



REL 2300

Religions of the World

Section: U07

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

Day:	Tuesday, Thursday
Time:	12:30-1:45 p.m.
Location:	Graham Center 283A

Professor Information

Ran Afek

Roles: Primary Instructor

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Phone: 7866786702

Office Hours: By appointment

Office Location: SIPA I 508

Department or Academic Unit: Religious Studies

Course Description

Examines the origins, teachings, and practices of selected world religions. The course will follow the historical development of world religions and religious thought as some understand them today, with particular attention to comparative mythology, cosmology, shared religious narratives, and the historical interrelationships among religious traditions. It will explore how myths, symbols, philosophical ideas, and apocalyptic traditions moved across cultures and helped shape civilizations over time.

Textbook and Course Materials

Religions of the World

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Lewis M. Hopfe, et al.

Publisher: Prentice Hall

Publication Date: 2019

Copyright Date: 2019

ISBN 10: 013606177X

ISBN 13: 9780136061779

Notes: B00XIH22GM (E-TEXTBOOK)

Chapters/Pages: Required chapters on the course outline below.

Additional Articles and Book Sections as Listed in the Course Schedule Below

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: n/a

Publisher: n/a

Publication Date: n/a

Copyright Date: n/a

ISBN 10: n/a

ISBN 13: n/a

Chapters/Pages: n/a

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](#).

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Assignments & Assessments

1. Site Visit by Mid Semester, an Essays (4-5 pages in length, double-spaced, 12 pt. font), supported by 30 min presentation, on a visit to actual worship place other than the student religion/ belief. The material should include general introduction to the visited religion, description of the place and the student experience, personal reflection, identifying and describing at least two distinctive elements, practices or rituals of the selected religion that was observed by the student (20% of final grade)
2. Presentations - During the semester, student will prepare and deliver at least two, 20–30 minute in-class presentation on a religion aligned with the Topic's theme, preferably none of his own religion / belief. The

instructor may allow students to present more presentations; in such cases, only the highest grade will count toward this component of the final grade (20% of final grade)

3. Assignments - Each Topic, students are expected to write 500 – 700 words summary of the assigned readings for discussion in the following class. Students are also expected to respond to reflection questions in class (20% of final grade)
 4. Attendance Participation - Students will be assigned a participation grade based on their in-class activities and certain online activities (20%).
- Cumulative Exam (20%) - Multiple questions choice/true or false or a 500-700 words Essay Final Exam (TBD).

Grading

A	94-100	C	65-72
A-	90-93	D	64-60
B+	87-89	F	59-0
B	82-86		
B-	78-81		
C+	73-77		

Grading Participation: Remember that “participating” does not mean “getting it right.” There are multiple ways to read and analyze primary documents. Participating in conversation is an opportunity to build your analytical skills.

A level work involves participating in an ongoing conversation throughout the semester. This means coming to class prepared to discuss the reading, listening and responding to other people’s comments, and being willing to offer ideas, comments, and questions that help all of us think about the course as a whole- in addition to the requirements above.

B level work requires at least occasional participation in classroom discussions in which you demonstrate that you have read and engaged with assigned readings. You should also listen to other people's comments and be able to answer factual questions if asked - in addition to the requirements above.

C level work Showing up is about half of the battle! Come to class, be awake, and not on your phone or doing homework for another class. Listen to the discussion. Every journey begins with a first step!

D or F level work reflects a lack of attendance in class and/or limited or no evidence that you have read or attempted to do the assigned reading, and/or a repeated pattern of being on your phone or computer doing things unrelated to class.

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via the Canvas Inbox. Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial](#) or [Canvas Guide](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox. I will respond to all correspondences within 24 hours.

Course Goals

To provide the student with the "raw materials" for the study of religion by immersing the student in the beliefs, doctrines, rituals, symbols, and selected scriptures of some of the major/ influential world religions.

To facilitate the informed cross-cultural comparison and evaluation of ways of being religious by focused study of select world religions.

To widen, enhance and enrich the intellectual and spiritual horizons of the student by exposure to the spiritual beauty, vitality, coherence, plausibility and richness of Christian and non-Christian, Western and non-Western approaches to the transcendent or ultimate reality.

To challenge the student to enter sympathetically into the worldview of the religious traditions selected for study.

To provide the context for dialogue and discussion that will enable the student to live in an enormously complex, interdependent, and religiously plural world with patience, understanding, and appreciation for that which is different, and in some

cases irreconcilably different, from his or her own "worldview."

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- See course goals and objectives above.

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.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights Compliance and Accessibility** (CRCA) 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 CRCA team through report.fiu.edu.

Expectations of the Course

UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS: GLOBAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Global Awareness: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.
 - Course Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate knowledge of

the interrelated dynamics (social-cultural, political, economic, etc.)

that shape the actions of multiple figures in diverse cultural contexts.

