

**REL 2011 - U01**  
**INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION**  
**SPRING 2023**

**Meeting Location:** Labor Center 301

**Meeting Time:** Tu & Th 9:30 am-10:45 am

**Instructor:**

**Teaching Assistant**

Dr. Alfonso Matas  
Department of Religious Studies

N/A

**Office:** DM 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

**Office Hours:** By appointment every Tu and Th before/after class

**Email:** CANVAS Inbox

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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 OBJECTIVES**

- Explain the basic history, development, and belief systems of various religious traditions.
- Recognize religious themes and concepts found in other field of study
- Identify the meaning behind religious concepts and practices
- Evaluate their own religious views regarding other cultures and paradigms of religious belief and practice
- Apply critical thinking to various topics in the field of religious studies
- Perform field research to better understand a particular religious
- 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

## **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

## **Coursework:**

Chapter Quizzes (20% of grade) – Due each week

Worldview Essay (5% of grade): 1000 words – Due Feb 5th

Midterm Exam (20% of grade) – March 14 (taken online)

One-page preliminary Site Visit Report (20% of grade): 2000 words – Due April 1st

Final RE Site Visit Report (5% of final grade) – Due April 15th

Final Exam (20% of grade) – Due April, Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> (taken online)

Attendance (5% of grade)

Class Participation (5% of grade)

**Textbook:**

*Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*

Author: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Prentice Hall, Edition: 6th ISBN: 013600380X ISBN-13: 9780136003809

**1. INDIVIDUAL (ONLINE) CANVAS QUIZZES (20% OF FINAL GRADE)**

These are short multiple choice, True/false, and/or short answer quizzes on the week's content that you will be taken individually, online after the class chapter is covered. The quizzes documentaries and visual media students are required to watch before class. No make-ups are allowed for these quizzes. Even if you are not planning to attend the lecture, you are required to take the quiz online before class time. Late submissions will not be accepted, so plan accordingly.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements. All assessments will auto-submit when (1) the timer runs out OR (2) the closing date/time is reached, whichever happens first. For example, if a quiz has a closing time of 5:00 pm but the student begins the quiz at 4:55 pm, the student will only have 5 minutes to complete the quiz. Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance, please contact FIU Online Support Services.

**2. WORLDVIEW ESSAY (5% OF FINAL GRADE)**

This is a 1000 personal worldview essay. Further guidelines for this project can be found in CANVAS.

**3. MID-TERM EXAM (20% OF FINAL GRADE)**

This is 24 question multiple choice which included three short essay questions covering the material the first 7 textbook chapters plus class content.

**4. INDIVIDUAL REL SITE VISIT REPORT (20% OF FINAL GRADE)**

For this individual project students are required to write a term paper (5 pages) based on their fieldwork in a chosen religious site. Further guidelines for this project can be found in CANVAS. (Global Awareness, Global Perspective, and Global Engagement).

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**5. PRELIMINARY SITE VISIT REPORT (5% OF FINAL GRADE)**

This is a one-page report students are required to submit prior to attending your final visit to the religious site you have selected (read the project description in CANVAS).

**6. FINAL EXAM - ONLINE (20% OF FINAL GRADE)**

The final Exam is a multiple-choice exam. You will take it online during finals week. It is a timed test. It will test your overall understanding/learning in the course. It will not be based on memorization. It will be based on your individual assignments, team activities/discussions, and key learning points in the course. You can find the detailed guidelines and exam review on CANVAS.

#### **7. ATTENDANCE - (5% OF FINAL GRADE)**

#### **8. CLASS PARTICIPATION - (5% OF FINAL GRADE)**

##### **Attendance policy:**

Attendance: all students are expected to be prepared and to be on time. Students are expected to treat the instructor, as well as other students with dignity and respect, especially in cases where a diversity of opinion arises. Students who engage in disruptive behavior are subject to disciplinary action, including removal from the course. Attendance will be graded and will represent 5% of your final grade. If you need to miss a class due to illness (medical doctor's note), religious observances or team participation (official paperwork) you must notify me prior to the class. In order to receive attendance credit for justified irregular attendances student must send me a CANVAS mail identifying in detail the missed calendar dates and provide as well a justifiable excused. If this step is omitted the student will receive a grade commensurate with FIU Check In records. Your attendance score is calculated by the number of times you attend class, divided by total class meetings. It is your responsibility to make sure you are signed in for attendance. Attendance will be taken through an electronic attendance solution called FIU Check-in. If you leave class early or arrive to class late, it will be reflected in your attendance score.

##### **COURSE POLICIES:**

**CANVAS - My Grades:** Check your grades periodically. It is your responsibility to check your grades on CANVAS and to inform me on missing grades/assignments before the semester ends.

**ACADEMIC CONDUCT.** 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 to honestly 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.

**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 citing them. Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity at <http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm>. 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.

**TARDINESS:** Assignments received after the deadline will lose 1/2 or 1 grade; one week and over 1 full grade or more.

**SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS:** Please notify the faculty prior to or immediately upon commencement of this course about your accommodation needs as in accordance with FIU policy. You will be accommodated accordingly.

