# REL 2300

# Religions of the World

Section: RVG

Internet/Fully Online

Spring Term 2027

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

## Professor Information

Michael Zolondek

**Roles:** Primary Instructor

**Email:** mzolonde@fiu.edu

## Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

# Course Description

Religion is not a museum piece but a vibrant force in the lives of many people around the world today. Studies in World Religions is a sympathetic approach to what is living and significant in the world's major religious traditions and in various new movements that are arising. This course provides a clear and straightforward account of the development, doctrines, and practices of the major faiths followed today. The emphasis throughout is on the personal consciousness of believers and their own accounts of their religion and its relevance in contemporary life.

Why should you care about religion?

Why do people believe what they believe? How have religious ideas shaped cultures, laws, and everyday life across the world? In this class, you'll explore fascinating questions about the origins of religious traditions, the meaning of rituals and sacred texts, and how faith influences identity, ethics, and society. What do different religions say about life, suffering, and what happens after death? Why do similar themes appear in traditions separated by thousands of miles? Through discussion, stories, and global perspectives, this course invites you to investigate religion not just as belief, but as a powerful force that continues to shape human history and modern life. Whether you're curious, skeptical, or searching for deeper understanding, this course will challenge you to think in new ways about one of humanity's most enduring questions: what does it mean to believe?

These are not just entertaining questions, but are 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 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.

## 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

- Course Goals At the end of this course, students will able to: Compare and contrast religious societies and cultures in the local, national and/or international context. Examine these societies and cultures within contemporary and historical perspective. Discuss the issue of religious diversity in national and/or international context. Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives. Evaluate how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions. Demonstrate creative thinking about religious issues in the contemporary world.
- 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

## Textbook and Course Materials

**Religion Matters Courseware (Illumine Ebook, InQuizitive, and Videos)**

**Required/Recommended:** Required

**Authors:** Stephen Prothero

**Publisher:** Norton

**Publication Date:** 2024

**Copyright Date:** 2024

**ISBN 10:** 9781324062202R180

**ISBN 13:** 9781324062202R180

**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.

## Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a 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 to all religious traditions and peoples at all times. Thus, disrespectful or derisive commentary 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.

Students are expected to:

- review the getting started page located in the course modules;

- introduce yourself to the class during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;
- interact online with instructor and peers;
- review and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines;
- log in to the course at least 5 times per week;
- respond to discussions by the due date specified. No late work will be accepted;
- respond to emails/messages within 3 days or sooner;
- submit assignments by the corresponding deadline

The instructor will:

- log in to the course 4 times per week;
- respond to discussion postings within 2 days of the deadline;
- respond to emails/messages within 48 hours;
- grade assignments within 2 weeks of the assignment deadline.

## Grading

| Assignment | Weighted Total |
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| Quizzes | 10% |
| Perusall Activities | 10% |
| Discussions | 10% |
| Midterm | 25% |
| Final | 25% |
| Term Paper | 20% |

| Letter | Range (%) | Letter | Range (%) | Letter | Range (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 95 or above | B | 83 - 86 | C | 70 - 76 |
| A- | 90 - 94 | B- | 80 - 82 | D | 60- 69 |
| B+ | 87-89 | C+ | 77 - 79 | F | 59 or less |

## Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via the Canvas Inbox and/or instructor email. 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.

## Schedule of Topics

| Dates | Instructional Materials | Assignments/ Assessments |
|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | **Module 1 \| Introduction to Religious Studies**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 1: Introduction: Why Religion Matters (pages 2-27)<br>• Article: "What is the academic study of religion?" Russell T. McCutcheon<br>• Article: "Why Study Religion?" Joseph A. Adler<br>• Lecture: "Introduction to Religion" by Dr. Northup | • Discussion: Introduce Yourself<br>• Quiz Module 1<br>• Perusall assignment |

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| Week 2 | **Module 2 \| Hinduism**<br><br>• Textbook: Chapter 2: Hinduism: The Way of Devotion (pages 30-77)<br>• Article: Hinduism in Interreligious Relations by Melanie Barbato<br>• Lecture: "Hinduism" Part 1 and 2 by Dr. Katz<br>• Videos: "Hinduism 101 by Wendy Doniger - Episodes 1-5 and 7-8 | • Quiz Module 2<br>• Discussion Module 2 - Hinduism |

