REL 2300

Religions of the World

Section: B53

Hybrid/Certified

Spring Term 2027

Course Meeting Information

Class meeting times	
Day:	Thursdays
Time:	1:00-2:15 p.m.

Class meeting times	
Location:	Biscayne Bay, AC1, 330

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

Professor Information

Dr. Jayne A. Klein

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: martinj@fiu.edu

Response Time: Within 24 hours

Phone: 305-348-2186

Office Hours: By appointment

Office Location: SIPA 500

Website: rel.fiu.edu

Department or Academic Unit: Religious Studies

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Ever since the beginning of humanity's existence on Earth, religion has been a singularly powerful influence on the lives of every human being, and it seems likely that it will remain so for as far into the future as our minds can project. While there are some who view religion as a singularly powerful means for promoting goodness and morality in the world, there are others who see it as the primary source of the hatred and violence in the world. Regardless of one's opinion on that issue -- and even if one considers oneself to be an atheist, an agnostic, or simply a non-believer in any established religious tradition -- the recorded history of humanity has shown incontrovertibly that humans have always sought to make sense of the world by asking most of the same existential questions: "What is the meaning of life?" "What is the ultimate source of all life?" "What happens when we die?" "To whom or what do we owe our existence and our ultimate loyalty?" Providing answers to those and many other profound questions about our life on this earth has been left largely to the field of religion.

Why should you 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? Is it good to wonder if religion is a force for good or evil to begin with? Can we be spiritual without being religious?

These are not just entertaining questions, but they are also 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 your ability to understand personal and social motivations behind financial decisions, political engagement, science and technological advancements, environmental and migration policies, family planning, diet and food production, gender relations, war and terrorist attacks, and more. Whether you notice it 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, and gender studies, among others. This will enhance 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 **Social Sciences, Group 2** requirement.

Social science courses afford students an understanding of the basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavior and past and present social, political, and economic issues.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- Recognize the strength of utilizing different approaches, theories, and methodologies to better understand the universal forms of religious experience and expression, such as sacred symbols, rituals, myths, scriptures, ethics, and communities.
- Understand the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization
- Analyze a wide range of religious beliefs and practices as an avenue for better understanding religion in individual, cultural, economic, and political contexts.
- Identify religious themes and patterns that shape our everyday life.
- Critically engage the issue of religious diversity and dialogue in both national and international contexts.

- Reflect upon and enhance students's potential for moral agency and compassion.

Expectations of this Course

How will you succeed in this course?

Gordon Rule Requirement

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write one research paper and a second shorter research paper, in addition to three Reflection papers, and four Discussions. (The reflection papers will be composed of 500–700 words each.) All source material must be cited correctly using MLA or APA style. 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).

Global Learning Objectives

As a Global Learning course, students will meet the following objectives through readings, assignments, and written 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 the ability to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

Additional Course Information

This is a certified hybrid course, which means that most of the coursework will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in a hybrid course are basically the same as for a traditional course. In fact, hybrid courses require an even greater degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills, which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

In addition to the completion of writing assignments and exams, the primary requirement for successful completion of this course will be an open mind. Students are expected to exhibit respect for all religious traditions and peoples at all times. Any disrespectful or derisive comments will not be tolerated in this course. Religion is, after all, a very personal and sensitive subject for many.

On the other hand, class participants can expect academic freedom to express their views. Although religion can be personal, this is an academic course taken for college credit, and thus, students are expected to examine the topics rigorously. Religion shall not be exempt from the scrutiny placed on any and all academic subjects.

Course Detail:

Late Assignments

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 time frame may cause delays and/or errors, which can lead to students missing crucial deadlines.

Assignment Submissions

All work must be submitted through Canvas. Canvas does not allow instructors to submit on behalf of students, so 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.

Extra Credit

No Extra Credit work will be accepted in this course.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus by means of Canvas Announcements and/or email messages, with ample time allowed for students to respond and adjust appropriately.

Assignments & Assessments

Discussion Forums

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.

Assignments

Description of Assignments:

1. **Quizzes (5% of overall grade)**

Four time-restricted, multiple-choice and true/false quizzes will be given. The questions in the quizzes will draw from the weekly course content, including lectures, videos and assigned readings.

