



RLG 5183

Religion, Nature, and Globalization

Section: RVC

Internet/Fully Online

Fall Term 2026

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

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

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What do you think of when you think of the word nature? If you are like many, you probably thought about whales, skies, forests, rivers, green, or the image of planet earth from outer space. Also, if you are like many people, you didn't think of yourself, computers, the buildings we live in, language, and other technologies. This course draws from religious, philosophical, and scientific sources in order to examine how it is that many humans (especially of the western modern variety) have written themselves outside of the planet. The extreme forms of this would include Elon Musk and Jeff Besos, who think our destiny is to escape the planet; and the transhumanists who think we can

overcome our bodily natures. Many scholars in environmental ethics, philosophy, and in the field of religion and nature/ecology have identified this “human exceptionalism” as a very western (and often monotheistic) understanding of humans as somehow different than the rest of the natural world. This understanding has supported the reductive and productive model of modern western science that understands all non-human nature as stuff or resource for use by (some) humans. And, this treatment of nature has led to the contemporary ecological and social ills of climate change, economic inequity, species extinction, etc., leading up to the new geological era known as “The Anthropocene.” This course will explore the effects of the globalization of a modern western (and monotheistic) understanding of “nature” and “religion.” In addition, it will look at alternative understandings of humans and nature from different cultures, religions, philosophies and theories. Finally, we will explore what it might mean, ethically, to understand ourselves as planetary creatures: as creature-citizens among other creature-citizens on the entangled and evolving planet Earth.

For BA/ BS: This is a Global Learning Course and a Writing Across the Curriculum Course.

For All: This is a combined course, which means the BA, BS, and MA students will meet together on Tuesdays for the lecture, and the MA students have reading discussions later on Tuesdays. The BA students have reading discussions on Thursdays. You only need to attend the reading discussion devoted to your level/section of the course.

Textbook and Course Materials

Grounding Religion A Field Guide to the Study of Religion and Ecology

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Whitney Bauman, Richard Bohannon, Kevin J. O'Brien

Publisher: Routledge

Publication Date: 2023-09-29

Copyright Date: 2023

ISBN 10: 9781032194950

ISBN 13: 9781032194950

Chapters/Pages: 300

A New Environmental Ethics**Required/Recommended:** Required**Authors:** Holmes Rolston III**Publisher:** Taylor & Francis**Publication Date:** 2020-04-28**Copyright Date:** 2020**ISBN 10:** 9781000057515**ISBN 13:** 9781000057515**Chapters/Pages:** 282**Earthly Things Immanence, New Materialisms, and Planetary Thinking****Required/Recommended:** Required**Authors:** Karen Bray, Heather Eaton, Whitney Bauman**Publisher:** Fordham University Press**Publication Date:** 2023**Copyright Date:** 2023**ISBN 10:** 9781531503062**ISBN 13:** 9781531503062**Chapters/Pages:** 352**Religion, Decolonization, and the Planetary Community - Voices from the Indonesian Archipelago****Required/Recommended:** Required**Authors:** Whitney A. Bauman, Samsul Maarif, Jonathan Davis Smith**Publisher:** Routledge**Publication Date:** 2025**Copyright Date:** 2025**ISBN 10:** 9781003527398**ISBN 13:** 9781003527398

Chapters/Pages: 300

Radical Romanticism Democracy, Religion, and the Environmental Imagination

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Mark S. Cladis

Publisher: Columbia University Press

Publication Date: 2025

Copyright Date: 2025

ISBN 10: 9780231213325

ISBN 13: 9780231213325

Chapters/Pages: 384

Romantic Empiricism Nature, Art, and Ecology from Herder to Humboldt

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Dalia Nassar

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Publication Date: 2022

Copyright Date: 2022

ISBN 10: 9780190095437

ISBN 13: 9780190095437

Chapters/Pages: 326

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- a) Students will be able to identify interrelationships between religious ideas and the ways we interact with other animals and the rest of the natural world;
- b) Students will be able to identify specific, global environmental challenges and analyze them from multiple perspectives;
- c) Based on their awareness of how their own life-choices affect global environmental issues, students will

be able to describe possible solutions that work toward global health.

