



REL 4105

Latino/a Immigration and Religion

Section: U01

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

Classes are scheduled from 2:00 PM to 3:15 PM, Tuesdays and Thursdays in CP (Chem & Physics) 115.

Class meeting times	
Day:	TuTh
Time:	2:00 PM - 3:15 PM
Location:	CP 115

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Migration and religion are deeply entangled. Religion can be a reason people leave home, a resource that sustains them on the journey, an institution that receives them on arrival, and a public voice that argues for or against their welcome. This course examines that entanglement in the case of Latino/a immigration to the United States, asking a single guiding question throughout: **what is the role of religion in Latino/a migration? Whose religion, doing what, and for whom?**

Building on the foundational concepts of *religion*, *Latino/a*, and *migration*, the course treats each as contested and internally diverse rather than self-evident. It pays sustained attention to gender and extends that lens to sexualities, examining how these categories shape religious experience, leadership, persecution, and refuge across Latino/a communities. Situated in Miami, one of the richest Latino/a religious landscapes in the hemisphere, the course also engages the present moment, in which shifting immigration policy and enforcement directly affect the communities studied.

A distinctive feature of the course is that students do not only learn *about* the overlap of migration and religion; they learn *how knowledge about it is produced*. A research thread runs alongside the content, introducing the qualitative and quantitative methods used to study religion and migration, the difference between the two, and the research ethics this subject demands. Students apply these methods in a field observation and an original research project.

The course is organized into six interconnected modules:

Module I — Foundations. Establishes the analytical vocabulary of the course by examining its three core concepts one at a time: religion (as material practice, not belief alone), Latino/a (as a constructed, raced, internally diverse category), and migration (as a set of legal and lived statuses that shape everything downstream). It then introduces two theoretical lenses — transnationalism and diaspora/exile — that recur throughout the term.

Module II — How the Three Elements Interact: The Actors. The analytical

heart of the course. Having defined the three concepts separately, students examine the relationships among them and learn to see religion as playing many roles at once: a push factor driving departure, a personal resource sustaining migrants, an institutional actor through faith-based organizations and congregations, and a public voice advocating both for and against migrants. This module also introduces the course's research methods and ethics and launches the final project.

Module III — Traditions and Communities. Grounds the analytical model in specific traditions and communities — Mexican and borderlands Catholicism and Guadalupe devotion, Cuban exile Catholicism and the devotion to Our Lady of Charity, Afro-Latinx traditions such as Santería, and Pentecostal and evangelical growth. Here the sociological categories of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality become central to differentiating one community's religious experience from another's. The module includes a second methods session and the field observation assignment.

Module IV — Gender and Sexualities. Gives sustained, theorized attention to dimensions the course refuses to treat as secondary: women's religious labor and leadership, Latina and *mujerista* theologies, the queer migration experience, the supposed incompatibility of faith and queerness, and the work of faith actors in the reception and integration of queer Latin American migrants. Gender and sexuality are analyzed as forces cutting across every tradition rather than as a single community.

Module V — Religion, Rights, and the Present. Examines religion as a site of contestation and action: the sanctuary tradition, faith-based advocacy for immigrant and queer reception, the ethics of welcome, and religious responses to the contemporary enforcement landscape that is shaping students' own communities.

Module VI — Expanding the Map and Synthesis. Widens the frame beyond the Catholic and Christian traditions by focusing on Latino Muslims, the growing number of the religiously unaffiliated, and interfaith realities, to resist any tidy equation of "Latino" with "Catholic," and returns to the course's guiding question with the full analytical toolkit.

Textbook and Course Materials

No textbook required

Required/Recommended: Recommended

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

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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)

There is no required textbook to purchase for this course. All required readings — book chapters, journal articles, reports, and primary sources — will be provided through Canvas or made available via the FIU Libraries' electronic resources at no cost to students. This approach allows the course to draw on the most relevant and current scholarship across several fields rather than relying on a single text.

Course Goals

- Develop an appreciation for the depth and diversity of Latino/a religious life in the United States, and an understanding of religion as a living, lived phenomenon rather than a fixed set of beliefs.
- Cultivate the habit of thinking about migration and religion together — recognizing how faith shapes, and is reshaped by, the experience of leaving home, crossing borders, and building new lives.
- Foster empathy and intellectual humility toward people whose religious, cultural, and migratory experiences may differ from one's own, and toward the complexity of communities that resist easy generalization.
- Encourage students to take gender and sexuality seriously as fundamental to human religious experience, and to approach questions of difference with both analytical rigor and care.
- Inspire curiosity about how knowledge is made — to see research not as the retrieval of settled facts but as a careful, ethical practice of inquiry into the lives of real people.
- Equip students to engage thoughtfully and responsibly with contested public questions about immigration and religion, weighing competing perspectives rather than reaching for easy answers.
- Promote an appreciation of Miami and South Florida as a distinctive religious and migratory landscape, and of the value of understanding the communities in which students live and study.
- Nurture students' capacity to connect academic study to their own lives, families, and communities in ways that are meaningful to them.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Explain the major theoretical frameworks used to study religion and migration — including lived religion, transnationalism, diaspora and exile,

popular religion, and queer-of-color critique — and apply them to specific cases.

