



REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: U02

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays: 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.

Owa Ehan 134

UCC Category Description

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

Humanities courses afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy.

Professor Information

Adam Gorelick

Roles: Primary Instructor

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Phone: 3053484100

Office Hours: by appointment

Office Location: DM 383C

Department or Academic Unit: The Honors College/Department of Religious Studies

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

This course introduces methods of critical reflection on religion and some of their applications to fundamental topics such as knowledge, value, the sacred, the self, and human society. We will identify, examine, and respect particular examples from diverse religious traditions while also highlighting broad analytical themes helpful in defining religion generally. We will interpret these cross-cultural themes using methods from various academic disciplines.

Additionally, this course introduces students to the nature and variety of religious phenomena, belief, and practice. It shows the ways religion is studied, a cross-cultural study of the variety of history forms of religious belief and practice, such as deity conceptions at the divine myth, ritual scripture, rites of passage, views of the human problem evil, and the ways and goals of an examination of the challenges faced by religion today.

Why should I care about religion?

Why do bad things happen to good people? Is religion irrelevant in our fast-paced technological world? Does the sacred look the same across traditions? How can the study of religion help us understand current events? Is religion a creative or destructive force? How does the study of religion relate to your major? These are just some of the questions that we will explore throughout the semester.

This course is interested in examining the different expressions, practices and interpretations of religion from an interdisciplinary perspective. Although no particular tradition will be favored, materials from several traditions will be chosen to exemplify thematic topics in the experience of the Sacred. We will also focus on the tenets of religions, dispelling common misconceptions and assumptions and looking into the emergence of new practices among the post-denominational generation.

How can this course help you advance in your career?

You do not need to be personally religious, majoring in religious studies, or in a field within humanities to benefit from this course. Whatever your academic field is, this course will train you to make important connections between your career and the world of the sacred and the profane. You will be able to understand the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization, and the role religion plays in local and international affairs.

Religious illiteracy can greatly impact our ability to understand personal and social motivations behind financial decisions, political engagement, science and technological advancement, environmental and migration policies, family planning, diet and food production, gender relations, war and terrorist attacks, and more. Whether you notice or not, religion is a universal phenomenon that continues to transform and be transformed by our societies.

Our approach is interdisciplinary, which means you will be critically reflecting from many fields of study such as philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, history, economics, gender studies, among others. This enhances your ability to think critically, communicate effectively, respond sensitively, collaborate with others and creatively resolve conflict.

Course Goals

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the interdisciplinary academic analysis of the multidimensional cultural phenomena collectively referred to as religion.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

apply critical thinking skills to various topics in the field of religious studies.

explore the origins, nature, functions, and definitions of religion.

bracket out personal bias to attempt understanding the point of view of religious adherents.

demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems—as pertaining to the development and practice of religions.

analyze topics in religious studies through multi-perspective analyses of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.

demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world and to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.

conduct field research to better understand a religious community.

speak fluently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, etc.

Expectations of the Course

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is subject to minor changes. Students should e-mail the instructor with any questions about the assignments and schedule.

PLEASE NOTE: Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of the University. The principles of academic freedom are integral to the conception of the University as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and the communication of knowledge in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. The University serves the common good through teaching, research, scholarship/creative activities, and service. The fulfillment of these functions rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of teaching, expression, research, and debate. We affirm that academic freedom is a protected right in addition to a faculty member's constitutionally protected freedom of expression and is fundamental to the faculty member's responsibility to seek and to state truth as he or she sees it.

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

PLEASE NOTE: Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism. Ethical academic behavior is an important expectation in this course and plagiarism is a serious offense. You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct and any additional syllabus

language. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and/or unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism. Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization is another form of plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible.

Assignments & Assessments

Attendance and Participation – 15% of final grade

Formal Research Proposal - 10% of final grade

Research Paper - 30% of final grade

Quizzes - 15% of final grade

Midterm Exam - 30% of final grade

Grading

Attendance and Participation – 15% of final grade

Formal Research Proposal - 10% of final grade

Research Paper - 30% of final grade

Quizzes - 15% of final grade

Midterm Exam - 30% of final grade

Grading Scale

94 - 100 A

90 - 93 A-

87 - 89 B+

84 - 86 B

80 - 83 B –

77 - 79 C+

74 - 76 C

60 - 73 D

0 - 59 F

Textbook and Course Materials

Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion. 6th ed.

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: LIVINGSTON

Publisher: Pearson

Publication Date: 2009

Copyright Date: 2009

ISBN 10: 0-13-600380-X

ISBN 13: 978-0-13-600380-9

Chapters/Pages: 16 chapters

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 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.

Schedule of Topics

Week 1 (8/24)

Class introductions, syllabus review, course plan, what is religion?

Reading: Livingston ch. 1

Week 2 (8/31)

Reading: Livingston ch. 2

Week 3 (9/7) 4

Reading: Livingston ch. 3

Week 4 (9/14)

Reading: Livingston ch. 4

Week 5 (9/21)

Reading: Livingston ch. 5

Week 6 (9/28)

Reading: Livingston ch. 6

Week 7 (10/5)

Reading: Livingston ch. 7

Week 8 (10/12) Midterm Exam Questions 10/12 in class

Reading: Livingston ch. 8

Week 9 (10/19) Midterm Essay due 10/19, 11:59 p.m.

Reading: Livingston ch. 9

Week 10 (10/26)

Reading: Livingston ch. 10

Week 11 (11/2) Formal Research Proposal due Friday, 11/2, 11:59 p.m.

Reading: Livingston ch. 11

Week 12 (11/9) No Class on Veterans Day 11/11

Reading: Livingston ch. 12

Week 13 (11/16)

Reading: Livingston ch. 13

Week 14 (11/23) No Class on 11/25 or 11/27 for Thanksgiving Break

Reading: Livingston ch. 14

Week 15 (11/30)

Reading: Livingston ch. 15

Week 16 (12/7) Research Paper due 12/11, 11:59 p.m.

Finals Week – No regular class meetings, no final exam

Policies & Resources

Please review the [FIU's Policies webpage](#). The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses. For additional information, please visit [FIU's Policy and Procedure Library](#).

As a member of the FIU community, you are expected to be knowledgeable about the behavioral expectations set forth in the [FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code](#).

Gordon Rule Course

This is a Gordon Rule course which means you must demonstrate “college level writing

skills” throughout your assignments. You will not receive any credit as a Gordon rule

course for a C- or lower upon completion of this course. Your written assignments must

show good control of grammar, style, and structure. Your papers must have a clear thesis, supporting material, and a conclusion.

Guidelines for Written Work

All written work must consistently adhere to the MLA Formatting and Style Guide. Students are advised to carefully proofread all papers before submitting them. All students are encouraged to take advantage of the University resources for writing to be found in the Center for Excellence in Writing, a full-service writing center providing writing assistance and feedback to university students. For more information, go to <http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/Links> to an external site..

All written work is submitted through Canvas as turn-it-in assignments, which means that the instructor will be aware of plagiarism. Plagiarism can result in expulsion from the university and will have a negative effect on your entire career. All written work must include your name, Panther ID number, course number and the name of the professor on the title page. It must be double spaced, have 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) and be typed in 12 point font, Times New Roman or Calibri.

Religious Holidays

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

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.