REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: U09

In Person

Spring Term 2027

Course Meeting Information

Class meeting times	
Day:	T/TH
Time:	11:00 AM - 12:15 PM
Location:	CP 197

Professor Information

Daniel Alvarez

Roles: Primary Instructor

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Office Hours: TBA

Office Location: SIPA 501

Website: RELIGION.FIU.EDU

Department or Academic Unit: RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

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.

Textbook and Course Materials

INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION

Required/Recommended: REQUIRED

Authors: JAMES C. LIVINGSTON

Publisher: PEARSON PRENTICE-HALL, 4TH EDITION

Publication Date: 2008

Copyright Date: 2008

ISBN 10: 10013600380

ISBN 13: 978013600380

Chapters/Pages: Required chapter and pages given in the course schedule below.

TEN THEORIES OF RELIGION

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: DANIEL PALS

Publisher: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Publication Date: 2021

Copyright Date: 2021

ISBN 10: 0190935081

ISBN 13: 9780190935085

Chapters/Pages: Required chapter and pages given in the course schedule below,

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.

Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

ADDITIONAL READINGS AND OTHER LEARNING RESOURCES (AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL) WILL BE AVAILABLE ON CANVAS, AS WELL AS SITE VISIT REPORT FORMAT AND SELECT DIRECTORY OF RELIGIOUS SITES IN SOUTH FLORIDA.

Course Goals

At the end of this course, students will able to:

1. Explain the basic history, development, and belief systems of various religious traditions.

1. Recognize religious themes and concepts found in other cultures.
2. Identify the meaning behind religious concepts and symbols.
3. Evaluate their own religious views in regards to other cultures and paradigms of religious thought.
4. Apply critical thinking to various topics in the field of religious studies.
5. Demonstrate creative thinking about religious issues in the contemporary world.
6. Conduct field research about a particular religious community.
7. Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
8. Assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- Student learning outcomes allow faculty to assess the level of proficiency in content knowledge and skills that their students acquire in a course. If the objective meets a special designation, you will see the code after the objective: University Core Curriculum: UCC Gordon Rule Writing: GRW Global Learning: GL Civic Literacy: CL SEE COURSE GOALS

Expectations of the Course

ATTENDANCE TO CLASSES IS REQUIRED.

ALL FOUR DISCUSSIONS ARE REQUIRED. ALSO, THREE (3) ENTRIES FOR EACH DISCUSSION ARE REQUIRED.

FOR SITE VISIT REPORT,, STUDENTS NOT ALLOWED TO VISIT A SITE THAT IS RELATED TO STUDENT'S OWN CULTURAL BACKGROUND, EVEN IF THEY DON'T PRACTICE THE RELIGION OR BELIEVE IN GOD. ONLY JEWISH, MUSLIM, BUDDHIST, HINDU, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE ALLOWED TO DO THEIR REPORT ON A CHRISTIAN SITE. IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT, **CONSULT WITH THE PROFESSOR BEFORE YOU DO THE SITE VISIT. POINTS WILL BE DEDUCTED REPORTS THAT VIOLATE THIS POLICTY.**

Course Communication

STUDENTS SHOULD REACH THE INSTRUCTOR THROUGH CANVAS. IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY YOU CAN ALSO WRITE TO ME AT ALVAREZD@FIU.EDU.

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
- Core Principles of This Course
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use
- **AI AND PLAGIARISM POLICY**

If your papers come up as either plagiarized or AI/ChatGpt over 25%, they will be forwarded to the Office of Academic Conduct, and I will not be discussing the case with you until the review of your flagged work is completed by the *Office of Conduct for Academic Integrity* (SCAI). Please understand this is university-wide policy. I do not have control over SCAI nor what comes up as flagged for AI. My job is to report it to the only folks who have authority to make a decision, SCAI.

Assignments & Assessments

Assignments

All work must 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.

As a Gordon Rule course, written assignments are required of all students in order to fulfill the State-mandated standards for this course. The Gordon Rule requirement will be met by:

1. Two (2) Short Essays Mid-Term Exam, 500-700 words (Essay format) (20%)
2. Two (2) Short Essay Final Exam, 500-700 words (Essay format) (20%)
3. Four (4) Group Discussions based on the Readings (20%)
4. Globalization Essay 3-4 pages (5%)
5. One (1) Site Visit Report, 4-5 pages, based on visits to places of worship of select world religions represented in the South Florida area. The Site Visit must be written in essay form (20%).
6. Cumulative Objective Exam, 50 questions multiple choice/ true or false (15%). You will get two (2) attempts for the exam. It will be posted Monday-Thursday during finals week.