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| Week 3 | **Module 3 \| Buddhism**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 3: Buddhism: The Way of Awakening (pages 78-127)<br>• Article: Rey Ty - “The Rohingya Refugee Crisis”<br>• Lecture: "Buddhism" by Dr. Heine<br>• Video: "A Look Inside a Buddhist Temple in North Korea"<br>• Video: "An Exploration of Bhutan's Spirituality and Local Customs"<br>• Video: Buddhism’s Guide to Reality: The Bhavacakra \| Great Maps Explained (Duration: | • Quiz Module 3<br>• Discussion Module 3 Buddhism |

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| | 14 min)<br>• Video: Buddhism: The Buddhism: The Land of the Disappearing Buddha- Japan (Duration: 52 min) | |
| Week 4 | **Module 4 \| Jainism**<br>• Chapter from Living Religions: Chapter 4 – Jainism by Mary Pat Fisher<br>• Article: Wilson, Liz. “Child Ordination in South Asian Jainism.”<br>• Lecture: "Jainism" by Samani Charitra Prajna<br>• Video: What is Jainism? | • Quiz Module 4<br>• Perusall assignment |

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| Week 5 | **Module \| 5 Sikhism**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 4: Sikhism: The Way of the Guru (pages 128-169)<br>• Article: Re-Imagining the Divine in Sikhism by Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh<br>• Documentary Video: "Guru Nanak: The Founder of Sikhism - Life & Legacy" | • Quiz Module 5<br>• Perusall assignment |

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| Week 6 | **Module 6 \| Judaism**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 5: Judaism: The Way of Exile and Return (pages 172-223)<br>• Article: "From Social Norm to Legal Claim: How American Orthodox Feminism Changed Orthodoxy in Israel" - Elad Uzan<br>• Lecture: "Judaism" Part 1 and 2<br>• Video: "Celebrating Religious Tradition in Jerusalem"<br>• Video: "Mystic Lands: Jerusalem: Mosaic of Faith, Part 1 and 2 | • Quiz Module 6<br>• Perusall assignment |

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| Week 7 | **Module 7 \| Christianity**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 6: Christianity: The Way of Salvation (pages 224-289)<br>• Lecture: Dr. Larson - "Christianity: The First Millennia"<br>• Lecture: Dr. Gudorf - "Christianity: The Second Millennia"<br>• Lecture: Dr. Northup - "Religion in North America"<br>• Video: "Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus"<br>• Video: NBC Nightly News. (2011). "The Bible Updated for Modern Readers." | • Quiz Module 7<br>• Midterm Objective Exam (Modules 1-7)<br>• Midterm Essay |

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| Week 8 | **Module 8 \| Islam**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 7: Islam: The Way of Submission (pages 290-335)<br>• Article: “Islam and the Politics of Secularism in Pakistan.” by Zahid Shahab Ahmed<br>• Lecture: "Islam" by Dr. Musa (no audio)<br>• Video: Intro to Islam (feat. Dr. Hussein Rashid)<br>• Video: What is the Kaaba?<br>• Video: "Comparing the European and American Muslim Experience" | • Quiz Module 8<br>• Persuall assignment<br>• Discussion Module 8 Islam |

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| Week 9 | **Module 9 \| Confucianism**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 8: Confucianism: The Way of Ritual Propriety (pages 338-379)<br>• Lecture: Confucianism Lecture by Sandra Avila<br>• Article: Is Confucianism a religion? Modern Confucian theories on the ethical nature of classical discourses by Jana S Rosker<br>• Video: "China, China Religion" | • Quiz Module 9<br>• Perusall Assignment |

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| Week 10 | **Module 10 \| Daoism**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 9: Daoism: The Way of Flourishing (pages 380-427)<br>• Article: Religion, Cult or the Truth? The Struggle of Yiguan Dao in Thailand's Competitive Religious Field by Lin, Yu-sheng<br>• Lecture: "Daoism" by Sandra Avila<br>• Video: Foreign Correspondent: The Power of Falun Gong | • Quiz Module 10<br>• Persuall assignment |

