

**REL 3308 Studies in World Religions**  
**Spring 2023 Learning Guide**  
**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

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Instructor: Sharma Dammar

Contact: Canvas Inbox (preferred) & sdammar@fiu.edu (secondary)

**When and Where do we meet?**

Class Discussions: Classes will meet face-to-face on Thursdays,  
6:30p.m - 9:05p.m. at the Biscayne Bay Campus, Academic Center One,  
room 262. Course updates will be delivered as an announcement via Canvas.

Office Hours: By appointments on Thursdays, 9:05p.m. to 9:40p.m. at the  
Biscayne Bay Campus, immediately after a class meeting ends.

**What is this Course About?**

This course will cover various religious traditions of the world: Native American Religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Their major teachings will be discussed in detail and set in their proper historical and cultural contexts. Similarities and differences between the religions will be considered, as well as each religion's unique contribution to world civilization. In addition, we will spend some time at the beginning of the semester discussing what is religion and how do we study it in an academic setting.

**Objectives of the Course**

This course satisfies the University Core Curriculum for Humanities Group Two (FIU required) as supported by the following learning outcomes for our course:

1. To provide the student with the "raw materials" for the study of religion by immersing the student in the beliefs, doctrines, rituals, symbols, and (select) scriptures of some of the major world religions.
2. To facilitate the informed cross-cultural comparison and evaluation of ways of being religious by focused study of select world religions.
3. To widen, enhance and enrich the intellectual and spiritual horizons of the student by exposure to the spiritual beauty, vitality, coherence, plausibility and richness of non-Christian, non-Western approaches to the transcendent or ultimate reality.
4. To encourage the student to enter sympathetically into the worldview of the religious traditions selected for study.
5. To provide the context for dialogue and discussion that will enable the student to live in an enormously complex, interdependent, and religiously plural world with patience, understanding, and appreciation for that which is different, and in some cases irreconcilably different, from his or her own "worldview."

### **Why Should I Care about Religion?**

Maybe Jesus was a Buddhist monk. Where exactly did your yoga class come from? Why are Native Americans some of the best eco-advocates today? Is Judaism a religion, a culture, or a tribe? Is God dead? God may be alive, but is he a woman? It might be good to wonder if religion is a force for good or evil to begin with? Can we still be spiritual without being religious?

These are not just entertaining questions, but are highly relevant to your personal and professional development in our globalized world. In this interdisciplinary course, we will explore these questions and many more that emerge as we investigate humanity, religion, and the cosmos.

### **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 explore the variety of religious expressions and frameworks that shape societies around the world, and the role religion plays in local and international affairs.

Religious literacy will 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.

### **Equity and Diversity Statement**

This course recognizes and celebrates the vast array of individual and group differences in our community. To that end, this course ensures a curriculum rich with course reading materials, instructional content, and learning experiences from communities that have historically been marginalized or ignored. Prejudices and discrimination create challenges and hurdles that continue to shape the lives of our students.

Faculty and students condemn racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, ageism, religious intolerance, and other forms of oppression. We are committed to ending the systemic privileges and injustices embedded in our institutions, culture, and everyday life. Any behaviors that threaten, harass, or discriminate against another person will not be tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary actions. Together, we will cultivate a diverse and inclusive learning environment. Hate will not persist in us.

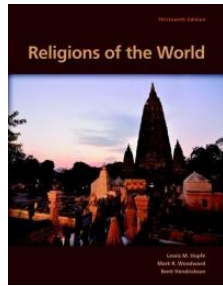
### **How will you succeed in this course?**

**Examinations (50%):** Exam #1 (25%)  
Exam #2 (25%)

**Assignments (50%):** Comparative Reaction Paper on Native American Religions, African Religions, Shinto, and Baha'i (25%)  
Religious Visitation Paper (25%)

