REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: U18

Hybrid/Certified

Spring Term 2027

Course Meeting Information

Class Meeting Times	
Day:	Wednesdays
Time:	3:00 - 4:15 pm
Location:	TBD

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

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.

Professor Information

Jeanette Smith

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: Via canvas messages

Response Time: 48 hours

Phone: Please use canvas messages for faster response time

Office Hours: Via Zoom

Office Location: SIPA 1 - 507

Department or Academic Unit: Religious Studies

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Why should we 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.

We will utilize our textbook, videos, internet sources, and discussions to explore these topics. Your grade will include exams, class discussions, and essays to develop your critical thinking skills and writing abilities. This course fulfills the Gordon Rule requirement. Aspects of this course will be

facilitated using a team-based learning approach. Students will be responsible for preparing for course activities in advance of each session.

Course Goals

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the basic history, development, and belief system of various religious traditions.
- Recognize religious themes and concepts found in other cultures.
- Identify the meaning behind religious concepts and symbols.
- Evaluate their own religious views regarding other cultures and paradigms of religious thought.
- Apply critical thinking to various topics in the field of religious studies.
- Think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.
- Perform field research to better understand a particular religious community.

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.

Textbook and Course Materials

Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Livingston, James C.

Publisher: Prentice Hall

Publication Date: 2008

Copyright Date: July 21, 2008

ISBN 10: 013600380X

ISBN 13: 9780136003809

Chapters/Pages: Chapters 1 through 14

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

- Please see above for detailed list of objectives

Global Learning

Global Learning Objectives Targeted

- **Global Awareness:** Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
- **Global Perspective:** Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
- **Global Engagement:** Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

Expectations of this Course

Course Modality & Expectations

This course will be taught in hybrid mode. In a hybrid class, the face-to-face meeting time is reduced by 50%. The other 50% of the class takes place outside of the classroom, whether online, in the field, in the community, or someplace else. It is important to note that this out-of-class “meeting time” is in addition to the homework and preparation that are assigned in all classes regardless of format. If you take a hybrid course, you will need to self-regulate your out-of-class time so that you can keep up with both the face-to-face and out-of-class assignments and preparation. Some tasks must be completed

prior to class and some after class. Paying attention to how the in- and out-of-class materials are connected is important.

You are responsible for carefully reading the syllabus and weekly calendar, meeting deadlines as posted, and submitting mature, thoughtful work. Some of this material may be new, personal, or controversial, so please maintain an open-minded and considerate attitude, allowing others time to reflect and communicate. The online portion of the class is required and constitutes the online attendance. Please review additional expectations below.

Course Communication

Communication directly with me in this course will take place via the Inbox. Check out the Canvas Conversations Tutorial to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox. At some points in the semester, my inbox gets quite full. If you message me and don't hear back from me within two business days, please send a follow-up message. I will appreciate the gentle reminder.

Also, there is an open forum pinned to the top of the discussion forum for general questions about the class. If one student has a question about course materials or assignments, that question is usually shared by others. Using the open forum will allow everyone in the course to benefit from each other's questions. I will check the forum several times a week to respond to questions, but, if you see a question that hasn't been answered yet and you know the answer, please feel free

to share that knowledge with your classmates.

As a student in this course, you are expected to:

- Review the Getting Started information located in the Modules.
- Introduce yourself to the class during the first week in the appropriate discussion forum.
- Take the Practice Quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with Canvas.
- Interact online with instructor and peers.
- Log in to the course at least 3-4 times per week, if not daily.
- Respond to Canvas Messages within 1 day.
- Check regularly for any announcements.

I, the professor, will:

- Log in to the course at least 6 days per week.
- Respond to Canvas Messages within 1 day.
- Respond to General Discussion posts within 2 days.
- Provide feedback on assignments within 7 days of submission.

Generally, I post any overall class information, including reminders or announcements, within the Announcements section of Canvas, but, if something is time sensitive, I will send a Canvas Message.