Analyze how religious beliefs, practices, institutions, and symbols function at each stage of the Latino/a migration process, from departure through second-generation life.

Compare the religious lives of distinct Latino/a communities, accounting for differences of history, race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality, as well as reception context.

Evaluate the role of gender and sexuality in shaping Latino/a religious experience, leadership, persecution, and refuge.

Assess the relationship between Latino/a religion and political action, including sanctuary, immigrant-rights and queer reception work, and religious responses to immigration enforcement.

Distinguish qualitative from quantitative approaches to the study of religion and migration, and critically read and use empirical and survey-based sources.

Apply qualitative research methods and research ethics to conduct an original field-based analysis and communicate it effectively in written and oral form.

Expectations of the Course

This is an in-person course. Performance expectations are consistent with an upper-division, discussion-driven seminar in which preparation and presence are essential. The expectations below concern (1) attendance and participation, (2)

preparation and collaborative learning, and (3) communication.

- **Attendance and participation.** Students are expected to attend class meetings, arrive having completed the assigned reading, and contribute to discussion. Much of the learning in this course happens through seminar conversation, so consistent, prepared presence matters as much as the reading itself. Students who must miss a session are responsible for the material covered and for any announcements made in class.
- **Preparation and collaborative learning.** Instructional materials and assignments are listed by module in the Schedule of Topics. Students are expected to pace their reading accordingly and to come ready to engage. Interactive learning enriches the experience for everyone: each student is expected to be a constructive contributor to the class community, to engage seriously and respectfully with course materials and with one another, and to approach difficult topics with intellectual curiosity and care.
- **Communication.** See the Course Communication section below.

A note on difficult and personal material. This course addresses immigration enforcement, persecution, gender, and sexuality — subjects that may touch students' own lives and families. Discussion will be approached analytically and with care. No student is ever required to disclose personal information, including immigration status or anything related to gender or sexuality, and assignments are designed so that no such disclosure is necessary. Students may always choose a non-personal focus for their work.

Assignments & Assessments

1. Attendance and Participation (10%)

Active, prepared participation in seminar discussion. Evaluated on consistency of attendance and the quality of engagement — contributing to discussion, responding thoughtfully to peers, and demonstrating preparation with the assigned material. Quality of contribution matters more than quantity.

2. Reading Responses (15%)

Short written responses (approximately 250–350 words) posted to Canvas in advance of class, designed to ensure consistent engagement with the readings and to seed discussion. **Eight (8) responses** will be offered across the term; your **six (6) highest scores** count toward the grade. Responses summarize and, more importantly, *respond to* — question, connect, apply — the assigned material; they are not book reports. The use of generative AI to produce these responses is not permitted.

3. Field Observation and Reflection (15%)

A supervised, first practice of the qualitative methods introduced in the course. Students conduct a single structured observation of a religious site, community, event, or — as an equivalent option — an online religious community (netnography), and write a 4–6 page analytical reflection that applies course frameworks to what they observed.

- **Site options** include, but are not limited to, places of worship, shrines (e.g., La Ermita de la Caridad), botánicas, and faith-based community or advocacy settings, in Miami or in another U.S. city accessible to the student.
- **Online/netnographic option.** Students who prefer not to visit a physical site — for any reason — may instead conduct a structured observation of an online religious community. This option is fully equivalent and requires no explanation.
- **Ethics.** All observation must follow the research-ethics guidelines discussed in class (positionality, consent, respect for privacy, care with vulnerable communities). Students will receive a short ethics briefing before beginning.
- **Connection to the final project.** The field observation **may** serve as the empirical basis for the final research project (see below), or students may

pursue a different topic for the project. The choice is the student's.

Field observations are presented briefly to the class during a dedicated session, giving the work an audience and seeding the research projects.

4. Midterm Exam (15%)

A written exam, administered via Canvas (online/take-home), covering the concepts and the interaction model developed in Modules I–II, the portable analytical apparatus of the course. The exam emphasizes synthesis and application through short and open-ended responses rather than recall. The use of generative AI is not permitted.

