

REL 2011: Introduction to Religion

Professor: Grisel d'Elena
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Office Hours: Appointment Only

About your Professor

Grisel d'Elena is an Adjunct Professor for Religious Studies and Women's and Gender Studies at FIU. Professor d'Elena is also the Director of Panthers Care at the Dean of Students Office. She is also an advisor to the Board of Directors for U.N. Women | USA | Miami and a mentor for National Voices for Equality, Education and Enlightenment (NVEEE). She has performed fieldwork abroad with U.N. officials, refugee coalition members and ethnic minorities, specifically in Southeast Asia, where she began to investigate the minority women and ethnic Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. As victims of systematic, state-sponsored persecution, she began to question why they faced such discrimination. This question led to the Buddhist 969 Movement in Myanmar, which contributes to the isolation and oppression of the Rohingya and minority women in Myanmar. Prof. d'Elena was able to interview Time Magazine's "Buddhist Terror" U Ashin Wirathu and provide feedback directly from the source of the violence for her ethnographic work. This led to several conferences and publications to raise awareness to the issues the Rohingya face in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Her work has been shared in both national and international academic conferences, colleges, non-profits, and local outreach programs for the youth about issues related to race, class, religion, violence, and politics.

Course Description and Purpose

This is a Gordon Rule class that serves as an introduction to the study of religion. The course explores the ways in which people understand and express religious experience. This course's scope includes the exploration of concepts such as deity, theodicy, cosmology, ritual, as well as religious social implications in society.

Throughout the course the student will also be exposed to specific rituals, myths, doctrines, ethics and symbols from various different world religions and cultures.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the basic history, development, and belief systems of various religious traditions.
- Recognize religious themes and concepts found in other aspects of daily life.
- Identify the meaning behind religious concepts

- Evaluate their own religious views in regards to other cultures and paradigms of the religious
- Apply critical thinking to various topics in the field of the religious.
- Think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary.
- Perform field research to better understand a particular religious community.

Course Work: Full descriptions, rubrics, dates etc..see below and posted on Canvas.

- **Worldview Essay:** 15 points. Formal essay format, 1000 words min.
- **Site Visit:** 20 points Formal essay format, 1000 words min.
- **Final Exam:** There will be 1 Multiple Choice exam, worth 20 points.
- **Project:** 20 points, 1500-word min. You will choose a visual topic (e.g. artist, art subject, architecture, music video, video game) that highlights at least 4 of the 6 aspects of religion discussed in class. Formats for project can include paper, video, PowerPoint or a unique proposal.
- **Attendance and Class Participation:** 10 points (Only 3 **excused** absences are allowed before I deduct points).
- **Class Discussions:** 15 points. Do your homework and you'll be fine.

The final week of class will be utilized for the final project and exam.

Global Learning Objectives Targeted

- Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives
- Assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
- Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world

Important Information

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- Accessibility and Accommodation
- Academic Misconduct Statement

*The professor reserves the right to change or modify the syllabus at any time during the semester.

*This course fulfills the **Gordon Rule requirement**; a “C” or better must be earned to receive credit for this course.

*This course fulfills the **Global Learning Foundations requirement**.

To learn more about Global Learning requirements, [please click here](#).

Summer Sections of this Course: *Please note that this course is a 15-week semester compressed into 6 or 12 weeks. Time management and organizational skills is key to successfully completing this course with minimal stress. Plan your weeks strategically, in order to complete assignments by their respective due dates.*

Textbook

Title: Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion

Author: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Prentice Hall, Edition: 6th

ISBN: 013600380X

ISBN-13: 9780136003809

COURSE POLICIES

Late Papers

Late submissions will **NOT** be accepted for full credit, except in cases of genuine and documented emergencies.

Avoid leaving assignment/quiz submissions for the last minute before a deadline. “Heavy user traffic” during this timeframe may cause delays and/or errors, which can lead to students missing crucial deadlines.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus by means of announcements or messages with ample time allowed for students to respond and adjust appropriately.

Assignment Submissions

All work has to be submitted through Canvas. Canvas does not allow instructors to submit on behalf of students. Please do not email your assignments to your instructor.

If you encounter errors or issues submitting an assignment, click on “Help” inside Canvas Course (located on the left-hand panel inside the course) and select Chat with Canvas Support (student). A live chat with Canvas support can fix the issue immediately.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

1. A written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
3. Paraphrasing from another source without proper

Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity

Offenders will receive a grade of “F” for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly the course.

**Students may not submit work from a previous semester or from another class for this assignment or any other assignment in this course. It will be flagged for plagiarism by Turnitin.

Extra Credit

10 points max per student. I will provide lectures you can attend in order to receive it.

Academic Conduct

- Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a zero. Plagiarism is 1) copying any written material without using proper citation – this includes material from the internet, our text and my notes; 2) incorporating another person's ideas without giving proper credit/citation (literary theft). 3) Copying or “fixing up” a previous paper written by yourself or another student.
- 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 to 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 educational mission of the University. 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 Handbook.

Citations Bibliographies and citations should be in MLA or Chicago Style format.