Quiz Duration: Students will have 20 minutes to answer 10 multiple-choice and true/false questions.

Quiz Attempts: Quizzes may be attempted twice. The higher of the two attempts will count towards the student's final grade. (It is not mandatory to take each quiz twice.)

Reopening quizzes after the due date has passed will require verifiable documentation.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and internet connection, it is very important that the "Practice Quiz" be attempted prior to beginning the quizzes and exams. It is your

responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements

2. Exams (30% of overall grade)

The Midterm Exam (15% of overall grade) will cover the following: all introductory material, African spirituality, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It will contain 80 multiple choice and true/false questions.

The Final Exam (15% of overall grade) will cover Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. It will also contain 80 multiple choice and true/false questions.

The exams are online and time restricted. Unlike the quizzes, students will have only one attempt to complete the Midterm and Final exams. Please make note of this important difference.

3.Visit to Holocaust Memorial (15% of overall grade)

For this assignment, you are to visit the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach (either in-person or virtually -- **preferably in person)** and then write a 4–5-page assessment of your experience there. The following are the things I would like you to include in your analysis:

In a brochure printed by the Memorial, its founders stated that one of the reasons for its creation was to provide, "a permanent reminder to future generations of Nazi persecution as well as a symbol of the world's indifference to genocide."

1) Do you think the Memorial has achieved that purpose? Why

or why not?

2) Would you recommend this experience to everyone? Why or why not?

3) What aspect(s) of the Memorial affected you emotionally the most? Why?

4) What has the knowledge of the various genocides related to religious persecution (i.e., the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the genocide in Tibet, and the Holocaust) I have discussed in class taught you about the kinds of religious extremism that continues to take place today?

5) Do you think that most people truly ARE indifferent to genocide? Provide reasons for your answer.

6) Finally, from your reading and class lectures, what were the major effects that the Holocaust had on the Jewish people today?

Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach

Address: 1933-1945 Meridian Avenue, Miami Beach 33139

Telephone: 305-538-1663

Website: http://holocaustmemorialmiamibeach.org

4. Reflection Papers (15% of overall grade)

These assignments require you to write a 1–2-page reflection on an assigned video or topic about the religion being taught in that particular section of the course. For each reflection, the instructor

will provide a question (or questions) to be answered, which will be found within the Class Schedule for the corresponding week or module.

5. Discussions (10% of overall grade) --

In order to receive full credit for your posts, these discussion assignments require you to write a post and then respond to that of one of your classmates. Each discussion must be about 300-500 words.

6. Research/Term Paper (25% of overall grade)

The term paper will be automatically checked for plagiarism using Turnitin, via Canvas. (It is not necessary to create an account on Turnitin.com to submit this assignment.)

Students may not submit work from a previous semester or from another class for this assignment or any other assignment in this course. If you do so, it will be flagged for plagiarism by Turnitin.

Make sure to keep electronic and paper copies of all written work. Also, for your own protection, keep a copy of your Turnitin electronic receipt (confirmation of assignment submission) until you have received your final grade for the course.

Requirements and Instructions for Term Paper

Length: 3000-4000 words, not including your reference or works cited page.

Formatting: Double-spaced, 12-pt font size, Arial or Times New Roman font.

References: A minimum of 2 academic sources, one of which must be a book reference. These academic sources are in addition to your textbook/weekly readings/lectures. Do not use Wikipedia as a source!

Select one religion – it must be a religion that you were neither brought up in nor one that you are currently practicing – and then, first, in about 3 pages, carefully research its history, ritual practices and beliefs. You must then attend at least one service/ceremony for your chosen religion and present both your academic research and your personal impressions and understanding of the religion. Follow the guidelines below:

1. In the introduction of your paper, state which religion you have chosen to research and your reason(s) for choosing it. Also, in the introduction, provide the name, address and phone number of the house of worship you visited.
2. How much – if anything – did you already know about the religion before researching it? What was it that you knew (or thought you knew)?
3. Did you have any preconceptions, expectations, or reservations about researching the religion? About the way the service would be organized? About its practitioners? About whether you would be welcomed at the service? If so, what were they?
4. How did your actual experience meet, or differ from, your

expectations?

