REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: U15

Hybrid/Certified

Spring Term 2027

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

What is this Course about?

This course will look into a pantheon of interdisciplinary

thinkers such as Jung, Weber, and Geertz to analyze salient theories about the patterns and paradoxes of sacred experiences across religions. We will explore how communities from various times and geographies express their sacred experiences through symbols, myths, scriptures, time, and space and how these are accessed and transformed through diverse interpretations. Our fundamental aim will be to discover the intrinsic connection between the sacred and our notions of self, nature, society, reality, and so on.

Ultimately, this course will prepare you to formulate your own theoretical questions and methodology to create and apply new knowledge in any field of study. It will also provide you with the necessary tools to guide your individual quest. Welcome!

Why Should I Care about Religion?

Why do I struggle to lead a meaningful life? How do I determine what makes life worth it in the face of suffering and evil? Is religion irrelevant in our fast-paced technological world? Does the sacred look the same across traditions? Is religion a creative or destructive force? 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 religion will be favored, materials from several religions 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. Religion greatly influences one's epistemology, or the way they deal with what is true or false, as well as the way they look at the world. If we fail to understand religion & secularization, we may fail to understand people.

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.

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.

Textbook and Course Materials

Anatomy of the Sacred

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Pearson

Publication Date: 2009

Copyright Date: 2009

ISBN 10: 0-13-600380

ISBN 13: 9780136003809

Chapters/Pages: 411

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.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- 1. Identify key thinkers such as Jung, Durkheim, and Weber and their interdisciplinary theories about the patterns and paradoxes of sacred experiences across traditions
- 2. Classify and utilize various approaches to the study of religion, including but not limited to ethnographic, psychological, sociological, ethical, phenomenological, and so on.
- 3. Compare and contrast the key underlying beliefs and principles of many religions.
- 4. Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
- 5. Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art,

literature, music, film, and so on.

- 6. Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.
- 7. Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs outsider/academic sources, and scholarly vs journalistic sources.

Expectations of this Course

Statement on Plagiarism

You are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity if you need further clarification. 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 or partially stolen from another source;

2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and

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.

Late Assignment Policy

I may accept late assignments, however, if you turn in late work the highest grade you can get for that assignment is an 75%. This even includes first drafts that are ‘replaced’ by final draft grades. No, you cannot turn in all of your assignments at the end of this course I will not accept assignments more than 10 days after the due date.

No assignments will be accepted after the last day of in person class with the exception of the final exam. No exceptions.

Assignments & Assessments

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write a minimum of two major assignments. **The essays must have a thesis (topic/original research), and adequately support that thesis. The essays must be organized clearly and logically.** Each paper will be 1,200 words and will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using Chicago or MLA style formatting. Please be aware that papers with an originality score of over 35% similarity and/or AI will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur additional penalties, up to and including receiving an F (0 points). **Please DO NOT send any writing assignments as email or message attachments! All writing assignments must be submitted in**

the proper drop box in Canvas; there are no exceptions. Late papers may be accepted with a legitimate excuse and the maximum score will be 90%.

1. Discussions:

Description: Throughout the semester, you will participate in six discussions. Each discussion will focus on specific questions related to the course topics. You are expected to post thoughtful responses and actively engage with the reading material and class discussions. Some discussions will be conducted in class using paper and pen, in response to various topics covered in lectures.

Due Dates: Discussions will be assigned randomly at the beginning of the week on Tuesday. Posts are due the following Monday at 11:59 pm. Late submissions will incur a 10% deduction in points.

Submission: Post your responses directly to the designated Canvas discussion board (Modules) It will also appear in your assignments as a reminder.

Evaluation Criteria: Discussions will be evaluated based on clarity of writing, depth of analysis, engagement with course material, and quality of peer responses.

A rubric will be provided.

Extra Points: If you participate in all six discussions, you will earn extra points (5%). If you only complete five discussions, points deductions will not be made (one freebie).

Video Comments: Some modules will include videos related to course topics. You are required to watch these videos and comment according to the instructor's requirements, which will be outlined in each

module. Comments will be evaluated based on relevance to the video content, depth of analysis, and engagement with the material. Specific criteria will be provided for each video.

1. **ESSAY #1**

Religious Site Visit Essay / MIDTERM (1200 words).

- **Description:** This essay requires field research, where you will attend a religious service. You must visit a religious site from a tradition different from your own and write a report on your experience. The goal is to immerse yourself in and analyze an unfamiliar religious context or tradition. Your essay should offer a detailed account of your findings and reflections, addressing the aspects outlined in the course materials. Your paper must include a clear thesis statement. Detailed instructions and formatting guidelines are provided in the course materials. You will have the opportunity to revise your essay. Please be aware that plagiarism is a serious offense; any instances of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. To complete this assignment, you must select a religious site and provide proof of your visit. If you attend a physical service, a photograph of yourself at the site will be sufficient. If you attend an online service, please

provide the following details: the name of the site or church, the title of the sermon, and the hour of the service (include the link).