**Extra Credit:** 5 points

## Required Text



By: Lewis M. Hopfe; Mark R. Woodward; Brett Hendrickson

Publisher: Pearson Edition: 13<sup>th</sup>

Print ISBN: 9780133793826, 0133793826 or  
eText ISBN: 9780133794229, 0133794229

*\* Other reading materials will be provided by the instructor.*

Religions of the World

## Course Breakdown

Course Landmarks	Items	Points	Percentage of final Grade
Academic Papers	2	200	50
Examinations	2	200	50
Total			100%

There will be **two exams**, a **religious visitation paper**, and a **comparative reaction paper on Native American Religions, African Religions, Shinto, and Baha'i** where each is worth  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your final grade. Examinations will entail true and false, fill in the blanks, and multiple-choice questions. Exams will be available via Canvas during a class date and time slot. **The religious visitation paper and the comparative reaction paper are mandatory as this course has a writing requirement. Failure to submit one and/or both writing assignments on time, via Canvas, will result in zero points for the papers as well as zero points for Exam #2.** Extra credit is optional and can only elevate the final grade by 5 points. It is your duty to attend class meetings and complete all graded items before this course is over.

<u>Coursework</u>	<u>Total Points</u>	<u>Percentage of Final Grade</u>
Exam #1	100	25%
Exam #2	100	25%
Comparative Reaction Paper:		
Native American Religions, African Religions, Shinto, and Baha'i	100	25%
Religious Visitation Paper	100	25%

## Grading Scale

A	=	95 – 100	B	=	83 – 86.99	C	=	70 – 76.99
A-	=	90 – 94.99	B-	=	80 – 82.99	D	=	60 – 69.99
B+	=	87 – 89.99	C+	=	77 – 79.99	F	=	below 60

## Examination Policy

Exams will cover material from lectures as well as from the assigned textbook. In order to obtain a good grade on exams students need to read and understand material from the chapters of the assigned textbook. It is the student's duty to contact the professor if he/she needs to make up an exam. Make-up exams will only be approved by the discretion of the professor. Students will only be able to take a make-up exam due to legitimate reasons. In order to take a make-up exam, students will need to provide reasonable

verification to a suitable department within FIU as to why he/she missed the scheduled exam. There are no make-ups if you miss Exam #2 unless there is/was a true emergency that restricted you from taking it. In other words, if you are absent, you will not be able to take Exam #2 which will result in a failing grade.

### **Goals**

- Foster tolerance of and appreciation for differences in human culture and diverse religious expressions.
- Develop fluency in ancient and contemporary religious history.
- Expand ability to apply different methodologies to the study of religion.
- Create an atmosphere of self-exploration and self-understanding.
- Nurture creative and critical thinking.
- Identify the relevance of studying religion to contemporary life, human thought, and professional development

### **Gordon Rule Requirement**

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write a minimum of two major assignments. Each paper will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using MLA Style and long quotes should be avoided. Please be aware that papers with an originality score of over 35% similarity will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur additional penalties, up to and including receiving an F (0 points). A grade of “C” or higher must be earned to receive credit for this course.

### **Global Learning Objectives**

As a Global Learning course, students will meet the following objectives through text readings, assignments, and class discussions:

1. Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
2. Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions.
3. Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

### **Plagiarism**

Do you know what plagiarism is? Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by asking me, a representative from the writing center or our library to explain. Many students end up plagiarizing material because they do not know what it entails. In short, 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.
3. Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations.

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> if you need further clarification. Offenders will receive a grade of F (0 points) for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly for the course. Please be aware: Previously submitted papers are not allowed, even if it is your own work and even if you are retaking this class. You may not “reuse” papers.

