REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: U16

Hybrid/Certified

Spring Term 2027

Course Meeting Information

Classes are scheduled from 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM on Thursday at **OBCC117**, Ocean Bank Convocation Center
Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Professor Information

Alfonso Matas

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: use Canvas inbox

Phone: N/A

Office Hours: By Appointment

Office Location: SIPA I 504

Department or Academic Unit: Religious Studies Department

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

"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

An Introduction to Religion

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Pearson

Publication Date: 1998

Copyright Date: 2009

ISBN 10: 013600380-X

ISBN 13: 978-0-13-6000380-9

Notes: Every Student Must Acquire This Textbook

Chapters/Pages: N/A

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

- Identify different religious traditions and respective cultures that shape individual and societal lives in America and beyond.
- Compare and contrast how the different religious claims, belief systems and practices are used to explain everyday phenomena and in response to different existential issues in society.
- Evaluate how these religious claims, beliefs and practices have influence popular cultures that define their own identities and that of others.

- Design research topics to illustrate how the knowledge acquired through exposure to these religious traditions are applicable to address sociocultural issues including conflict resolution and peace building in multicultural contexts.
- 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
- 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

Expectations of this Course

This hybrid Religious Studies course at Florida International University is designed for students who value flexibility but are prepared for a rigorous academic workload. Because we only meet in person for one hour and 15 minutes once a week, the structure of the course relies heavily on students assuming significant additional responsibilities outside of the classroom. It is a common misconception that a hybrid format is "easier" than a traditional face-to-face course; in reality, it requires a higher level of self-regulation and a proactive approach to learning.

To succeed, you must possess strong personal discipline and exceptional time management skills. The reduced seat time does not mean a reduction in content; rather, it shifts the burden of engagement from the lecture hall to your own independent study environment. You are expected to stay on top of all readings, online modules, and assignments without the daily reminders of a standard schedule. Ultimately, this course demands a consistent commitment to the material and a high degree of accountability to ensure you meet the same high academic standards as any other offering at FIU.

Students are expected to:

- Review course syllabus to familiarize yourself with course content.
- Review course materials assigned to each topic before coming to class.
- Acquire required reader (textbook) by the end of first week of class.
- Be punctual in class and participate in class discussions
- Log in to the course canvas regularly for any announcements
- Respond to discussions by the due date specified, when discussion assignment are created
- Respond to emails within 24hour.

- Submit assignments by the corresponding deadline only through canvas

The instructor will:

- log in to the course at least once in every 24hours.
- respond to emails within 12 hours;
- grade assignments on time to allow helpful feedback.

Assignments & Assessments

Course Policies on Late Work

All assignments will be assessed a 5% late submission penalty per day.

Assignments

The Grading section is wrong and should be replaced with:

- Chapter Quizzes (25% of grade)
- Worldview Essay (5% of grade)
- Midterm Exam (20% of grade)
- One-page preliminary Site Visit Report (5% of grade)
- Final RE Site Visit Report (20% of final grade)
- Final Exam (25% of grade)

1. INDIVIDUAL (ONLINE) CANVAS QUIZZES (25% OF FINAL GRADE)

These are short 10-15 questions, multiple choice, True/false, and/or short answer quizzes on the week's content that you will be taken individually, online before the class chapter is covered. This ensures that students are well prepared to participate in each chapter lecture, either asking questions or making comments. 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.

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 personal worldview essay. Further guidelines for this project can be found in CANVAS.

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

This is a 35 multiple choice questions test plus three short essays covering the material corresponding to the first 7 textbook chapters and lecture content.

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

- Length: 5-6 pages (1,250-1,500 words), double-spaced. Do not exceed this limit. **The format is in essay form, but you will develop and number each question separately. Do not write a continuous single essay.**
- Sources: You are required to include at least two peer-reviewed scholarly papers**. In addition to these, the Stein & Stein textbook is a mandatory primary source that must be cited extensively throughout your essay.** The textbook chapters serve as a theoretical bridge, helping you connect the raw field data you collect to anthropological theory. You are also welcome to reference weekly lectures and videos as supplemental sources, provided they are clearly identified and properly cited.

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

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

6. FINAL EXAM – ONLINE (25% 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.

It is imperative that students visit this assignment submission page for further details.

Extra Credit and Make-Up Assignments

There will be no make-up assignments without documented justification.

There will be no extra-credit assignments within the course.

There is a 5% penalty per day past the due date, and assignments may not be submitted after the third day. This will lead to a "0" for the assignment.

Grading

- Chapter Quizzes (25% of grade)
- Worldview Essay (5% of grade)

- Midterm Exam (20% of grade)
- One-page preliminary Site Visit Report (5% of grade)
- Final RE Site Visit Report (20% of final grade)
- Final Exam (25% of grade)

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Weight
Chapter Quizzes	13	25%
Worldview Essay	1	5%
Midterm Exam	1	20%
One-page Preliminary Site Visit Report	1	5%
Final RE Site Visit Report	1	(20% of final grade)
Final Exam	1	25% of grade
Total:	**18**	**100%**

Letter Grade

Distribution Table

Letter Grade	From	To
A	100%	95%
A-	< 95%	90%
B+	< 90%	87%
B	< 87%	83%
B-	< 83%	80%
C+	< 80%	77%
C	< 77%	70%
D	< 70%	60%
F	< 60%	0%

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

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

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via **the Canvas Inbox**. Check out the Canvas Conversations Tutorial or Canvas Guide to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.

I will respond to all correspondence.

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
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Technical Support

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

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 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.