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| Week 11 | **Module 11 \| Shinto**<br>• Reading: Chapter 7 – Shinto by Mary Pat Fisher<br>• Article: Creating the Sacred and the Secular in Colonial Korea - Don Baker<br>• Lecture: "Shinto" by Prof. Avila<br>• Video: "Japan, Japan Religion"<br>• Video: Japanese Animation and Shinto - Is Miyazaki Inspired By Shinto? | • Quiz Module 11<br>• Perusall Assignment<br>• Discussion Module 11 Shinto |

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| Week 12 | **Module 12 \| African Religions**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 10: Yoruba Religion: The Way of Connection (pages 428-477)<br>• Article: The Re-emergence of African Spiritualities : Prospects and Challenges by Kizito Chinedu Nweke & Ikenna Paschal Okpaleke<br>• Lecture: "African Religions" by Dr. Rey<br>• Video: "The Bushmen of Botswana"<br>• Video: "Santeria"<br>• Video: "Birth of Voodoo" | • Quiz Module 12<br>• Term Paper<br>• Perusall Assignment |

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| Week 13 | **Module 13 \| Native American Religions and Indigenous Religions**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 11: Navajo Religion: The Way of Beauty (pages 478-524)<br>• Article: "The Globalization of Ayahuasca Shamanism and the Erasure of Indigenous Shamanism" by Fotiou, Evgenia<br>• Lecture: "Native American Religions" by Dr. Huchingson<br>• Video: "Indigenous Sacred Ways: Religion Related to Ancestors | • Quiz Module 13<br>• Perusall Assignment |

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| | and Place"<br>• Video: "Apache Tribe Fights for Oak Flat"<br>• Video: Journey into Dreamtime Presentation by Aunty Munya Andrews | |
| Week 14 | | |

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| Week 15 | **Module 14 \| Atheism, Secularism and New Religious Movements**<br>• Textbook: Chapter 12: Atheism: The Way of No Way (pages 526-569)<br>• Article: Daniel Dennett - Teach Our Children Well<br>• Lecture: "New Religious Movements" by Erin Weston<br>• Lecture: "Religion in the Future" by Dr. Gudorf | • Quiz Module 14<br>• Discussion Module 14 – Secularism<br>• Global Learning Quiz |

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| Week 16 | **Finals Week** | • Final Exam Essay<br>• • Final Exam Objective Exam (Modules 8-14) |

# 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

## Assessments

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

# Assignments

## Discussion Board Assignments (10% of overall grade)

There will be five (5) 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, 12:00PM to Sunday, 11:59PM 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 attached to each discussion for details on what criteria your 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 position. Contribute links to articles, news stories, and/or other media whenever possible.

**Citation Style for Discussions:** Provide in-text citations for this assignment when referencing **any** source, including external sources and the course content in the modules (e.g., lecture videos, documentaries, articles, and the textbook). Use Chicago style. or MLA style for references. *You must cite page numbers on articles and books in your in-text citations.

## Quizzes (10% of overall grade)

Each module in this course will have a quiz administered through InQuizitive. You must answer at least 20 questions to get credit for each chapter quiz. These are not time restricted and can be completed throughout the availability of each quiz. See course schedule for availability dates.

The Jainism and Shinto modules will have quizzes via Canvas as these do not have corresponding chapters in the Religion Matters textbook. These two quizzes will be time-restricted, multiple-choice quizzes. The questions for these two quizzes will draw specifically from the assigned readings in these modules.

Quiz Availability: Open from Monday, 12:00 AM to Sunday, 11:59 PM (see Course Calendar for specific dates)

Quizzes will be graded automatically. Students will be able to see their scores immediately after submitting the quiz.

The correct answers for quizzes will not be released to students. Students will be able to see submitted answers only. Students should refer to their course

materials for the correct answers.

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be attempted through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance please contact FIU Online Support Services.

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 or exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements.

## Perusall Assignments (10% of overall grade)

Students will read and/or watch selected videos through Perusall inside Canvas where they will be awarded points for leaving high quality thoughtful comments on each reading or video. This both ensures students are reviewing and engaging critically with the weekly instructional materials. Students will be able to see other students' interactions in Perusall.

Students earn full credit by submitting 4 high-quality comments.

If all comments are bunched together in a small area of the content, deduct up to 10% of this component.