### **Accessibility and Accommodation**

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305-348-3532 or visit them at the Main Campus (see below).

### **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.

### **Covid 19**

For the latest, please check the COVID Information link on your CANVAS' navigation bar.

### **Academic Freedom**

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.

### **Getting Help**

Please come to me with any problems or questions because I want to help you succeed in my class. Beyond the instructor, students may benefit from other resources FIU offers. Here are some frequent obstacles students face, and the programs and services that FIU provides to assist with the obstacle.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):**

**I'm having trouble with a writing assignment. I can't get started, organize my ideas, develop this beyond the first two pages, etc.**

[Center for Excellence in Writing](#) (more casually called the Writing Center): During any stage of the writing process, the writing consultants at the writing center are available to help you set clear goals, bring focus to your ideas, and encourage creative and critical thinking. I may, at any point in the semester, recommend you visit the writing center. However, I do actively encourage all students to take advantage of this great resource. Even the most confident writers can benefit from the help our writing center provides.

**I'm having trouble reading these academic articles. I am finding it difficult to study effectively. My high school study strategies aren't working in college.**

[University Learning Center](#): The Learning Center also has peer tutors available to help you. The Learning Center is the place to go if you want assistance focused on reading or study skills.

**I'm really stressed out and it's affecting my classwork or my life. I'm having personal problems that are interfering with school.**

[Counseling Services](#): If you find your academic performance (or just your daily life) is hindered because of anxiety, stress, depression, relationship issues, or other personal struggles, FIU offers Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to help you. CAPS consists of licensed psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and trainees with expertise in dealing with student concerns and development. Registered students are eligible to utilize these services and participate in the programs.

**I have a diagnosed disability and need accommodations to do my best.**

[Disability Resource Center](#): Any student with a diagnosed disability has access to special accommodations through the DRC. You must register with the DRC to receive such accommodations.

**I am encountering technical problems in my Canvas course.**

[LMS Help Support Services](#): Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring. I can usually help you if you are having a problem with a very specific assignment.

However, if you are having trouble accessing Canvas or if you are noticing something that seems like a technical glitch, please contact Canvas support.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

*\*Week dates do not represent calendar weeks. They indicate the beginning/end of Chapter lectures*

#### **WEEK 1 - JAN Tu 10, Th 12**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 1

What is religion? Why are humans religious?

#### **WEEK 2 - JAN Th 18, Tu 23**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 2

Ways of Studying Religion

**Quiz 1 - Chapters 1 & 2** due Jan 18 before 9 am

#### **WEEK 3 - JAN Th 25, Tu 30**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 3

The Sacred and the Holy

**Quiz 2 - Chapter 3** due Jan 25 before 9 am

#### **WEEK 4 - FEB Th 1, Tu 6**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 4

Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine

**Quiz 3 - Chapter 4** due Feb 1 before 9 am

**Worldview essay due! - Feb 5**

#### **WEEK 5 - FEB Th 8, Tu 13**

Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 5

Sacred Ritual

**Quiz 4 - Chapter 5** due Feb 8 before 9 am

**WEEK 6 - FEB Th 15, Tu 20**

Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 6

Sacred Scripture

**Quiz 5 - Chapter 6** due Feb 15 before 9 am

**WEEK 7 - FEB Th 22 March Tu 6**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 7

Society and the Sacred: The Social Formations and Transformations of Religion

**Quiz 6 - Chapter 7** due Feb 22 before 9 am

**WEEK 8 - MARCH Th 8, Tu 13**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 8

Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality

**Quiz 7 - Chapter 8** due March 8 before 9 am

**Midterm Exam due March 14 @ 11:59 pm (taken online)**

**WEEK 9 - MARCH Th 15, Tu 20**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 9

Cosmogony: Order of the Natural and Social Order

**Quiz 8 - Chapter 9** due March 15 before 9 am

**WEEK 10 - MARCH Th 22, Tu 27**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 10

Views of the Human Problem

**Quiz 9 - Chapter 10** due March 22 before 9 am

**WEEK 11 - MARCH Th 29, APRIL Tu 3**



Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 11

Theodicy: Encountering Evil

**Quiz 10 - Chapter 11** due March 29 before 9 am

**Preliminary, One-page, REL Site Visit Report due Aril 1 @ 11:59 pm**

**WEEK 12 - APRIL Th 5, Tu 10**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 12

Ethics: Foundations of Moral Action

**Quiz 11 - Chapter 12** due April 5 before 9 am

**WEEK 13 - APRIL Th 12, Tu 17**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 13

Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation

**Quiz 12 - Chapter 13** due April 12 before 9 am

**Religious Site Visit report - Due April 15th**

**WEEK 14 - APRIL Th 19**

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 14

Secularization – New Religious Revitalization Movements – Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism

**Quiz 13 - Chapter 14** due April 19 before 9 am

**WEEK 15 - EXAM WEEK APRIL Tu 24**

**Final Exam April, Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> (taken online)**