- **Global Perspectives:** Students will be able to develop a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
 - **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will be able to analyze the multiple causal forces that shape the perspectives of historical individuals/persons — economic, political, sociological, technological, cultural, etc.
- **Global Engagement:** Students will be able to demonstrate a willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.
 - **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate a willingness to engage in negotiation regarding actions of global import within the context of the class simulation.
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Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

Additional learning resources (articles and videos) are posted.

Policies, Accessibility, Accommodation

Use of AI

All assignments should primarily reflect the student's own work and understanding, as developing these competencies prepares you for a competitive workplace.

AI-generated tools and language model chatbots (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) are permitted and recommended to support your learning. However, students are fully responsible for the accuracy, quality, and integrity of any AI-generated content included in their work.

Critically evaluating and integrating AI outputs is an essential skill, both for this course and for future professional contexts. Be prepared to thoughtfully assess AI-generated results and use them responsibly as part of your assignments and class discussions.

Accessibility and Accommodation

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305-348-3532 or visit them at the Graham Center GC 190.

For additional assistance please contact [FIU's Disability Resource Center](#).

Web Accessibility Statements for Partners and Vendors

- [Canvas](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
- [Adobe](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [ProctorU](#)
- [HonorLock](#)
- [Turnitin](#)
- [OpenStax](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [Respondus LockDown Browser](#)

Please visit accessibility.fiu.edu for additional information about accessibility at FIU.

Academic Integrity

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the University's educational mission. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Conduct and Honor Code.

Academic Misconduct includes:

Cheating

- The unauthorized use of any materials, information, study aids, or assistance from another person on any academic assignment or exercise unless explicitly authorized by the course Instructor;
- Assisting another student in the unauthorized use of any materials, information, or study aids, unless explicitly authorized by the Instructor; and
- Having a substitute complete any academic assignment or completing an academic assignment for someone else, either paid or unpaid;

Plagiarism

- The deliberate use and appropriation of another work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the Student's own.
- Assisting another student in the deliberate use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own.

Learn more about [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](#).

Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care

encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate's well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with [FIU's Panthers Care website](#).

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don't wait to call (305) 348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.

Core Principles of this Course

This course will serve to embrace the diversity and inclusivity found within Florida International University. We appreciate and respect diversity, equality, equity, cooperativeness, community, and sustainability within our online courses. We are committed to the ongoing education of our students and their participation within the course regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, geographical location, religion, and disability. We strive in encouraging collaboration by preparing our students to value the differences in others. At the core of our intentions is the encouragement of acceptance and appreciation of differences within our student population and community.

Copyright

The following conduct is prohibited by the Student Conduct and Honor Code. A lack of familiarity with University policy is not a defense to a violation of this Code. Unless specifically noted, the intent is not a required element to establish a policy violation. The following conduct violation or any attempt to violate the Code will be used in charging all Students or Student Organizations;

Section 5 | Conduct Violations - g. Computer Misuse

- vii. Unauthorized distribution or downloading of copyrighted materials, including but not limited to, unauthorized peer-to-peer file sharing. This is a violation whether the user is using their own personal computer or the University's information technology system for unauthorized distributions.

Copyright Statement: The materials and content in this course are provided solely for student use during the course. Course materials may not be shared outside of the

course or with any third party without the explicit permission of the instructor or content publisher. Visit FIU [Library's Copyright Lib Guide](#) to learn more about copyright law and restrictions.

Additional Resources:

- [Student Conduct and Honor Code](#)
- [Digital Millennium Copyright Act Policy](#)
- [FIU - Copyright Guidance for Students](#)
- [FIU Library's Copyright Lib Guide](#)

Schedule of Topics

The topics listed below are organized by week. However, to allow sufficient time for meaningful and in-depth discussion, a particular topic may extend beyond its assigned week or, when appropriate, be completed in less time. The weekly schedule is therefore flexible and may be adjusted according to the pace of the class and the depth of discussion.

Topic 1

Introduction I: Syllabus, Requirements, Textbooks, Overview of course

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Introduction, 2- 21.

Topic 2

Introduction II: Where Do We Come From, Where Are We Going, and How?

Origins, meaning, cosmology, and the development of religious thought.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., chapter 1, 12 – 19.

Topic 3 - Animism, Paganism, and Shamanism

Early forms of spirituality and humanity's relationship with nature and the supernatural.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Part I, 9 – 11.

Topic 4 - Mesopotamia and the Americas

Ancient religious traditions, creation myths, cosmologies, and religious narratives.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Chapter 2, 22 – 48.

Complimentary Reading:

Lambert, W. G., 1967. "Enmeduranki and Related Matters." *Journal of Cuneiform*

Studies 21, 1, pp.126–138.

Dalley, Stephanie, ed. 1998. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*. New York: Oxford University Press, xv – xxi, 1-38, 39-136, 182-203.