    - **First Draft**: You must submit a 1,200-word first draft. The purpose of this first draft is to give you feedback and make you a better writer. You need to submit a picture of yourself at the site for credit. **Please attach photo to submission at end of word doc.**
    - **Final Draft:** After my feedback on first draft the final draft must be at least 1,200 words long and cover 3 elements of the religion or site you are visiting. Please submit a picture of yourself at the site for credit. Please attach photo to submission at end of word doc.

- **Submission:** Submit your essay as a Canvas Assignment. **Please DO NOT send any writing assignments as email or message attachments.** Late submissions will not be accepted unless approved by the instructor, and the maximum grade for late submissions will be 90%.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Essays will be evaluated based on the depth of observation, insightfulness of analysis, clarity of writing, and adherence to academic standards. A rubric

will be provided.

ESSAY #2

Final Project (Personal Analysis):

Description:

For your final project, you will choose a topic from the course material, such as "Ways to Study Religion," "What is Religion," "Sacred Symbols," or "Myth and Doctrine." Your project should include a comprehensive description of common aspects of religion, including myth, ritual, sacred texts, divinities/prophets/enlightened beings, paths to liberation, views on righteousness and sin, and interpretations of gender, violence, and purity. In this essay, you will analyze your own experiences using the theoretical frameworks introduced in this class. The objective is to assess your understanding of core concepts in the study of religion by identifying what is sacred in your life and presenting this as your thesis. Support your thesis by describing and defending the significance of your chosen sacred value, especially in relation to themes of suffering, evil, and the human condition. **The first draft of your project in Week 13. The final draft is due on Canvas in Week 15.** Alongside with this essay, you will have a presentation in class during the final's week. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation and a 1200-word essay on your chosen topic. Your presentation should be approximately 15 to 20 minutes long. Your grade will be based on both your PowerPoint presentation and your essay.

Submission: Submit the PowerPoint presentation and essay via Canvas. You will present your project in class during the final week.

- **Evaluation Criteria:** The project will be graded based on the following:

  PowerPoint Presentation: Clarity, organization, visual appeal, and how well it complements your essay.

  Essay (1200 words): Depth of analysis, clarity of writing, and adherence to academic standards (150 points).

  Presentation: Effectiveness in communicating ideas, engagement with the audience, and overall delivery.

Extra Credit Opportunities

You have the chance to earn up to 5% of your final grade through one extra credit opportunity. All submissions must be made through Canvas; emails will not be accepted.

1.Visit the Writing Center: Earn 5% extra credit by visiting the Writing Center for assistance with one of your essays. Schedule your appointment early, attend it, and work with the staff to improve your writing. After your session, the Writing Center will provide a confirmation email of your completed appointment. Take a screenshot of this confirmation and upload it to Canvas under the "Extra Credit- Writing Center" category.

2. Participate in an Additional Discussion: Although only five discussions are required, you can complete a sixth one for up to 5% extra credit towards your discussion grade.

Grading

Insert notes about grading here. You may want to use something similar to the table below. Edit or remove the table as needed for your course.

Example:

Course Grading Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available
Discussions/Quizzes	6 (1 extra)	50	250
Essay #1 Midterm	2	150/150	300
Essay#2 Final Project	2	150/150	300
Attendance and Participation	1	50	100
Total			1000

Proctored Exams

Please note that the information contained in this section applies only if your course requires a proctored exam.

Through a careful examination of this syllabus, it is the student's responsibility to determine whether this online course requires proctored exams. Please visit our Student Proctored Exam Instructions webpage for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.

Schedule of Topics

Type something

This is a tentative outline of the course. It is subject to change with written noti

This section is for you to describe your course schedule.

We suggest you include the following language.
This is a tentative outline of the course. It is subject to change with written notice.

Zoom Video Conference

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities.

Zoom meetings can be accessed via the Zoom link in the course navigation menu. Once you click on the Zoom link, it will route you to join the meeting for the respective class session. You will also be able to view upcoming meetings, previous meetings that you have already joined, and meeting recordings. Before joining an actual class session:

- Reference the Zoom Student Tutorials to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.

- Access the Zoom Test Meeting Room to test out the software before joining an actual session.

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact the FIU Canvas Help Team. Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights (OCR)** 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 OCR team through report.fiu.edu.