



REL 3106

Introduction to Religion in Latin America

Section: RVC

Internet/Fully Online

Fall Term 2026

Course Time Zone | Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates are according to this time zone.

Professor Information

Joseph Holbrook

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: jholbroo@fiu.edu

Response Time: 48 hours

Phone: (786) 395-5402 (texting ONLY, and only between 9 am and 9 pm please).

Office Hours: by appointment

Office Location: At Vicki's bakery on campus or on zoom.

Website: [Playlist for lectures: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNQvOQW2aM_xH9Hbi5jeVJacojvoXdf2V](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNQvOQW2aM_xH9Hbi5jeVJacojvoXdf2V)

Department or Academic Unit: Religious Studies Department

Additional Notes

Holbrook's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@MrJosephholbrook>

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

As students of Florida International University and likely residents of South Florida, Latin America and the Caribbean may not seem that far away. Maybe you have even traveled to parts of the region. But even if you have not, you likely recognize that Latin America is becoming increasingly visible on the US radar.

This course offers an overview of Religions in Latin American history from the Pre-Columbus indigenous civilizations to Pentecostalism and new religious movements in the twenty-first century. It is intended to provide students with knowledge of the region, emphasizing its diversity, complexity, and vital culture.

'Latin America', a term created in the nineteenth century, refers to a vast region from Mexico to Chile, including not only Spanish-speaking peoples, but Portuguese-speaking countries like Brazil and French and Creole speaking countries such as Haiti. The region is a mixed population of Amerindian, African, European, and Asian descent, whose diversity has created a multifaceted society and complex religions with Indigenous, European and Afro-Diaspora elements. The course examines the trajectory of Latin American religions in Latin America and the Caribbean by analyzing their religious myths, beliefs, communities, and practices from an interdisciplinary perspective. Catholic, Protestant (and Pentecostal), indigenous, Afro-diasporan and syncretistic religions will be considered in the light of a number of classical and contemporary theoretical perspectives and using methodologies from the academic disciplines of history, sociology, anthropology and phenomenology. Particular emphasis will be given to religious trends and dynamics that have been instrumental in the formation of political cultures of contemporary Latin America and the Caribbean.

In summary, the course will cover the following topics:

- Religions of the region in the context of the social, political, economic, and cultural experiences that have contributed to the development of Latin America and the Caribbean;
- Overview of the multiple ethnic backgrounds of the peoples of contemporary Latin America and the role of slavery and the conquest in the transcultural formation of new religious movements;
- The influence of religious developments that went into shaping the Latin American popular culture and politics, starting with European, African and Amerindian myths and religious beliefs;
- Connections between religious and cultural dimensions and their effects on specific regions and societies;
- The nature of religious community, leadership and governance in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Political cultures that have been shaped by long-term religious experience along with other variables such as historical events, immigration and patterns of ethnicity.

Textbook and Course Materials

Christianity in Latin America

Subtitle: A History

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Ondina E., and Justo L González

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Publication Date: 2008

Copyright Date: 2008

ISBN 10: 0-521-68192-6

ISBN 13: 978-0-521-68192-6

Chapters/Pages: 331

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](#).

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

First, the class asks you Identify and analyze the historical stages in the development of religion in Latin America. This means that you regularly go beyond overarching generalizations and common stereotypes.

Second, the course teaches you to write about Latin America in a scholarly manner, and how to do so online. This means that you online writing will be graded not only on critical thinking, but also on formal professionalism and collegiality. This means you write with a scholarly tone and style, that you participate on time, and that you engage your colleagues respectfully.

Third, the course introduces you to the disciplines and theories we use to understand the region. We will in particular look at the concept of political culture, and how it might be shaped by long-term religious traditions. You will be asked to compare and analyze issues from various disciplinary perspectives.

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same as a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation,

self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **review the getting started** page located in the course modules;
- **introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- **take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;
- **interact** online with instructor and peers;
- **review** and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines;
- **log in** to the course **5 times** per week;
- **respond** to discussions by the due date specified. **No late work will be accepted without a late penalty.**
- **respond** to **emails** within **3 days**;
- **submit** assignments by the corresponding deadline.