Assessments

Discussion Forums (20% of final grade)

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

Discussion Forum Expectations:

- There will be four (4) discussions in this course. These discussions are meant to stimulate critical thinking about how religions manifest in our globalized world.
  Discussion topics will become available Monday, 12:00 PM to Sunday, 11:59 PM of each week that a discussion topic is posted. See the course calendar for the weeks that have discussion topics posted.

  To receive full credit for the discussion assignments, students must post a minimum of 3 discussion threads per discussion topic:

  - One post in response to the main discussion topic
  - Two responses to other students' posts
- Please refer to the rubric for details on what criteria your discussion assignments will be evaluated on. Canvas Tutorial: How do I view the rubric for my graded discussion?

  Keep in mind that this is an academic forum; all students in the course will see the discussion posts. When criticizing or agreeing with another student's position on a given topic,

please make sure to include supporting facts and specific examples to strengthen your arguments. Contribute links to articles, news stories, and/or other media whenever possible.

Exams: Midterm and Final (40% of final grade)

The essay prompts for Written Exam 1 and Written Exam 2 will become available in the Assessment area during the exam availability time (check the weekly calendar)

- All assignments can be submitted via Canvas in the Assignments content area.
- The written exams should each be approximately 500-750 words long.
- All written assignments will be automatically checked for plagiarism. See section titled Course Policies to learn more about what plagiarism is and how to properly cite your work.
- Exams will be graded manually. Students will be able to see their scores within 7 to 10 business days of the assignment deadline.

Site Visit Report (4 to 5 pages double spaced 12 pt. font) 20% of Final Grade

All written assignments will be automatically checked for plagiarism. See section titled Course Policies to learn more about what plagiarism is and how to properly cite your work.

**Students May Not Submit Work From A Previous Semester Or From Another Class For This Assignment Or Any Other Assignment In This Course.

Assignment Details and Instructions:

- Format: MLA Format Required
- Content: Field research and supplementary research
- Length: 1800-2000 Words, Not Including Your Works Cited Page
- Double –Spaced, 12-Pt Font, Arial Or Times New Roman Font
- Sources: 3 Academic Sources Minimum
- Works Cited Page required

For this Site Visit, students will perform field research by attending a religious service outside of their own religious tradition. The goal is to immerse each student in an unfamiliar religious context (example: Christians should perform field research on a non-Christian religion, like Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.)

At the top of your paper, please include the name of the religious site visited, the date visited, the names of any individuals you may have interviewed, and the particular sect or denomination of the religion that practices at the site.

[If you visited a Muslim mosque, was it Sunni or Shi'ite? If you visited a Jewish synagogue, was it Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform? If you visited a Buddhist temple, was it Theravada or a Mahayana sect?] You may want to ask this when you call to find out if your visit is acceptable.

Your research should ideally progress in three stages:

1. Preliminary Research
    - Before going to the service, it is a good idea to do some preliminary research on the religious tradition. For example, if you're attending a Hindu ceremony, you will want to read the textbook chapter and watch the PowerPoint presentation on Hinduism. Additionally, I strongly recommend that you call the site you'll be visiting and let them know you're coming to do research for a class project. Ask them if there's any dress code requirements, or anything else you should keep in mind. You may also want to ask if they will allow you to take notes during the service. (Some Jewish denominations, for example, do not allow writing on Shabbat {Saturday}.)
2. Field Research
    - Attend the service and observe closely. You may want to take notes. Some students have found it helpful to attend services in groups, and you're welcome to do

this.

3. Supplementary Research
    - After your visit, research any elements of the experience that were unfamiliar and that left you with questions, including but not limited to the practices, symbols, dress code, and conversations encountered at the site. In other words, research each practice and find out why it's done in this particular section.

Examples:

If you go to a Jewish service and you see the men wearing kippahs (or yarmulkes), you don't want to write in your essay, "There were these men and they were wearing these funny hats but I don't know why." This is where your additional research comes in. Find out what the hats are called, and find out why they're worn.