Attendance & Participation

Since we have limited class sessions, you are expected to do your best to attend every session, arrive on time, and stay for the duration of the class. Attendance will be taken during each session. Arriving late, leaving early, or stepping out of the class for long periods of time may incur an absence penalty. Please refrain from texting and emailing in class. Please inform the instructor immediately if a situation develops that will impact your performance or attendance. I cannot help you if you don't reach out to me.

Participation includes reading for class, contributing to discussions, and being attentive to lectures and student presentations. Participation also includes introducing yourself in the online forum.

Grading

Grading

I provide multiple opportunities for students to receive feedback on their performance throughout the course in order to give students opportunities to see how they are doing and so they can identify places where they need to apply more effort or new strategies along the way. My hope is that all of you will develop the knowledge and skills that you need to to do well in this course.

Grading Course Requirements	Number of Items	Total Weight

Attendance, Participation, & Introduction		10%
Film Discussions	3	6%
Film Discussion & Social Awareness		3%
Video/Short Film Discussions	3	4%
Short Film Discussion & Self-Awareness		3%
Online Discussions & Self-Management		4%
Writing Assignment 1		11%
Writing Assignment 2		10%
Journal	3	6%
Group Religion Project		10%
Group Religion & Relationship Management		3%
Weekly Ch. Quizzes	12 (out of 14)	10%
Exams	2	20%
Total		**100%**

Schedule of Topics

As a hybrid class, we will meet once per week, although there will be an extension of our time together through discussions and other activities. All of these items will be clearly listed in the modules for each week.

Policies & Resources

Please review the FIU's Policies webpage. The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses. For additional information, please visit FIU's Policy and Procedure Library.

As a member of the FIU community, you are expected to be knowledgeable about the behavioral expectations set forth in the FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code.

Assignments & Assessments

Discussions

Film Discussions

You are required to participate in three online discussions about historical films, documentaries, and particular concepts or issues covered in the course. You will also have one (1) film discussion as a make-up option. There may be some substitutions below based on current library availability. I never want you to have to spend money to see one of the films. It is possible that we may substitute an article for one or more of the films depending on availability. The

films will not be shown in class; you are responsible for watching the films on your own time as part of the hybrid online work. The films will be available on library reserve or through a shared link.

Video Discussions

We'll also be using some intriguing videos as part of the course content as well.

Discussion Posting Guidelines

Generally, each film discussion requires that you answer the discussion prompt and then comment on a peer's post. Discussion prompts will open on Monday the week they are assigned and close on Saturday at 11:59 pm that same week. You must answer the prompt early enough in the week to allow others the opportunity to comment on your post before the due date. See the specific discussion forums for detailed instructions. Please keep in mind that you are responding in an academic forum so you want to pay attention to grammar and punctuation.

Discussion Grading Guidelines

- Response to prompt (80%): post length (minimum 300 words), content, grammar, and punctuation
- Replies to peers (20%): there are two replies with instructions in discussion post

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

Please do NOT send any discussions or other assignments as email or message attachments. Assignments cannot trigger the gradebook in order to be graded unless they are properly submitted.

Essays

As this is a Gordon Rule course, you are required to complete a certain number of major writing assignments. The FIU Writing Center is a great source for help and feedback as you are working on your essays. The assignment links will also include links to MLA resources in case you're not familiar with that particular citation style.

Writing Assignment 1	Virtual Pilgrimage. For this writing assignment, you will need to visit three of the nine provided virtual sites and write an insightful essay that demonstrates a general understanding of the importance of each of the sites within its religious tradition (1,500 – 1,800 words, double-spaced, MLA formatting). Detailed instructions will be provided in the assignment link. This assignment will include both a draft and a final version so that you can get feedback and receive the best grade possible on your final version. Please note that the draft is part of the total grade for the assignment, so you want to take advantage of the opportunity.

Writing Assignment 2	Topic Essay. This essay will be a topic of your choice related to religion - hopefully something fun that you would like to explore. The topic will be approved by the professor and you must utilize at least two scholarly or academic sources. Other additional sources are fine, but the one scholarly source is a must. This essay is 1,200 - 1,500 words and should also be double-spaced and use MLA formatting, which includes a works cited page. This assignment will also include both a draft (for points) and a final version so that you can get feedback and receive the best grade possible on the final version.