High quality comments are those that do the following:

-reveal interpretation of the text

- demonstrate understanding of concepts through analogy and/or synthesis of multiple concepts

-thoughtful explanations with substantiated claims and/or concrete examples

-poses profound questions that go beyond the material covered in the text

-explains the relationship between concepts

Here is a good guide for Writing good comments in the social sciences – Perusall : Writing good comments in the social sciences – Perusall

## Exams (50% of overall grade)

The Midterm Exam (25% of overall grade) and Final Exam (25% of overall grade) consist of both objective and essay portions.

The Midterm Exam will cover: Modules 1- 7 (see course schedule for details)

The Final Exam will cover: Modules 8-14 (see course schedule for details)

The objective portions are online, time-restricted examinations. Students will have only one attempt to complete the objective portions of the Midterm and Final Exams. Please make note of this important difference. The objective portion of exams will be graded automatically. Students will be able to see their scores immediately after submitting the exam. Honorlock will be used to proctor the objective portion of each exam to ensure academic integrity of these assessments.

The essay prompts for the exams will become available during the exam availability period. The essay portions of these exams must be submitted via Canvas and will be checked for plagiarism using Turnitin. The essay portion of the exams should be approximately 500-750 words long. Please refer to the rubric within the assignment page for details on what criteria your exam essays will be evaluated on.

**Citation Style for Midterm/Final Essays:** Provide in-text citations for this assignment when referencing the course content in the modules (e.g., lecture videos, documentaries, articles, and the textbook). Use Chicago or MLA style for references. *You must cite page numbers on articles and books in your in-text citations.

## Term Paper (20% of overall grade)

### Important Information

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. It will be flagged for plagiarism by Turnitin.

Keep electronic and paper copies of all written work. 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.

### Instructions for Students

Length: 1200-1500 words, in addition to a bibliography/works cited page

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

**Citation Style:** Provide in-text citations for this assignment when referencing **any** source, including external sources and the course content in the modules (e.g., lecture videos, documentaries, articles, and the textbook). Use Chicago style. or MLA style for references. *You must cite page numbers on articles and books in your in-text citations.

Bibliography: a minimum of 3 academic sources; preferably peer-reviewed publications and books. One of these must be a book reference. These academic sources are in addition to your textbook/weekly readings/lectures. Do not use Wikipedia as an Internet source.

The textbook and required readings will not have enough information about any of the topic questions above to formulate substantial responses. To

succeed in this assignment, set aside sufficient time to research the chosen topic thoroughly.

**Term paper prompts and instructions will become available to students during the early weeks of the course.**

## Grading Criteria

- Please refer to the rubric within the assignment page for details on what criteria your Term Paper will be evaluated on.
- Pay special attention to the following items:
    - The information in your paper. Is it correct? Is it detailed? Do you demonstrate basic knowledge of the religious tradition from which the concept is taken? Is this knowledge evident in your description? You must use at least three academic sources in your paper. One of them must be a book reference.

1. How your information is presented. This includes the way the it is organized and language skills such as spelling, grammar, and proper sentence structure.
2. The quality of your analysis, how well you support the main argument of your paper.

## Research Resources

**The following resources can assist with your research for this assignment:**

- **ATLA Religion Database**
- **JSTOR**
- **Web Site evaluation video (4 minutes)**
- **Web site evaluation guidelines from Berkeley**

# 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.

# Academic Integrity

**Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and**

**community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Conduct and Honor Code.**

## *Academic Misconduct includes:*

**Cheating**

- **The unauthorized use of any materials, information, study aids or assistance from another person on any academic assignment or exercise, unless explicitly authorized by the course Instructor;**
- **Assisting another student in the unauthorized use of any materials, information, study aids, unless explicitly authorized by the Instructor; and**
- **Having a substitute complete any academic assignment or completing an academic assignment for someone else, either paid or unpaid;**

**Plagiarism**

- **The deliberate use and appropriation of another are work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the Student's own.**
- **Assisting another student in the deliberate use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own.**
- **The submission of any work authored by another person or automated tool without proper acknowledgement of the source, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form. It is a student's responsibility to familiarize themselves with the University and Class policies on AI, which can be found in the Canvas Module.**

**Learn more about the academic integrity policies and procedures as well as student resources that can help you prepare for a successful semester by clicking the relevant links in the Policies & Resources Section of this syllabus.**