If you go to a Muslim mosque and you see the worshippers washing their hands and feet, you don't want to write in your essay, "Everyone was washing their hands and feet but I don't know why they did that and it was pretty weird."

Upon completing these three stages, write a detailed and insightful essay. It should demonstrate a general understanding of the religious tradition; use your research to explain your experience at the site. What did you see around you? What did the place of worship look like? Did you see any religious art or religious symbols there? How were people dressed? What rituals were performed?

Finally, include your personal reaction to the service. How did you respond? Did you enjoy the visit or did you feel uncomfortable? Were your opinions about the religion challenged or confirmed by the site visit?

Appiah Analysis Essay (5% of final grade)

**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.

Guidelines for all written work:

- Format: MLA Format Required
- Length: 1000 Words, Not Including Your Works Cited Page
- Double –Spaced, 12-Pt Font, Arial Or Times New Roman Font
- Sources: Class Readings And PowerPoint Lectures
- Submit your essay to Assignments via Canvas.
- Keep electronic receipts and/or paper copies of all submitted work.

In every Gordon Rule course at FIU, students must demonstrate "college-level writing skills." College-level writing must exhibit the following characteristics:

- It has clear purpose and thesis or controlling ideas.
- The thesis is supported with adequate reasons and evidence.

- It shows sustained analysis and critical thought.
- It is organized clearly and logically.
- It shows knowledge of conventions of standard written English.
- It shows awareness of disciplinary conventions in regard to content, style, form, and delivery methods.
- Moreover, sources must be cited as appropriate.

Thesis Statement: The thesis is the central idea of your paper around which all your evidence and claims are organized. Every single paragraph should be dedicated in a clear way to proving your thesis. In your essay, the thesis should be stated as quickly and as clearly as possible. In fact, many teachers will expect your thesis statement to appear in the last sentence of your essay's first paragraph. A vivid thesis statement will announce the steps of its argument, not just provide a flat statement of the essay's ultimate goal. Think of the thesis as a roadmap that gives directions to your reader rather than as a picture of your final destination.

A good thesis should not state something that is obviously true. When your thesis is too easy to prove, your essay can become repetitive and you may feel that you do not have enough to write about. A complex thesis, on the other hand, requires you to convince your reader that your argument is logical and will reveal ideas that cannot be easily anticipated. A worthwhile thesis will always outline an argument with which a reader can readily disagree.

These are two links to guide you to write a good thesis statement:

- "How to Write a Thesis Statement" by Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University Bloomington
- "Thesis Statements" by The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Please refer to the rubric for details on what criteria Research Paper 2 will be evaluated on.

Cumulative Final Exam (15% of Final Grade)

50 questions, T/F and Multiple Choice, 3 hours, Two Attempts. Posted in final exam week.

Grading

Late submissions will not be accepted, 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.

GRADE CRITERIA FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

A-A- = Outstanding/Exceptional in terms of content (grasp of concepts, depth of analysis and comprehension) and expression (grammar, diction, syntax, style, organization/ structure) B+-B = Above average to Very Good

B+-B= Good to above average

C+ = Above average

C= Average, achieving minimum standards

F= Failed

A	94-100	C	65-72
A-	90-93	D	64-60
B+	87-89	F	59-0
B	82-86		
B-	78-81		
C+	73-77		

Schedule of Topics

Week 1

I. The conflict of Greek-Roman Naturalism and the Supernaturalism of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) (600

b.c-400 c.e.).

The Pre-Socratics (600 b.c.) to Late Antiquity (400 c.e.)

Introduction: Syllabus, Requirements, Overview of course

The Analysis of Religion: Greek Naturalism vs. Judeo-Christian Supernaturalism: Historical vs. Dogmatic Method in the Study of Religion

Required Reading: Livingston, Chapters 1: “What is Religion?” (3-14); Chapter 8: “Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality” 153-179.

Week 2

II. The Victory of Supernaturalism East and West (400-1600)

The Study of Religion in the 19th century (II)

Required Reading: Livingston, chapter 2: “Ways of Studying Religion” (15-32); Chapter 9: “Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order” (183-208).