Dates

Week 1 and 2

Course Content Calendar

Class Work: Review and familiarize yourself with the course syllabus, calendar of due dates, and how content items are setup under Modules and Assignments.

Section I - The Study of Religion

Topic: Defining Religion. Why Are Humans Religious? Why Study Religion?

Read: Chapter 1 p. 1-14

Topic: The Perspective of the Student—Commitment and Objectivity. The Ways Religion Is Studied. Interpreting and Explaining Religion.

Read: Chapter 2 p. 15-34

DUE: Introduce Yourself in class discussion

HW: Watch Samsara

Class Work:

Analysis of movie: Samsara

Discussion of the following topics:

- Why are humans religious?
- Why Study Religion?
- Interpreting and explaining religion

Dates
Week 3

Course Content Calendar

Section II. Universal Forms of Religious Experience and Expression

Topic: The Concept of Sacred Power. The Ambivalence of Sacred Power. The Holy as Mysterium Tremendum and Fascinans. Sacred Space and Sacred Time. Religion as Ultimate Concern.

Read: Chapter 3 p. 35-52

DUE: Write Worldview

Week 4

DUE: Worldview Essay

Class Work: Discussion on sacred power, sacred space and time and Mysterium Tremendum.

Topic: Symbolic Communication. Religious Symbols. Metaphor, Parable, and Story. Religious Myths. Models and Doctrines.

Read: Chapter 4 p. 53-73

Week 5

Class Work: Discuss Site Visits and pick sites.

Topic: Ritual Action. Types of Sacred Ritual. Ritual and Sacrifice. Rituals as Sacraments.

Dates

Course Content Calendar

Read: Chapter 5 p. 74-95

Topic: The Pervasive Role of Sacred Scripture. Using the Term Scripture. Some Distinctive Features of Sacred Scripture. The Authority and Canonicity of Scripture. The Reception and Uses of Scripture. The Interpretation of Scripture.

Read: Chapter 6 p. 96-123

DUE: Start Site Visits

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Week 6

Class Work: Class participation exercise on the interpretation of scripture.

Topic: The Reciprocal Relationship between Religion and Society. Types of Religious Communities. Voluntary Religious Communities. Protest and Change in Voluntary Religious Communities. The Sect. The Cult: New Religious Movements.

Read: Chapter 7 p. 124-150

****Have you visited a religious site yet?
Your Site Visit Essay is due soon!***

Week 7

Class Work: Presentation / Site Visits

Section III. Universal Components of a Religious Worldview

Topic: Polytheism and the Worship of Nature. Dualism. Pantheism and Monism. Monotheism.

Dates

Course Content Calendar

**Have you visited a religious site yet?
Your Site Visit Essay is due soon!*

Weeks 8 and 9

Class Work: Discussion on Religion and Society: Social Justice and Evolution of Religion

Discussion on Polytheism, Pantheism, Monotheism

Action Exercise: Today, we start a cult. Just Kidding. Maybe.

Topic: The Practical Basis of Cosmogony. Emergence or Procreation from a Primal Substance or Being. The Sexual Union of a Primal Male and Female. Creation by Conflict and the Ordering of Chaos. Creation by a Divine Craftsman.

Creation by Decree or from Nothing. The Rejection of Cosmogonic Speculation. Cosmogony Today.

Read: Chapter 9 p. 183-210

Week 10

Class Work: Lets talk about science and religion, philosophy and religion, balance in religion, good, evil and sex.

Topic: Modern Views of Our Human Plight. Stoicism. Christianity. Theravada Buddhism. Confucianism.

Read: Chapter 10 p. 211-234

Week 11

Dates

Course Content Calendar

Class Work: Presentation on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Topic: The Persistent Demand for Theodicy. Theodicy of "Mystical Participation." A Future, This-Worldly Theodicy. Other-Worldly Theodicy. Dualism. The Karma-Samsara Theodicy. Monotheistic Theodicies.

Read: Chapter 11 p. 235-258

Topic: Virtues and Obligations. The Sources and Norms of Moral Authority.

Read: Chapter 12 p. 259-286

DUE: Site Visit

Week 12

Class Work: Discussion on Moral Authority.

TBH: I'm just going to boss you around and tell you what to do for three hours today. If you don't resist, I'll let you play god too.

Topic: Ways of Salvation and Liberation. The Way of Grace through Faith. The Way of Devotion. The Way of Action and Obligation. The Way of Mediation and Insight. Goals of Salvation and Liberation. Psychic Wholeness and a Healthy Social Order. Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life. Samadhi and Nirvana.

Read: Chapter 13 p. 287-338

DUE: Work on your Project and Study for Final

Dates

Week 13 and 14

Course Content Calendar

Class Presentation: Buddhist Terrorism Presentation and Secular presentation

Section IV. The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity View
Topic: Secularization and Pluralism. The Reactions of Religious Fundamentalisms Today. The Characteristics of Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism. The Status and Roles of Women in Religion. Relations between Religion and State.

Read: Chapters 14-15 p. 339-398

FINAL PROJECTS DUE NEXT WEEKS

Week 15 & 16

Due: In Class project presentations!

Take Final Exam - will only be available Monday- Sunday till 11:59pm

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 of belief.