The instructor will:

- log in to the course **6** week;
- respond to **emails** within **24 hours**;
- grade assignments and/or provide feedback within **3 days** of the assignment deadline.

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.

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
- Core Principles of This Course
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Assignments & Assessments

Discussion Forums

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post. At least twelve times during the semester, you will be required to participate in online discussions with your peers to reflect on films or primary source readings related to the material. Five of the discussions will be focused on films, and another seven will be focused on readings of primary source documents. The

lowest two grades will be dropped.

All Discussions can be found by clicking on the Discussions link located on the left-hand side of the course.

- View "[How do I reply to a discussion](#) ."
- View "[How do I upload and embed an image in the New Rich Content Editor as a student](#) ?"
- View "[How do I create hyperlinks to user files in the New Rich Content Editor as a student](#) ?"

Participation in the discussion forums is critical for maximizing student learning in this course, both because your participation is graded and because it's a chance to engage in a dialogue about course material. In this course, students are required to be a part of a community of learners who collectively interact, through discussion, to enhance and support the professional performance of each other. Part of the assessment criteria for the course includes evaluating the quality and quantity of your participation in the discussion forum. Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

Some characteristics I consider to be part of excellent discussion contributions are outlined below. I will consider these characteristics when assessing the quality and level of student participation.

- Posts and responses should be thorough and thoughtful. Just posting an "I agree" or "Good ideas" will not be considered adequate. Support statements with examples, experiences, or references. Be brief — keep each post and response to one or two short paragraphs. Keep in mind that fellow learners will be reading and responding to you, too.
- Posts should be within a range of 250-300 words. Do not use headings, subheads, numbering or bullet points. These formatting items raise suspicion of the use of AI.
- Make certain that all posts and responses address the question, problem, or situation as presented for discussion. This does not mean you should not

extend the topic, but do not stray from the topic.

- Discussions occur when there is dialogue; therefore, you need to build upon the posts and responses of other learners to create discussion threads. Make sure to revisit the discussion forum and respond (if necessary) to what other learners have posted to your initial responses.
- When relevant, add to the discussion by including prior knowledge, work experiences, references, web sites, resources, etc. (giving credit when appropriate).

Contributions to the discussions (posts and responses) should be complete and free of grammatical or structural errors.

- Three replies to other student's posts constitute twenty percent of the grade. Please avoid using headings, subheads, numbered paragraphs or bullet points. These all raise suspicions of the use of ChatGPT or some other AI to write the posts.
- See individual discussion assignments for prompt and grading criteria

- **Grading Criteria**

The twelve discussions will be graded 20% summary, 20% personal and critical reaction, 20% on how it relates to the course themes, and 20% on length, content, grammar and punctuation.

Another 20% of the grade will be for at least three REPLIES of a minimum of 50 words or 3 complete sentences to other students. At the end of the semester, the two lowest discussion grades will be dropped.

30 Point Canvas Discussion Rubric

30 point discussion rubric

Writing Assignments

- Two major essays of 1,200 words (with the option of revising essay 1) will

be required of undergraduates regarding a topic that will be presented in class. Both essays together constitute 20 percent of your final grade. The essays should be 3 or 4 pages double-spaced, or about 1,200 words in length and submitted through Canvas (no written assignments will be accepted or graded through email).

Detailed essay instructions will be provided in the *Assignments* course section.

General Guidelines

- The essay must be written with a thesis statement and supported with evidence.
- The essay should draw evidence from primary sources, secondary sources, and class lectures.
- All source material must be cited correctly using APA, MLA or Chicago Style and long quotes should be avoided.
- Do not use AI to write the essays for you. If you use AI to research information, please include it as a reference and use citations. DO NOT USE HEADINGS, SUBHEADS, BULLET POINTS OR NUMBERED PARAGRAPHS. That is a strong hint that the essay was written by ChatGPT.
- The essay must follow proper formatting guidelines. It is standard for college essays that body text be double spaced, there must be a proper title page with complete information such as author, course number and name, names of the institution (or department) and instructor. Also, the semester or date.
- The essay must draw from at least four sources (including the textbook and YouTube videos) and provide properly formatted in-text (short form) citations or footnotes, and a List of References at the end of the essay.