5. Final Research Project (30%, scaffolded)

The capstone of the course's research thread: an original, qualitative research project on an aspect of Latino/a immigration and religion. Students may build on their field observation or pursue a different topic with the instructor's approval. The project is scaffolded across the term so that it develops in stages rather than all at once:

- **Project proposal (5%).** A short statement of the research question, its significance, the chosen approach, and (if applicable) the site or community. Due after the field observation, so students using their field data can propose from it.
- **Annotated bibliography (5%).** A working bibliography with brief annotations situating each source, demonstrating engagement with relevant scholarship beyond the assigned readings.
- **Presentation (5%).** A concise presentation of the project's question, approach, and findings to the class.
- **Final paper (15%).** A 10–12 page paper presenting the research and its analysis, integrating course frameworks and additional scholarly sources, with complete citations in a consistent style.

A draft workshop is built into the schedule. Generative AI may be used to find sources to read and verify, but not to draft the proposal, bibliography annotations, or paper.

6. Final Exam (15%)

A cumulative, synthetic written exam administered **in class** during the assigned finals-week slot. The final exam asks students to connect material from across the whole course — especially the second-half modules not covered by the midterm — and to return to the course's guiding question with the full analytical toolkit. It emphasizes synthesis and argument rather than recall. The use of generative AI is not permitted.

Grading

Late Work

Late submissions are not accepted except in cases of genuine, documented emergencies. If a serious and documented situation prevents timely submission, contact the instructor **as soon as possible**; requests are considered case by case, and accommodation is not guaranteed. Students are encouraged not to leave Canvas submissions to the last minute, as heavy traffic near deadlines can cause delays.

Extra Credit

Extra-credit opportunities may be offered during the term based on the needs and performance of the class. Any such opportunities will be announced on Canvas with sufficient notice for all students to participate.

Grading System

Course Requirement	Number of Items	Points Each	Total Points	Weight
Attendance & Participation	—	—	10	10%

Reading Responses	8 (best 6 count)	2.5	15	15%
Field Observation & Reflection	1	15	15	15%
Midterm Exam	1	15	15	15%
Final Project — Proposal	1	5	5	5%
Final Project — Annotated Bibliography	1	5	5	5%
Final Project — Presentation	1	5	5	5%
Final Project — Final Paper	1	15	15	15%
Final Exam	1	15	15	15%
Total			100	100%

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	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
F	0 – 59.99

Schedule of Topics

This syllabus is subject to change; you are responsible for regularly monitoring Canvas Announcements, the Canvas Inbox, and your FIU email to be aware of any changes. The course is organized by module; each module spans the weeks indicated. Readings are listed as a per-module pool and will be assigned to specific dates on Canvas; exact selections and page ranges are finalized on Canvas, and some later-module materials will be posted closer to their dates. *Two flex sessions and a conference-travel adjustment are built into*

the term; specific dates will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Module / Weeks	Topics	Reading Pool	Milestones
I. Foundations Weeks 1–3 (Aug 24 – Sep 11)	Welcome and the guiding question; religion as lived and material practice; <i>Latino/a</i> as a contested category (Latinidad, race, <i>mestizaje</i>); migration as legal and lived status (immigrant, refugee, exile, asylum, undocumented, TPS, parole); theory — transnationalism and "globalizing the sacred"; theory — diaspora and exile.	Excerpt on lived/material religion (e.g., McGuire or Orsi); short piece on the category "Latino/a"/Latinidad; current explainer on immigration statuses (TPS, CHNV parole, asylum); Vásquez & Marquardt, <i>Globalizing the Sacred</i> (intro); Tweed, <i>Our Lady of the Exile</i> (theory chapter).	—