Week 3

III. The Rise of Scientific Naturalism: Renaissance and Reformation to the Enlightenment (1600-1800): Spinoza, Reimarus, Hume, and

Kant

Livingston, Chapter 13: “Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation” (287-337).

Week 4

IV. Reaction to Enlightenment Naturalism in the 19th Century

Defense of Religion in the in the First Half of the 19trh Century: Schleiermacher and Hegel (1800-1840)

Required Reading: Alvarez, “Study of Religion in the West: 1800-1900” (on Canvas); Livingston, Chapter 5: “Sacred Ritual” (74-93).

Recommended: David F. Strauss, Preface to the Life of Jesus Critically Examined (on Canvas).

CASE STUDY I (BY INSTRUCTOR): RITUAL & SACRIFCE IN ANCIENT RELIGIONS

Week 5

The Radical Defense of Scientific Naturalism: The “Hegelian Left” (Feuerbach, Strauss, Stirner, and Marx), Darwin, and Nietzsche)

Required Reading: Alvarez, “Study of Religion in the West:

1900-1960" (on Blackboard); Livingston, Chapter 6: "Sacred Scripture" (96-123).

Recommended: Ludwig Feuerbach, "The Essence of Christianity"; Feuerbach, "Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy" (on Canvas).

Week 6

The Triumph of Scientific Naturalism: The Sociological; Anthropological-Psychological Analysis of Religion (2nd week later paper submission: 10 point deduction)

Required Reading: Livingston, Chapter 10: "Views of the Human Problem" (212-231); "Karl Marx" (in Pals).

Recommended: Max Stirner, selection from The Ego and its Own (on Canvas).

CASE STUDY II (BY INSTRUCTOR): A Sociological Interpretation & Critique of the Bhagavad Gita Karl Marx versus Emile Durkheim

Week 7

Required Reading: "Emile Durkheim" (in Pals); Chapter 4: "Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine" (53-73).

Week 8 MIDTERM EXAM DUE (ON CANVAS)

Required Reading: “E. B. Tylor and James Frazer” (in Pals); Readings from the Bible that illustrate the Numinous: Exodus 1-4; II Kings 3:24-27; Kingship Ideology: Psalm 2, 89, II Chronicles 13; Prophetic Critique of religion and kingship ideology: I Kings 12, Isaiah 58, 61, Jeremiah 7.

Week 9

(Second week late paper submission: 10 points deduction)

Required Reading: Livingston, Chapter 12, “Ethics: The Foundations of Moral Action” (259-283).

Recommended: Peter Berger, selection from The Sacred Canopy (on Canvas).

CASE STUDY III (BY INSTRUCTOR): Kingship Propaganda in Ancient Israel and the Prophetic Critique

Week 10

Christianity: Sects, Church, and Cults: Bureaucrats, Prophets, and Charismatic Leaders

Required Reading: Livingston, Chapter 7: “Society and the Sacred” (124-147); “Max Weber” (in Pals).

CASE STUDY IV (BY INSTRUCTOR): EARLY CATHOLICISM & BHAGAVAD GITA

Week 11

Freud (and others) and the Psychological Interpretation of Religion

Required Reading: “Freud” in Pals.

Week 12

V. Scientific Naturalism Challenged: The Recovery of the Sacred (Otto, Eliade, Geertz, Heidegger)

The Sociological/Anthropological Rapprochement with Religion

Required Readings: Livingston, Chapter 11: “Theodicy: Encountering Evil” (35-254; Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” (on Canvas).

Week 13

Required Reading: Livingston, Chapter 3: “The Sacred and the Holy” (37-50); Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy (on Canvas); “Mircea Eliade,” in Pals; selections from Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” (on Canvas)

Week 14

The Philosophical Defense of Religion: Thomas Nagel, William Lane Craig, Alvin Plantinga, and the Rise of Fundamentalism

Required Reading: Livingston, Chapter 14: “Secularization [and] Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism” (341-357); J. P. Moreland, “Slouching Toward Theism: Reflections on Thomas Nagel’s Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is almost Certainly Wrong” (on Canvas).

CASE STUDY V (BY INSTRUCTOR): VARIETIES OF FUNDAMENTALISMS

Week 15 OBJECTIVE FINAL EXAM POSTED WEEK OF FINAL EXAMS

History, Horizons, Relativism, and the Question of Truth

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.

UCC Category Description

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

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