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 **X times** per week;
- **respond** to discussions by the due date specified. **No late work will be accepted;**
- **respond** to **emails** within **X days**;
- **submit** assignments by the corresponding deadline.

The instructor will:

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

Assignments & Assessments

I. Class Participation/Weekly “Illuminated Reading Notes”—25% (BA/MA)

The first step to doing well in this class is to show up and participate, even in zoom lectures and online discussions! You can’t be a part of the learning community if you are not present. If you have to be absent for an extended period due to illness or family issues, etc., please let me know.

The second step to doing well in the class is to “speak up” during discussions. There will also be time for Q&A on course lectures day. It is important to hear your voice! Toward this end, every student will submit a modified form of an “illuminated manuscript” each week. See description below.

The classroom is a community of learners. That is, we are all in the process of critically engaging the lectures and course materials together, even remotely. Learning should be a collaborative process and it will take all of us to learn this semester. At the beginning of each class, we will have a 2-minute centering exercise that helps us to enter into a space of dialogue together. There are some ground rules that should be followed in course discussions and assignments.

1. Confidentiality: Sometimes we are exploring serious issues in the course that may be hard to speak about or give voice too. I expect that students will respect one another’s privacy in this course and allow room for this type of exploration.
2. Trust and Respect: The classroom is a learning community, and it is only as good as the relationships of the people that make up the classroom. Give your classmates the benefit of the doubt before jumping to conclusions about what is said. Also, be sure to state your opinions, questions, ideas and beliefs in a way that is not intentionally disrespectful to others in the class. While freedom of expression, and challenging assumptions is encouraged in this classroom, hate speech will not be tolerated.
3. Academic Honesty. In all written materials, students will be expected to cite

sources. Plagiarizing and “Copying” from other students will result in a failing grade. Grading for written assignments will follow the Rubric that is handed out on the first day.

4. Students should be aware of everyone in the classroom and enable each person to contribute to the conversation. Likewise, each participant should refrain from dominating class discussion.

Illuminated Manuscript / Weekly Reflections Throughout the course, students will read approximately 1-2 chapters of text per week. This assignment is meant to encourage you and aide you in digesting the course readings. As such, each student will keep a “reading journal”, and create a modified version of an illuminated manuscript.

Illuminated manuscripts come to us from what western historians would call the ancient medieval periods. We can find them from multiple cultures, including: The Euro-Christian world, the Islamic World, Buddhist and Hindi texts from India and many other places, etc. They were created by monks and scribes who would basically “doodle” on the edges of manuscripts as they read them: making their own commentary and notes, but also including images that came to mind as they were reading, thinking, and daydreaming. You can see more about these and the marginal annotations here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marginalia>.

This assignment is a writing to learn assignment and will count toward your weekly participation grade. Each week, every student must choose a pericope (or a small part of each text such as a few sentences or a paragraph) that captures what you think is the most important or interesting part of that week’s reading. First, include the pericope at the top of the text (with the name of the text and page number that it came from), and then tell me in your own words what you think it means and why it is important. Second, paste or create an image/drawing that you think relates to the text and give a brief interpretation as it relates to the text you chose. Third, provide some example of why the text is relevant in terms of our current context (a news story, a video game, a current event, issues of race/class/species extinction/etc.).

There will be a weekly space on Canvas for you to submit your illuminated reading journals. They are due by Friday each week.

NB: All weekly readings should be completed by the time of the weekly reading discussions!

1. Planetary Thinking Essays (WAC Assignment): 50% of the grade (BA/MA)

Each student is expected to write three “planetary thinking” essays. These essays will be distinct but will build upon one another.

Each essay should be 1000-1200 words, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font. You must cite your sources (even if they are just course materials). Any type of plagiarism will not be tolerated. Each essay should contain AT LEAST 4 sources. Each essay *must* cite course materials (lectures and readings)! Each essay may also cite sources outside of the course. Remember not all sources are equally reputable and there is a lot of false information out there. Part of this assignment is to help you sift through information and discern what sources are reputable. A good way to do this is to check claims with multiple, scholarly sources (peer-reviewed articles and academic books). In terms of online sources, remember there is a difference between .edu, .org, .net, and .com addresses. When you are citing a source online, be sure to figure out what type of organization is making a claim and why.