- Writing should demonstrate knowledge and awareness of standard written English.
- Essays must be submitted in the Assignments section via **Turnitin** for plagiarism prevention. Papers with an originality score of over 35% similarity will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur additional penalties, up to and including receiving an F (0 points). No essays or written work will be accepted via email. If you have technical difficulties, document your issue and contact the student help desk or your professor immediately for assistance.

Graduate Research Writing Assignments

Instead of essays, Graduate students will choose a topic for research, resulting in a review of the literature. (NOTE: This will NOT be a research paper, but rather a literature review which is preliminary to the actual research).

1. The topic will first be articulated as a *research question* and presented to the professor (ungraded but worth 1 extra credit point on the final grade).
2. Then, after an online library research tutorial, the graduate student will begin to develop a list of sources (books and articles) which will be formatted into an *annotated bibliography*, which will be submitted online as a 2- to 3-page document (with a minimum of 8 sources) for a grade (25 points, 5 percent of the final grade).
3. Finally, the student will write and submit a 10 to 12-page *literature review* (and bibliography with at least 15 sources) on the chosen topic. This is this will be submitted as a first draft and then a final draft, each worth 15 percent for a total of 30 percent of the final grade.

Detailed essay instructions will be provided in the *Assignments* course section

Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the Practice Quiz from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet.

- There will be weekly quizzes on assigned readings. Quiz questions will be multiple choice.

Although there may be more than 10 quizzes, only your 10 highest quiz scores will count toward your grade. The lowest 2 quiz scores will be dropped. Each quiz will consist of 10 randomly selected multiple-choice questions.

Make-ups/Extra Credit

There are no extra credits offered for this class. **Absolutely no make-ups will be accepted *after* the last day of class of the regular semester.**

Participation (for undergraduates)

Participation (100 points or 10 percent of the overall final grade): Since this is an online course, attendance, (or participation) will be measured through forum type discussions based on a variety of documentaries and other informational sources. Additional participation points will be awarded for introducing yourself in an online forum and viewing a library research tutorial. For graduate students, participation will also include an oral presentation of their research at the end of the semester via Zoom. Graduate students do not need to worry about the participation grade as the "research" grade will replace it.

Proctored Exams

Please note that the information contained in this section applies only if your course requires a proctored exam.

Through a careful examination of this syllabus, it is the student's responsibility to

determine whether this online course requires proctored exams. Please visit our [Student Proctored Exam Instructions](#) webpage for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.

Zoom Video Conference

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities.

Zoom meetings can be accessed via the Zoom link in the course navigation menu. Once you click on the Zoom link, it will route you to join the meeting for the respective class session. You will also be able to view upcoming meetings, previous meetings that you have already joined, and meeting recordings. Before joining an actual class session:

Reference the [Zoom Student Tutorials](#) to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.

Access the [Zoom Test Meeting Room](#) to test out the software before joining an actual session.

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact the [FIU Canvas Help Team](#). Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring.

Grading

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points of Each	Total Points Available	Weight
2 Writing Assignments	2	100	200	20%
Forum Discussions	10	30	300	30%

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points of Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Participation	5	20	100	10%
Quizzes	10	20	200	20%
Exams	2	100	200	20%
Total	10	N/A	1000	100%

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A	95 - 100
A-	90 – 94.99
B+	87 – 89.99
B	83 – 86.99
B-	80 – 82.99
C+	77 – 79.99
C	70 – 76.99
D	60 – 69.99

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
F	0 – 59.99

Schedule of Topics

Week 1	Introduction
Week 2	Foundations
Week 3	Arrival of Christianity
Week 4	Shaping the Faith
Week 5	Reform Movements
Week 6	The Church in Turmoil
Week 7	The Church's New Place
Week 8	Afro-Latinos and Jews
Week 9	Protestant Immigration
Week 10	Expanding Protestantism
Week 11	Catholicism post-Vatican II
Week 12	Afro-Spiritist Religions
Week 13	Pentecostalism-New Movements
Week 14	Islam in Latin America

Week 15	Globalization and future trends
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Course Awards

Affordability Counts

This course has been awarded the Affordability Counts Medallion. The Affordability Counts initiative at FIU seeks to make learning more affordable by reducing the cost of course materials to \$60 or less. Find out more by visiting the Affordability Counts website at <https://affordabilitycounts.org/>

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.