5. How did attending the service make you feel?
6. In about 3 pages, provide a brief discussion of the main beliefs and rituals of the religion.
7. Does the religion you researched utilize a sacred text or texts? If so, which one(s)?
8. What is the origin/authorship of the sacred text?
9. Provide a detailed physical description of the house of worship and its external surroundings. That is, what did the building look like on the outside? What kind of neighborhood was it in?
10. What did it look like on the inside? For example, was there artwork on the walls? If so, what did the artwork depict? Were there paintings? Stained glass windows? Flowers? Was there incense or candles burning?
11. Was there an altar? If so, how was it utilized and what objects (if any) were on it?
12. Provide a detailed description of what took place during the service. Be sure to include the subject and exact details of the sermon or talk.
13. Was there music playing? If so, what kind? Was there a band or a choir?

14. Were the participants dancing? Singing?
15. Describe the way in which the service was organized. For example, were men and women seated together or apart?
16. How were the participants dressed? Why were they dressed in a particular way (if they were)?
17. Did the practitioners get together after the service for refreshments or discussion? If so, what occurred? If not, how did the service end?

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.

- 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 exam at 4:55 pm, the student will only have 5 minutes to complete the quiz.
- **IMPORTANT NOTE: 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 the FIU

Canvas Help Team.

Grading

Course Grading Table

Course Assignments	Number of Items	Weight
Research/Term Paper	1	25%
Reflection Papers	3	15%
Visit to Holocaust Memorial	1	15%
Quizzes	4	5%
Midterm Exam (Exam 1)	1	15%
Final Exam (Exam 2)	1	15%
Discussions	4	10%
Total	15	**100%**

Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %
A	9r or above	B	83-86	C	70-76
A-	90-94	B-	80-82	D	60-69

Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	F	59 or less

Textbook and Course Materials

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD, 13th Edition

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Lewis M. Hopfe, Mark R. Woodward, and Brett R. Hendrickson

Publisher: Pearson Education, Inc., College Division

Publication Date: December 2014

Copyright Date: 2016, 2012, 2009

ISBN 10: 9780133793826

ISBN 13: 0133793826

Notes: A digital version of the book has been ordered for REL 2300 by the FIU Bookstore, as the book is currently out of print. However, if you wish to purchase an actual copy of the book, you can get the 11th, 12th or 13th edition.

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.

Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

PowerPoints will be provided to supplement material discussed in class and/or not found in the textbook. Links to all PowerPoints will be listed in the Canvas Announcements section of the course.

Other materials provided will be illustrative videos, which are to be viewed and evaluated as per each assignment.

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place both during our weekly in-person classes, via email, Canvas Announcements, and 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 correspondences within 24 hours.

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.

Schedule of Topics

Week #1:

Introduction to the course: course overview; review of course syllabus; defining religion; and theories on the origin of religion.

Discussion #1: Read the list of definitions/assessments of the term “religion” (see Canvas Announcements) and choose at least two of them to discuss. Your discussion should include an explanation of WHY you find them of interest and how they are closest to – or furthest from – what you perceive to be a satisfactory definition. **Due**

Reflection #1: Watch a portion of Part One of the film Zeitgeist, which is entitled “On Religion.” You may begin watching approximately 9 minutes into the video and then watch it until the end of Part One. The link for it will be found on the Announcements section of Canvas.

Write a 1-2-page reflection paper answering the following questions: (1) Which of the theories on the origin of religion presented in class (see Power Points, "Introduction to World

Religions") does the film express most clearly? (2) How did watching the film make you feel? (3) What is the film's main theme? (4) Do you agree or disagree with its point of view? Why or why not? **Due**

Reading Assignment: Religions of the World, Introduction and Hopfe Chapters 1, 2 & 3; Power Points: "Introduction to World Religions"

Week #2:

Overview of Basic Religions

Introduction to African Spirituality

American Indian Religions (on your own)

Discussion #2: Discuss the African traditional religions, in terms of their basic worldview, their relationship with nature, and their ideas about god/gods. **Due**

Reading Assignment: Power Points on African Spirituality, the Papal Bulls, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Week #3:

African Spirituality (continued)

The Papal Bulls, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the Middle Passage

Films to view:

(1) The Middle Passage, by Steven Spielberg:

The link for it will be found on the Announcements section of

Canvas.