For all essays, follow the citation and formatting guidelines of the Chicago, Turabian Style: <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/citation-guide.html>.

A. **First Essay: Ecological Footprint Essay.** (BA/MA) First, locate yourself within the south Florida bioregion by describing: who were the first peoples of south Florida and what the geological makeup of South Florida Is. Second, complete the Ecological Footprint Assessment (http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/personal_footprint). Write a reflection about your results in your journal including addressing the complex question, “what is a sustainable lifestyle?” **Be sure to read *Grounding Religion*, chs. 15 and 17 for your reflections!** Second, for this essay, I would like you to create an essay with AI, using the search “what is a sustainable lifestyle?” Turn this in as an appendix to your essay, and in the body of your essay describe what the CGI essay wrote and how it is different from some of the reflections on justice and biodiversity in Chapters 15 and 17; in other words, what does the AI essay leave out? Third, offer your reflections on what you might be able to “do” given the results of your ecological footprint, and given the history of the peoples and the bioregion of South Florida. This is a “writing to learn”

assignment meant to help you understand the complex issues surrounding the concept of sustainability and how your own habits relate to sustainability. **See syllabus for due dates.**

Students must make an appointment (in person or virtual) with a Writing Center tutor for the first or second essay (<https://case.fiu.edu/writingcenter/make-an-appointment/>). **You will have to turn in some sort of proof that you went to the writing center for this first essay, which they can provide you with (usually an official email approval or stamp).** It is strongly recommended that you make an appointment early, and take your essay along to that appointment. You can make in-person and on-line appointments at the following url, but do it early because the time-slots fill up: <https://case.fiu.edu/writingcenter/make-an-appointment/index.html>.

You must provide a draft of either your first or second essay for review at the writing center and make an appointment with a writing tutor. This will count as part of your grade for the essay portion of the course.

B. Second Essay: Food Consumption Essay. (BA/MA) First, describe the source of your water, and a few foods that are local to / can be grown/raised in south Florida. Second, write down everything you eat for your largest meal of the day, including: a) the ingredients, b) where the food came from and how much it had to travel to get to you, c) how the people in farms/factories were treated in the making of the food product (this one may not be possible in all cases, but do your best), d) how the crops and animals that make up your food were grown /raised (organically? With pesticides? In factory farms? Small farms? Etc.) Third, read **Chapter 13 of *Grounding Religion*** and reflect on ways that these issues tie into your own ecological footprint from the first assignment. How can you reduce your ecological footprint through your diet? This is a “writing to learn” exercise that is meant to help you explore how your daily food habits have global implications; it is meant to introduce you into the issues of food, globalization, and the environment. **See**

syllabus for due dates.

Students must make an appointment (in person or virtual) with a Writing Center tutor for the first or second essay (<https://case.fiu.edu/writingcenter/make-an-appointment/>). **You will have to turn in some sort of proof that you went to the writing center for this first essay, which they can provide you with (usually an official email approval or stamp).** It is strongly recommended that you make an appointment early, and take your essay along to that appointment. You can make in-person and on-line appointments at the following url, but do it early because the time-slots fill up: <https://case.fiu.edu/writingcenter/make-an-appointment/index.html>.

You must provide a draft of either your first or second essay for review at the writing center and make an appointment with a writing tutor. This will count as part of your grade for the essay portion of the course.

C. Third Essay: *Council of All Beings (BA/MA)*

In this essay, you will adopt an avatar of a local animal or organism. It can be either “indigenous” to the region or “foreign.” First, you need to provide a good introduction to your animal, species, ecosystem, river, etc. This means doing a little work on the history and habitat of the given entity. Second, read the short article (which will be provided) on what totem animals are and reflect on the relationship between an indigenous community and that animal. Third, read “The Council of All Beings” (which will be provided) and from the perspective of the animal / entity persona you have adopted, write a letter to the South Florida human community about what the human community has done to you, and what you need to live a healthy life. This is an “writing to understand” essay, meant to help you “think” from the perspective of animals that are other than human.