Essay General Guidelines

- Source material must be cited correctly using MLA Style, and long quotes should be avoided.
- Papers need to be submitted in Canvas through Turnitin. Be sure to review the detailed Turnitin Instructions on how to submit your assignments and how to review the Grademark comments (feedback) from me.
- 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.

- Papers with an originality score of over 34% similarity in Turnitin will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur additional penalties, up to and including receiving an F (0 points).
- Late papers may be accepted with a legitimate excuse and a 10% penalty for late submission at the professor's discretion. After more than two weeks, papers will either be refused, or will be discounted by fifty percent at the professor’s discretion.

Group Religion Project

This project is a lot of fun. Each group will collaborate to design their own sect, church community, or religion. The following components of the sect/church/religion must be thought out and articulated in writing: definition, myth, rituals, scriptures, community practices, deity(ies), cosmogony, the human dilemma, and paths of salvation.

The project will be graded on organization, creativity, and clarity of understanding the key concepts from each chapter and will cover chapters 3 through 13. This assignment is due online, here in Canvas, and will be presented in class. Further assignment details will be provided in Canvas and discussed during class.

Weekly Chapter Quizzes

There are 14 weekly chapter quizzes (one quiz per textbook chapter). The lowest two grades from the quizzes will be dropped.

Please review the specifics for each quiz below:

- Open from Monday until Friday at 11:59 pm EST. The first quiz on chapter 1 will be during the first week of the course, but will stay open until Sunday at 11:59 pm EST.
- 10 multiple-choice and true/false questions
- 15 minutes to complete
- Total score is available immediately upon submission; answers feedback is available in My Grades after quiz due date

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the Practice Quiz from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams.

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 Canvas Help Center.

Exams

The Midterm and Final Exams will be available online during their respective scheduled dates. Please review the specifics for each exam below. I am fully confident that you can do well on both of these exams if you use the quizzes and tools that we will discuss in class in order to prepare.

Midterm Exam

- Covers the first half of the course, from Chapter 1 through Chapter 7
- Administered online in Canvas
- Sixty-five minutes allowed to complete
- Total score is available immediately upon submission

Final Exam

- Covers the second half of the course, from Chapter 8 through Chapter 14
- Administered online in Canvas
- Sixty-five minutes allowed to complete
- Total score is available immediately upon submission

Students who miss the exam and request make-ups must provide valid documentation for appropriate emergencies. “Forgetting” is not an excuse.

Understanding Emotional Intelligence

As a new initiative, FIU has introduced an opportunity for you to earn badges and micro-credentials in various topics that the university considers vital for your lives both within the university and outside, including understanding emotional intelligence, which is perfect for our class. Religion, as you probably know, is one of those topics that we are often told not to discuss or about which people can have very strong feelings, but we are going to march

boldly forward in this class. There will be a few opportunities along the way, including working with a partner or a team or just engaging in online discussions, that will allow you to better understand yourself and others as you complete the assignments or, in our case, as you complete your own hero's journey! Note that in order to receive the microcredential, you must receive 80% or above on each assignment. As long as you meet that 80% threshold, you will receive full credit (100%) for the assignment in the course gradebook so that's a win-win for everyone!

Extra Credit

Extra-Credit Film Review

Review a movie and write a 300-word forum post describing the role that religion plays in the story or event. Focus on religious symbols, rituals, myths or the ways in which religious beliefs or practices influence the plot or meaning of the movie. Do not tell the whole story of the movie, but just enough so that your points are clear. The movie selection must be approved by the instructor.

Extra-Credit if I know Your Name

Yes, that's right. You will get extra-credit if I can connect your name to your face. It's relatively easy to learn names and faces but connecting the two can be a challenge, especially when a professor has several large classes. That being said, it's very important to me to make the connection so, if you help me do it, you'll get extra-credit. This is a little more challenging in larger classes, but let's see how it goes!

Nondiscrimination Statement

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