## Course Policies

1. Read each assignment prior to the date on which it is scheduled to be discussed. Students are expected to complete the required readings for each session and formulate Discussion Points concerning the readings to facilitate class discussion.
2. Take exams and turn in assignments at the scheduled times. Late submission of assignments is unacceptable and will result in 0 points.
3. Be on time to our class meetings. If a student must arrive late or leave early, the student should be courteous and observe silence.
4. Be respectful of the beliefs of others. This is of utmost importance in a world religions class. This course acknowledges and honors the vast array of individual and group disparities in our community. In this course, there is no place for racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, ageism, religious intolerance, and other forms of oppression. Any behaviors that threaten, harass, or discriminate against another individual will not be tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary actions. Together, we will embrace a diverse and inclusive learning environment.
5. Know and abide by FIU's Student Conduct and Honor Code. Cheating and plagiarizing will result in an "F" for this course.
6. Turn off all cellular phones. Texting is not permitted in the classroom.
7. The use of any recording software and/or device (visual and/or audio) are prohibited.
8. Silence is golden when your professor/classmate is speaking. Essentially, one individual at a time has the right to speak unless otherwise instructed by your professor.
9. Disrespectful behavior (sleeping, using headphones as well as using electronic devices to oppose academic purposes, verbal disruption, and physical disruption) is unacceptable and may result in removal from the course.
10. Physical contact with your professor is forbidden such as hugs, handshakes, etc.

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**Note:** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor. Changes will be announced in a fair and timely fashion. Assignments, homework, and exams will be adapted for the benefit of the student; students will always know of any changes ahead of time. Monitor Canvas consistently to keep up with any potential changes or modifications to our class as we progress through the semester, especially if you are not sure, were absent, or were late. Check the "Announcements" section of your Canvas account daily for possible course updates.

## **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 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.

## **Academic Freedom and Integrity**

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.

## **Attendance Policy**

Class attendance is an expectation of this course and attendance will be tracked. Any student who misses **more than 3 class meetings** will be subject to losing one letter grade for the course. Students may be excused at the professor's discretion for legitimate reasons to be absent, such as verified illnesses, emergencies, etc. Reasonable verification as to the nature of the absence must be provided to a suitable department within FIU. Being absent because of work, vacations, or sport activities will not be excused. It is the student's responsibility to obtain missed notes and assignments. **Communicating with your professor before you are absent is a key to your success.**

## **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 Graham Center GC 190 (BBC: WUC 139, 305-919-5345).

For additional assistance please contact FIU's Disability Resource Center, <https://dasa.fiu.edu/all-departments/disability-resource-center/>

**COURSE OUTLINE**

<b>CLASS DATE</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>
January 12	Welcome Introduction to Class
January 19	Dimensions of Religion Fieldworks Instructions for Religious Visitation Paper Video
January 26	The Study of Religions
February 2	Hinduism
February 9	Buddhism
February 16	Jainism
February 23	Sikhism <b>Comparative Reaction Paper (Due 2/25/2023 via Canvas)</b>
March 2	<b>Spring Break (No Class)</b>
March 9	Videos <b>Exam #1</b>
March 16	Daoism & Confucianism
March 23	Judaism
March 30	Christianity <b>Religious Visitation Paper (Due 4/1/2023 via Canvas)</b>
April 6	Videos
April 13	Islam
April 20	Videos <b>Exam #2</b> <b>Extra Credit Paper (Optional &amp; Due via Canvas)</b>
April 27	Closing Lecture & Evaluations
<b>EXAM</b>	<b>SUBJECT ON EXAM</b>
<b>Exam One</b>	The Study of Religions Hinduism Buddhism Jainism Sikhism
<b>Exam Two</b>	Daoism Confucianism Judaism Christianity Islam

## **Instructions for Comparative Reaction Paper on Native American Religions, African Religions, Shinto, and Baha'i**

The reaction paper should be typed after reading the chapters on Native American Religions, African Religions, Shinto, along with Baha'i. **Your Comparative Reaction Paper is due by 11:59p.m. (Miami-Dade local time), via Canvas on February 25, 2023.**

Use Microsoft Word, times new roman font, font size should be 12, and for each page include a right aligned header with your last name and page#. Double space your lines excluding your heading. Only your heading should be single spaced. Your paper should be divided into **2 sections** with section titles in bold such as **Compare & Contrast and Global Perspective.**

The first page should consist of your full name, course id, reference number, days of week your class meets with time, my name, and the title of your paper. Please refer to my sample document for a sample heading format.