For this essay, a draft of your essay must be peer reviewed by someone else in the class, using the rubric for the essays provided in the course. This draft essay should be turned in one week prior to the final essay. Your revised final essay is due by **See syllabus for due dates.**

1. Final Stuff

BA/BS STUDENTS: Eco-Autobiography, 25%

Everyone of us has our own understanding of how we relate to the natural world, and what it means to be human in the world. This essay is an exercise in thinking about your own relationship with the rest of the natural world, and how it has changed over the years. Many of us have a special place (a family farm, a certain vacation spot, a tree, a lake, a city) where we feel “at home” and “more like ourselves.” These “grounding” places often give us confidence, and even feelings of being loved and safe. Our relationship to the places (and the life therein that make them up) often help to shape our own understandings of how we think about humans-and-the-rest-of-the-natural world. Oftentimes these places are the source for some of our deeply held feelings, beliefs, and values. In this 1000-1200 word essay, I want you to think about one of these places and:

- 1) Include an image of you with this place, a sort of “Holy Selfie” if you will. Start by describing that image and what it means to you;
- 2) Discuss how this place has shaped your understanding of what it means to be human in the world; and
- 3) using course materials, describe how your own relationship to that place has changed over the years, and how the course has changed your understanding of it.

Due at scheduled finals time of finals week.

MA STUDENTS: Final Conference Paper 25%

Instead of a traditional “final paper” for the course, we will build up to a conference paper/presentation. The first part of that will be developing a paper abstract, conference paper proposal, and conference paper. We will work to identify a conference in your given area of interest within religious studies, and then write a proposal for that conference. Step 1: Once we have identified a conference and a topic, you will write a paper abstract. **See syllabus for due date.** Step 2: You will create the conference paper proposal based upon the guidelines of the given conference you have chosen. **See syllabus for Due date .** Step 3: Each student is expected to write a final conference paper for the course of no more than 3,000 words, double-spaced, 12pt font, 1-inch margins. This is the maximum length that any conference paper should be, as you will usually have about 20-30 minutes to deliver a paper at a conference. These will be delivered to the class on the final day of the semester as a presentation. **Due at scheduled finals time during finals week.**

As with all written assignments in this class, you must use the Turabian Guide and follow the “Notes and Bibliography” style. This is one of the required texts for the course and you can find a shortened version of it here: <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/turabian-notes-and-bibliography-citation-quick-guide.html/>

Grading

Grading Scale

A 96-100 C+ 76-79

A- 90-95 C 70-75

B+ 87-89 D 60-69

B 83-86 F 59 and below

B- 80-82

Schedule of Topics

COURSE ALIGNMENT MAP (MODULE LEARNING OBJECTIVES, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS & ACTIVITIES ALIGNMENT)					
Module	Course Level Objectives	Module Learning Objectives	Asynchronous Activities	Synchronous Activities	Instructional Materials
Week 1:	Introduction to Course: Sources for Environmental Ethics. Overview of Syllabus and Requirements	Students will know the requirement, readings, and assignment expectations for the course	Readings	Introduction of students to one another; introduction to and questions on course syllabus requirements.	BA/MA: 1 White rea (online)

Week 2:	What is Religion?	Students will be able to identify some of the basic definitions of religion, and get an understanding of how “religion” will be understood in this course	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	<i>BA/MA: Grounding Religion, 1; Rolston chapter 1</i> MA READING
Week 3:	What is Nature?	Students will be able to identify some of the ways that “nature” has been understood by different cultures and peoples over time. Students will be able to understand how “religion and nature” relate to one another in this course.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	<i>BA/MA: Grounding Religion, 2-3; Rolston chapter 2.</i> MA READING

