



REL 2300

Religions of the World

Section: U05

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

Saturday 11 am-1:45 pm

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Course Description

This course is an academic survey of the world's major religious traditions. Students will examine the historical development, sacred writings, beliefs, rituals, ethics, and contemporary expressions of major world religions. The course emphasizes understanding religions within their historical and cultural contexts while developing critical thinking and comparative analytical skills.

Textbook and Course Materials

Religions of the World. (Use the edition adopted by the institution.)

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Hopfe, Lewis M.

Publisher: Pearson

Publication Date: 2014

Copyright Date: 2016

ISBN 10: ISBN-10:0-13-379-400-8

ISBN 13: ISBN-13:978-013-379400-7

Chapters/Pages: 13/264

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for \$22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the [Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop](#).

Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

ANET (*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*), edited by James B. Pritchard,

Hebrew Bible

New Testament

Course Goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the historical origins of the world's major religions.
2. Describe the central beliefs and practices of each tradition.
3. Compare similarities and differences among religious traditions.
4. Analyze how religion influences culture, ethics, and society.
5. Demonstrate respectful engagement with religious diversity.

Write analytical essays using evidence from assigned readings.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

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Expectations of the Course

Attendance is required

There are no make-up exams

Assignments are to be turned in on time

Assignments & Assessments

Assessment	Percentage
Class Participation and Attendance	10%
Weekly Reading Reflections (5–8 total)	15%
Midterm Examination	20%
Research Paper (8–10 pages)	20%
Student Presentation (10–15 minutes)	15%
Final Examination	20%

Assessment	Percentage
Total	100%

Assignment Descriptions

Research Paper (20%)

- Length: 8–10 pages (double-spaced)
- Sources: At least 8 scholarly sources (books and peer-reviewed journal articles)
- Citation Style: Chicago, APA, or MLA (whichever you specify)
- Topics may include:
 - A major world religion
 - A religious founder or influential figure
 - Sacred texts
 - Rituals and worship
 - Religion and ethics
 - Religion and contemporary society

Student Presentation (15%)

Each student will deliver a 10–15-minute presentation based on the research paper. The presentation should:

- Explain the research question.
- Summarize major findings.
- Incorporate visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint or Google Slides).
- Engage classmates through discussion or questions.
- Demonstrate effective oral communication and critical thinking.

Presentation Topics

- Siddhartha Gautama and the origins of Buddhism

- Confucius and Confucianism
- Muhammad and the development of Islam
- The Bhagavad Gita
- Athanasius
- The Slave Bible
- The Septuagint
- The Dead Sea Scrolls
- The Epic of Gilgamesh

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- Sources: At least 8 scholarly sources (books and peer-reviewed journal articles)
- Citation Style: Chicago, APA, or MLA (whichever you specify)
- Topics may include:
 - A major world religion
 - A religious founder or influential figure
 - Sacred texts
 - Rituals and worship
 - Religion and ethics
 - Religion and contemporary society

Student Presentation (15%)

Each student will deliver a 10–15-minute presentation based on their research paper. The presentation should:

- Explain the research question.
- Summarize major findings.

- Incorporate visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint or Google Slides).
- Engage classmates through discussion or questions.
- Demonstrate effective oral communication and critical thinking.

	20%
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Grading

Grading

Assignment	Percentage
Attendance & Participation	10%
Weekly Reading Quizzes	15%
Reflection Papers (4)	20%
Midterm Examination	20%
Research Paper (8–10 pages)	15%
Final Examination	20%

Schedule of Topics

Course presentations will begin at the end of September and will continue until November

REL 2300: Religions of the World

15-Week Undergraduate Course Schedule

Week	Lecture Topic	Major Concepts
1	Introduction to the Study of Religion	What is religion? Methods of studying religion, functions of religion, and religious diversity
2	Indigenous and Traditional Religions	Animism, shamanism, sacred space, ritual, oral traditions
3	Hinduism I: Origins and Development	Indus Valley, Vedas, Upanishads, Brahman, Atman
4	Hinduism II: Beliefs and Practice	Karma, samsara, moksha, yoga, caste, worship, festivals
5	Buddhism	Life of the Buddha, Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, Theravada and Mahayana
6	Chinese Religions	Confucianism, Daoism (Taoism), Chinese folk religion, ancestor veneration
7	Japanese Religion	Shinto, kami, shrines, Buddhism in Japan, Zen
8	Midterm Review and Examination	Comprehensive examination covering Weeks 1–7
9	Judaism	Hebrew Bible, covenant, prophets, Temple, rabbinic Judaism, modern Judaism
10	Christianity I: Origins	Jesus, the New Testament, the early church, the spread of Christianity
11	Christianity II: Development	Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, sacraments, worship, global Christianity
12	Islam	Muhammad, Qur'an, Five Pillars, Sunni and Shi'a traditions, Islamic civilization

Week	Lecture Topic	Major Concepts
13	New Religious Movements	Bahá'í, Sikhism, Jainism, new religious movements, globalization of religion
14	Religion in the Modern World	Religion and science, politics, ethics, secularization, interfaith dialogue
15	Comparative Religion and Final Review	Comparing religious traditions; religion in the twenty-first century

Suggested Major Themes for Each Religion

For each religious tradition, students should examine:

- Historical origins
- Founder(s)
- Sacred texts
- Major beliefs
- View of God or ultimate reality
- Human problem and solution
- Worship and rituals
- Ethics
- Holy days and festivals
- Contemporary issues
- Geographic distribution

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies such as:

- University Policies

- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights** (OCR) is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the OCR team through report.fiu.edu.

UCC Category Description

This course satisfies the University Core Curriculum **Social Sciences, Group 2** requirement.

Social science courses afford students an understanding of the basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavior and past and present social, political, and economic issues.