**It is required to use the Writing Center for assistance in the writing process.**  
<https://case.fiu.edu/writingcenter/>

**4-5 pages in length with a requirement of 1000 – 1250 words. There is no need for a title page. Include at least 2 peer review sources to support your comparison, contrast, and/or global perspective. A works cited page is required with peer review sources as well as your textbook as a source.**

Leave 1" margins on the top, bottom, left, and right.

Use single spaces after full stops, commas, exclamation marks, etc.

Indent each paragraph.

Do not forget to use the spelling and grammar check tool that is offered by Microsoft Word.

You are required to submit your paper by 2 ways, Turnitin.com, and as an attachment in Canvas.

**Compare & Contrast** Choose 4 dimensions from the 7 dimensions of religion such as narrative/mythic, ritual, social/institutional, ethical/legal, doctrinal/philosophical, art/material, and experiential/emotional. For your Comparative Reaction Paper, make sure to include in bold the 4 dimensions of your choice. Also, to endorse your comparison and contrast, please state the page numbers from your textbook where you have found supportive information regarding each of your 4 dimensions. For the first paragraph, identify and state 2 dimensions to cover 2 chapters for a comparison. Elaborate on the similarities from both chapters. For the second paragraph, identify and state 2 dimensions to cover the remaining 2 chapters for a disparity. Elaborate on the dissimilarities from the remaining 2 chapters.

**Global Perspective** After perusing through both chapters, state all the global issues and trends that comes to your mind that are interrelated with the development and practice of religions. Based on what you have read, what would you change religiously in the world of religions to pacify religious issues in the contemporary world?



## Instructions for Religious Visitation Paper

Review the lecture slides on the topic of Fieldworks, which is a necessity for students that have missed the lecture on Fieldworks. The paper should be typed about your experience from a live streaming religious service/event via online or a prerecorded religious service/event that is somewhat current. You should not incorporate personal feelings/bias into your research. **Your Religious Visitation Paper is due by 11:59p.m. (Miami-Dade local time), via Canvas on April 1, 2023.**

You should visit a religious site/event of a religion other than your own by using the internet. Students that are Christians should not visit a Catholic site/event for this paper, as well as Catholics should not visit a Christian site/event for this paper. You are required to visit a religious site/event live via online. If you have had an experience from religious sites/events before the lecture on fieldworks, your prior religious experiences will not be admissible for your research and writings. Religious stores and external resources (online material, books, someone else's experience/accounts other than your own) does not count as a visitation site or event for the site visitation paper.

For health and safety purposes, it is best to encounter the religious experience via online for your site visitation paper. Experiencing a live streaming religious service/event via online is highly recommended. Many religious institutions might provide a live stream through their website, social media, or elsewhere on the internet. After exploring, if you still cannot come across something solid to live stream, I will make an exception for the entire class. The offer is on the table to watch a prerecorded religious service/event via online if it is somewhat current, as it should be something from 2023 or within 5 years old. Please explore online for it is part of the preliminary research process. If a student is not affiliated with any religion, the individual is free to observe any religion desired. I understand that an online religious experience is restricted in the sections of visuals and audio, as there are limitations, the lenses/microphone of a camcorder/webcam can only reveal captured footage to us. Please do your best. I am aware of the circumstances.