Week 4:	Religion and Nature: The Ancient Near East, Greece and Proto-Modern Western Science	Students will be able to think about the critical, historical development of what we call “religion” and “science” before such concepts existed. Students will learn about the contributions to science and monotheistic thought from the ANE, India, and Greece.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class. First Essay Due by Friday	BA/MA: selections from: “Genesis” Selections from the <i>Enuma El</i> (online); Merchant, <i>Reinventing Eden</i> (online) MA READING
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Week 5:	Religion and Nature: Islamic Thought and the Scientific “Revolution”: Shifting Paradigms	Students will learn about the advances in what came to be known as Modern Science (then “natural philosophy”) during the Golden Age of Islam, falsely called, “the dark ages.” Students will understand how the renaissance and “scientific revolution” would be impossible without the advances made in the Muslim world.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture/ Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	BA/MA: I and Natur book (onli MA READING Abstracts by Friday
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Week 6:	Colonization of land, animals and “others” and the Industrial Revolution	Students will critically examine the ways that the western understandings of “religion” and “science” were tied up with European colonization. Furthermore, students will see the importance of “reductive and productive” models of science for the Industrial Revolution.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	BA/MA: Grounding chapter 4; Leduc, Timothy F "Reconcil to the Ancestors Spirit of Decoloniz in Times c Pandemic MA:
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Week 7:	The Romantic “Return”	Students will learn about all of the different, non-reductive models posed by scientists, philosophers, and even different religions as a reaction to the so-called Industrial Revolution and its environmental costs.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	<i>BA/MA: K Rigby, Reclaimin Romanticism (online)</i>
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Week 8:	Globalization and its Discontents	Students will examine the ways in which the globalization of neo-liberal ideas about economics, nature, and humans has roots in earlier efforts of “Christianizing,” “Colonizing,” and “Enlightening.” Furthermore students will learn to critically assess the pros and cons of living in a globalized world.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class. Second Essay Due by Friday.	<i>BA/MA: Grounding Religion, 7, 10; Rol Chapter 7</i> MA READING
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Week 9:	Human-Animal Relations	Students will critically examine different ways in which human-animal relations are constructed in different cultures and religions. In addition, students will begin to ask ethical questions about the treatment of animals in food production and medical research.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	<i>BA/MA: Grounding Religion</i>, 12, 16. Rolston, Chapter 3 MA READING MA: paper proposals by Friday
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Week 10:	Religion, Gender, Sexuality and Nature	Students will look at come of the different understandings of gender and sexuality (non- binary/ non- heteronormative) that have existed in virtually every culture in recorded human history. In addition, students will analyze the construction of “family values” to mean “hetero- patriarchal” values, especially in monotheistic cultures.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	<i>BA/MA:</i> <i>Grounding</i> <i>Religion,</i> and 6; MA READING
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Week 11:	Religion, Nature and Technology	Students will learn about some of the ethical issues surrounding how technologies shape human- human and human-earth relations. In addition, students will look at the ways in which religious ideas both fuel and resist technological developments.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	<i>Grounding</i> ch. 14. Rolston, chapter 6. MA:
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Week 12:	Religion, Environmental Justice, and Intersectionality	Students will critically analyze the ways in which race, gender, sex, sexuality, and ability have contributed to economic and social inequities, and to inequitable sharing of ecological goods and ills. Students will also look at the role religion has played in constructing and deconstructing notions of race, gender, sex, sexuality, and ability.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class. Third Essay Due by Friday	<i>BA/MA: Grounding Religion, 8-9.</i> MA:
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Week 13:	Religious responses to Global Climate Change	In this unit, students will look at some of the many religious and religiously influenced responses to global climate change around the world. In addition, students will analyze the ways in which religions have been complicit with and fought against the systems that have led to climate change.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	<i>BA/MA:</i> <i>Grounding</i> <i>11; Rolsto</i> <i>chapter 7.</i> <i>MA:</i>
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Week 14:	Religion, Food and Agriculture	In this unit, students will analyze the ethics of food production in the United States. In addition, students will learn about various religiously based ethics that promote food justice and ecologically sound eating practices.	readings; sharing of your question and resource to the course website.	Lecture / Discussion of readings and lecture with whole class.	BA/MA: <i>Grounding</i> <i>17.</i> MA:
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15: FINALS WEEK	The Planetary Future: Grieving Loss and the Hope for Possibilities to come	In this section, students will learn about resources, rituals and organizations that are help to deal with “eco- anxiety” and “ecological grief” associated with climate change and all its consequences. In addition, students will begin to imagine what different futures might be possible for the planetary community.	Work on final projects.	Final lecture BA: Eco- Autobiography due by finals time. MA Students: 10page conference paper due by finals time.	<i>BA/MA: A extra Wor. Final Stuff</i> MA:
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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

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.

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.