II. How the Three Elements Interact: The Actors Weeks 4–6 (Sep 14 – Oct 2)	The role(s) of religion in Latino/a migration; religion as a push factor (persecution, incl. gender- and sexuality-based); religion as individual resource on the journey and in resettlement; faith-based organizations and congregations as institutional actors; religious advocacy for and against migration. Methods I: qualitative vs. quantitative approaches, reading survey data (e.g., Pew) critically, research ethics. <i>Final project launched.</i>	Reading on religion and forced migration/persecution; Hagan, <i>Migration Miracle</i> (journey chapter); Moreno et al., "Vaya Con Dios" (<i>IJERPH</i>, 2020, OA); Hondagneu-Sotelo, <i>God's Heart Has No Borders</i> (faith-based organizing chapter); paired readings on religious pro-immigrant advocacy and religious restrictionism; short methods-and-ethics reading; Pew overview of U.S. Latino religion.	Midterm Exam (online/Canvas), covering Modules I–II
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III. Traditions and Communities Weeks 7–10 (Oct 5 – Oct 30)	Mexican and borderlands religion and Our Lady of Guadalupe; Guadalupe, gender, and the feminine divine; Cuban Miami — Our Lady of Charity and the religion of exile; Afro-Latinx traditions — Santería/Lukumí; Pentecostal and evangelical growth and conversion. Sociological categories (race, ethnicity, class, and the beginnings of gender and sexuality) introduced, grounded in communities. Methods II: designing your study — site/community selection, research questions, fieldnotes, annotated bibliography; pre-field ethics briefing. <i>Field observation launched.</i>	León, <i>La Llorona's Children</i> (Guadalupe/ borderlands chapter); Elizondo, <i>Galilean Journey</i> (<i>mestizaje</i> selection, optional); Tweed, <i>Our Lady of the Exile</i> (ethnographic chapter); De La Torre, <i>Santería</i> (intro chapter); Espinosa, <i>Latino Pentecostals in America</i> (a chapter) with current Pew data on Latino religious change; short reading on qualitative research design.	Field Observation & Reflection due; field-observation presentations (dedicated session)
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IV. Gender and Sexualities Weeks 11–12 (Nov 2 – Nov 13)	Women's religious lives, labor, and leadership; Latina and <i>mujerista</i> theologies and spiritual <i>mestizaje</i> ; the queer migration experience and SOGI-based asylum (SOGIESC vocabulary and queer-of-color critique introduced here); the "religion versus queerness" dichotomy and queer Latinx negotiations of faith; faith actors and the reception/integration of queer Latin American migrants (comparative U.S.–Spain perspective; featured instructor research).	Hondagneu-Sotelo, <i>Gendered Transitions</i> or <i>Doméstica</i> (a chapter); Delgadillo, <i>Spiritual Mestizaje</i> (a chapter), with selections from Anzaldúa, <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i> and Medina & Gonzales, <i>Voices from the Ancestors</i> ; Cantú, <i>The Sexuality of Migration</i> (asylum chapter) with Muñoz, <i>Disidentifications</i> (intro); Decena, <i>Tacit Subjects</i> (concept chapter), Peña, <i>Oye Loca</i> (a chapter), Decena, <i>Circuits of the Sacred</i> (a chapter); 2025 <i>Journal of Gender Studies</i> article on LGBTIQ+ asylum and religion and 2023 <i>Refugee Survey Quarterly</i> review, with instructor-selected work; Althaus-Reid, <i>Indecent Theology</i> (intro, optional).	Project proposal due (early); annotated bibliography due (late)
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V. Religion, Rights, and the Present Weeks 13–14 (Nov 16 – Nov 24) <i>(Thanksgiving recess; no class Thu Nov 26)</i>	The sanctuary tradition (1980s and the New Sanctuary Movement); faith-based advocacy for immigrant and queer reception; the contemporary enforcement moment — detention, TPS, the end of CHNV parole, and religious responses; Florida and Miami now; the ethics of welcome.	Yukich, <i>One Family Under God</i> (a chapter) or Cunningham, <i>God and Caesar at the Rio Grande</i> (a selection); Hondagneu-Sotelo, <i>God's Heart Has No Borders</i> (activism chapter); De La Torre, <i>Trails of Hope and Terror</i> (selected testimonies); short reading on faith-based support for LGBTQ+ migrants; current reporting and a Florida-focused source (posted closer to the date).	Final-paper draft workshop
VI. Expanding the Map and Synthesis Week 15 (Nov 30 – Dec 4)	Latino Muslims; the rising religiously unaffiliated ("nones"); interfaith realities; synthesis — returning to the course's guiding question with the full toolkit.	Martínez-Vázquez, <i>Latina/o y Musulmán</i> (a chapter; verify availability); Pew Research piece on Latino "nones"; short synthesis or reflection reading.	—
Final Exam Finals Week (Dec 7–12)	In-class, cumulative, synthetic final exam during the assigned examination slot.	—	Final Exam (in class); final research paper due (date posted on Canvas)

Course Communication

Course communication takes place through **Canvas Announcements and the Canvas Inbox**. Students are responsible for monitoring Canvas announcements and their FIU email regularly, as these are the official channels for updates, schedule changes, and assignment information.

- The instructor will respond to emails and Canvas messages within **2 business days**.
- Assignments will be graded, with feedback, within **7 days** of the due date under normal circumstances.
- **Office hours** are held in person (and by Zoom on request); students are encouraged to use them to discuss readings, research projects, or any aspect of the course.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus by means of Canvas announcement, with ample time for students to adjust.

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

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