**It is required to use the Writing Center for assistance in the writing process.**  
<https://case.fiu.edu/writingcenter/>

**4-5 pages in length with a requirement of 1250 – 1500 words. There is no need for a title page. Include at least 2 peer review sources to support your preliminary research, 5 bold sections, and/or conclusions. A works cited page is required with peer review sources.**

Use Microsoft Word, times new roman font, font size should be 12, and for each page include a right aligned header with your last name and page#. Double space your lines excluding your heading. Only your heading should be single spaced. Your paper should be divided into **5 sections** with section titles such as **Background Information, General Information, Account of the Service, Analysis, and Conclusions.**

The first page should consist of your full name, course id, reference number, days of week your class meets with time, my name, and your title of research. Please refer to my sample document for more information.

Leave 1" margins on the top, bottom, left, and right.

Use single spaces after full stops, commas, exclamation marks, etc.

Indent each paragraph.

Do not forget to use the spelling and grammar check tool that is offered by Microsoft Word.

You are required to submit your paper by 2 ways, Turnitin.com and as an attachment, a Microsoft Word document in Canvas. Updated details for the submission of your paper will be provided during our class meeting/Canvas announcement.

Please establish a connection by email or phone (your Google Voice number) with a gatekeeper regarding the religious site that you intend to visit. In order to be precautious of taboos and ethics, conduct preliminary research about the religion and religious group before connecting with a religious site. Visit an online religious service/event in a tradition that is unfamiliar to you and write it up as a report. Here is the outline you should follow.

A preliminary note: For this exercise, select a religious group in which you do not possess positive or negative feelings towards, but a group that would be neutral for you, so you can be objective. It is best just to try to remember what transpired. It is usually alright to ask leaders or members questions afterward if anything is unclear. Tap into your senses based on what you actually see and hear. Keep in mind, individual members or a group may deviate quite a bit from the official teachings and practice of a denomination or tradition.

**Background Information** Give the full name, entire physical address, web address, and religious affiliation, including the exact denomination of the group; give the date and time of your visit; and give the name and type of service attended. Which individual or individuals(group) formed the religious institution that you are visiting? What is the date of their establishment and purpose/mission for formation?

**General Information** Describe the outside and inside appearance of the building, giving special attention to particularly important symbols and distinctive architectural features. Then describe the way visitors are greeted, and the sort of people in this group - their apparent social class, lifestyle type, ethnic background, average age, gender, and approximate number present. Describe in the same way the leadership conducting the service.

**Account of the Service** Describe what happened in the service from beginning to end. Try to give some sense of the emotional tone and subjective spiritual meaning of the activity. For example, was the opening dramatic or casual? Was the congregational participation emotional or reserved? Was much of the service spontaneous? Did it seem to be ancient ritual or contemporary?

**Analysis** Analyze the worship experience in terms of the three forms of religious expression: theoretical (teaching), practical (worship), and sociological.

- Theoretical. What, essentially, does this religion teach? As far as you could tell from this one experience, from the sermon, practices, symbols, and so on, what seems to be the main message of this religion? You may need to distinguish between what was "officially" said in the creeds, and what really seemed to be most important to the people in the congregation as they took part.
- Practical. What was the basic nature of the worship? Formal or informal, old or new, structured or spontaneous, intellectual or emotional, or something of all of these. What message about how this group conceives of the role of religion, and the best way for humans to build bridges to Ultimate Reality, did this worship communicate?

- Sociological. What kind of group was it? As well as you could tell from this one experience, was it close-knit or diffuse? Was this group composed of mostly people drawn to the religion by family or ethnic ties, or mostly committed converts of different backgrounds? What role did the priest or leader play? What message did you get from the religious experience that was communicated by the nature of the group?

Optional. You may also conduct an interview with a religious practitioner(s) from the religious setting. If you choose to do so, incorporate your interview at the end of your Analysis section of your paper by using a dialogue format for the interview portion of the paper.

**Conclusion** How would you summarize your interpretation of this group in terms of the three forms of religious expression? (This does not mean to include your personal bias of the religion you have experienced. Describe and elaborate on how the forms fit together and how the forms served the religious practitioners for whom view them as important.)