Topic 5 - India: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism

Religious traditions of the Indian subcontinent, including Kali and Kumari.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Part II, 53 – 56, 58 - 116.

In Class reading: The Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita.

Complimentary Reading:

Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas, Volume 2: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. 17. Brahmanism and Hinduism: The First Philosophies and Techniques of Salvation, 18. The Buddha and His Contemporaries, 19. The Message of the Buddha: From the Terror of the Eternal Return to the Bliss of the Inexpressible (pages are subject to the edition). 23. The History of Buddhism from Mahakasyapa to Nagarjuna. Jainism after Mahavira. 24. The Hindu Synthesis: The Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita.

Topic 6 - Monotheism: Biblical Judaism

The emergence of monotheistic ideas and their historical and cultural contexts.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Part IV, 173 – 174, 178- 185.

In Class reading: The Bible

Topic 7 - Greek Mythology and Philosophy

Mythology and the philosophical thought of Plato.

Required Reading: Hard, Robin. 2019. *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London: Taylor & Francis Group), 1- 65.

In class reading: Greek Mythology / Plato

Complimentary Reading:

Plato's Republic 614a–621d

Anna Marmodoro and Sophie Cartwright, "Introduction," in *A History of Mind and*

Body in Late Antiquity, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Sophie Cartwright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3–4

Topic 8 - Zoroastrianism and the Apocalypse

Cosmology, dualism, apocalyptic traditions, and the development of religious ideas.

Required Reading: Isaiah 1:1–9, 11:1–8, Jeremiah 19, Ezekiel 36:16–37:14, Malachi 3, Daniel 9.

Shaked, Shaul. 2005. *Dualism in Transformation* (London: Routledge) 1- 16.

Complimentary Reading:

Newsom, Carol A. 2016. "Foreword." In *Apocalypses in Context: Apocalyptic Currents through History*, edited by Kelly J. Murphy and Justin Jeffcoat Schedtler (Minneapolis: Fortress Press). ix–x

Portier-Young, Anthea E. 2014. "Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature." In (ed.) John J. Collins. *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press). 85–103.

Topic 9 - Christianity and Gnosticism

Origins, development, diversity, and competing religious traditions in Late Antiquity.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Part IV, 174- 175, Chapter 11, 202 - 231.

Gen. 15:1, 17:22, 18:22, 26:24, 35:13, Exod. 3:6, 24:9 -11, Isa. 6:1-5, Amos 9:1, 2 Cor.12:1–10 Rev. 4:1–3

Complimentary Reading:

Meyer, Marvin. "Introduction: The Gnostic Scriptures." In *The Gnostic Bible: Gnostic Texts of Mystical Wisdom from the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, edited by Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer, Boston: Shambhala, 2003, 1–28.

Topic 10 - Islam: Sunni and Shi'a Traditions

Origins, development, beliefs, and historical relationships with Judaism and Christianity.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Part IV, 175- 176, Chapter 12, 238 - 259.

In class reading: Quran

Topic 11 -Rabbinic Judaism and Hasidism

The development of Jewish thought, rabbinic traditions, mysticism, and

Hasidism.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Chapter 10, 184 - 198.

In class reading: The Talmud

Topic 12 - Religions of China and Japan

Religious traditions, philosophy, spirituality, and their cultural development.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Part 3, 131 - 169.

In class reading: Tao Te Ching

Complimentary Reading:

Eliade, Mircea. A History of Religious Ideas, Volume 2: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, Chapter 16. The Religions of Ancient China.

Topic 13 - The Three Abrahamic Religions: A Comparative Perspective

Comparing Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, including possible rabbinic influences on Islamic thought.

Topic 14 (as much as the time allows...)

Syncretic Modern and Emerging Religions

The Bahá'í Faith, Sikhism, and New Age spirituality.

Animism and Materialism - Religion, science, nature, materialism, and competing understandings of reality.

Religious Movements in Christianity and America - Modern Christian movements, religious diversity, and the changing role of religion in American society.

Required Reading: Hopfe, et al., Pages, 56 – 57, 122 – 128, 176-177, 231, 264 - 269.

Topic 15 - Final Comparative Discussion

Shared narratives, cultural exchange, religious transformation, and the future of religion.

General Complimentary Reading:

Charlesworth, J. H, ed. 2009. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. 1- 2. Yale University Press.

Freud, S., 2001, Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the

Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics. Routledge Classics.

Jung, C.G., 1958. Psychology and Religion: West and East. Translated by R.F.C. Hull. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Nietzsche, F. W., 2020. The Gay Science. Translated by Thomas Common, Paul V. Cohn, and Maude Dominica Petre. Dover thrift edition. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications.

Otto, R., 1958. The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational. 2nd ed., 1st Oxford University Press.

Plato – Timaeus, Phaedo.

Wilkinson, Richard H. 2003. The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt (London: Thames & Hudson).