(2) A short clip from the HBO Documentary, "Middle Passage"

The link for it will also be found on the Announcements section of Canvas.

Quiz #1: **Due**

Reading Assignment: Hopfe, Chapter 4 (Hinduism)

Week #4:

Hinduism: The Classical Period

Assignment – Reflection #2 – Film: Mystic India – due

The story in this film is based on the life of a real mystic who lived in the late-18th century and became the founder of an important sect of Hinduism. Please answer the following:

(1) What did you think about the experiences depicted in it? How believable are they? Why or why not?

(2) In what ways does the story of Neelkanth and his journey aid in understanding the Hindu mindset and the practices of asceticism and mysticism? Please give specific examples from the film.

(3) What does the term “unity in diversity” convey about the religion of Hinduism?

Reading Assignment: Hopfe, Chapter 5 (Jainism)

Week #5:

Hinduism – the Post-Classical Period

Reading Assignment: Chapter 6 (Buddhism); Power Points on Buddhism and Buddhism after the Buddha's Death

Quiz #2: Due (on Hinduism)

Week #6:

Hinduism – the Post-Classical Period

Week #7:

Introduction to Buddhism and the Life of the Buddha

Excerpts from film "Little Buddha" -- to be shown in class

Middle Way Scene

Awakening Scene (Enlightenment)

Also, see the Canvas Announcements for an explanation of the Buddhist Eightfold Path)

Film: Compassion in Exile: The Story of the 14th Dalai Lama.

This film is not available online. It can be rented for $3.99 via the following link: **https://vimeo.com/ondemand/compassioninexile)**

Reflection #3, Due

This film tells the life story of His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama of

Tibet who, for over 60 years in exile, has waged a non-violent struggle to save the very unique culture and religion of the Tibetan people. Please answer the following:

(1) What does the film tell us about Tibet's culture and religion, both prior to and since the Chinese invasion?

(2) In what ways did the Chinese attempt to destroy the Tibetan religion?

(3) Do you consider the Chinese actions in regard to the Tibetan people genocidal? Why or why not? Explain your answer.

(4) Throughout the Dalai Lama's decades in exile, in what ways has he shown himself to be the ultimate example of compassion?

Week #8:

Changes in Buddhism after the death of the Buddha: The Three Rafts – Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana

Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) and the Dalai Lama

Midterm Exam: Due

Reading Assignment: Hopfe, Chapter 10 (Judaism)

Week #9:

Introduction to Judaism

Film: A History of God, part 1 (This film is divided into 3 parts: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity). For now, you can watch the first part (the first 47 minutes).

Week #10:

Judaism

Discussion #3 – due Watch a video entitled "The Mystery of the Jews"

The link for the video is: https://aish.com/the-mystery-of-the-jews

Then, discuss the following:

(1) How would you assess the way in which this short film portrays the Jewish people?
(2) Do you think it gives an accurate picture of the people and their history?
(3) Using specific examples from the film, why or why not?
(4) Add any other observations and/or reactions to the video, both positive and/or negative, you may have.

Quiz #3 (Judaism) – due

Reading Assignment: Hopfe, Chapter 12 (Islam)

Week #11:

Judaism (continued)

Introduction to Islam and the life of Muhammad

Film: A History of God, Part 3

Week #12:

Islam

Research/Term Paper is due

Reading Assignment: Hopfe, Chapter 11 (Christianity)

Week #13:

Islam

Discussion #4: Due

Read the following article, which you will find on the Canvas Announcements: Alyahya, M. (2016, October 19). Don't Blame 'Wahhabism' for Terrorism. New York Times.

Summarize the author's major claims in the article. Do you agree or disagree with the claims put forth in this article? Defend your position.

Quiz #4 – due (on Islam)

Paper on Holocaust Memorial is due

Week #14:

Introduction to Christianity and the Life and Teachings of Jesus

Film: A History of God, Part 2

Week # 15 (last week of class):

Christianity continued

FINAL EXAM: TBD

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.