REL 2300

Religions of the World

Section: U09

Hybrid/Certified

Spring Term 2027

Course Meeting Information

Class meeting times	
Day:	T
Time:	11:00 AM - 12:15 PM
Location:	CASE 136

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

Professor Information

Erik Larson

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: larsone@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.

Textbook and Course Materials

Religion Matters

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Stephen Protero

Publisher: W. W. Norton

Publication Date: 2020

Copyright Date: 2020

ISBN 10: 1393912852

ISBN 13: 7801393912852

Chapters/Pages: All

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

- 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

Expectations of this Course

This is a hybrid course, which means half of the course will be in-person and the other half online. Expectations for performance are the same for a traditional course. The combination of traditional and online work requires a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology

skills which can make these courses even more useful for your professional preparation.

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;

- review and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines;
- submit assignments by the corresponding deadline

Grading

Assignment	Weighted Total
Quizzes	25%
At-home Assignments	40%
Midterm	10%
Final	10%
Attendance and Participation	10%
Globalization Question	5%

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

Schedule of Topics

Week 1 [January 11-17] Introduction. Read: RM, Introduction and Overview (pp. 7-17).

At-home Assignment 1 Due January 20

Week 2 [January 18-24] Theories on the Origin of Religion. Read: RM, Chapter 1 (pp. 17-25).

Quiz on Chapter 1 Due January 17

At-home Assignment 2 Due January 27

Week 3 [January 25-31] Native American Religions Read: RM, Chap. 10 (pp. 441-489).

Quiz on Chapter 10 Due January 24

At-home Assignment 3 Due February 3

Week 4 [February 1-7] Hinduism. Read: RM, Chap. 2 first half (pp. 26-54).

Week 5 [February 8-14] Hinduism, Jainism. Read: RM, Chap. 2 second half (pp. 54-77).

Quiz on Chapter 2 Due February 7

At-home Assignment 4 Due February 10

Week 6 [February 15-21] Buddhism. Read: RM, Chap. 3 (pp. 78-127).

Quiz on Chapter 3 Due February 14

At-home Assignment 5 Due February 17

Week 7 [February 22-28] Confucianism. Read: RM, Chap. 8 (pp. 340-389).

Spring Break March 1-7

Quiz on Chapter 8 Due February 28

At-home Assignment 6 Due March 3

Week 8 [March 1-7] Daoism. Read: RM, Chap. 9 (pp. 390-439).

Quiz on Chapter 9 Due March 7

Midterm Examination open from Tuesday March 10 until Thursday, March 12 at 11:59pm

Week 9 [March 8-14] Judaism. Read: RM, Chap. 5 first half (pp. 172-197).

At-home Assignment 7 Due March 17

Week 10 [March 15-21] Judaism Read: RM, Chap. 5 second half (pp. 198-223).

**Extra Credit: Paper Proposal Due on Monday, March 15

Quiz on Chapter 5 Due March 21

Week 11 [March 22-28] Christianity Read: RM, Chap. 6 first half (pp. 224-260).

Week 12 [March 29-April 4] Christianity. Read: RM, Chap. 6 second half (pp. 260-291).

Quiz on Chapter 6 Due April 4

At-home Assignment 8 Due April 7

Week 13 [April 5-11] Islam. Read: RM, End Chap. 7 first half (pp. 292-314).

**Extra Credit: Research Paper Due on Monday, April 5

Globalization Question Due on Monday, April 12

Week 14 [April 12-18] Islam. Read: RM, Chap. 7 second half (pp. 314-339).

Quiz on Chapter 7 Due April 18

Final Examination open from Tuesday April 20 until Thursday, April 22 at 11:59pm.

Policies & Resources

Academic Honesty: Each student is expected to do his or her own work. It is absolutely unacceptable to submit

someone else's work as your own. This is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade (F) for the assignment and possible disciplinary action. Thus, when in the course of writing your paper you quote or paraphrase an idea found in one of your sources you must give credit to the original author (usually by means of a footnote).

AI Policy: Using an AI Natural Language Model (such as ChatGPT) to complete a writing assignment is not allowed in this course. Any evidence of such use will result in being reported to academic misconduct with a recommendation of a zero for the assignment.

Academic Conduct: 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 Handbook.

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

Assignments & Assessments

Quizzes: We will be using Norton's InQuizitive textbook system that includes chapter quizzes with questions drawn from the information in our textbook. You need to buy the code at the bookstore and create an Inquizitive account if you don't already have one. The quizzes will be due each Sunday night after we complete a particular chapter.

At-Home Assignments: There will be eight assignments to do at home interspersed throughout the semester. These assignments will ask you to do various things such as read articles and watch videos, conduct research, and then explain your findings and discuss how your views have been enlarged or changed as a result of what you have learned. These at-home assignments will be due on Wednesdays in a drop-box on Canvas.

Examinations: Both midterm and final examinations will be a

combination of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and matching questions. The final examination is not cumulative–it covers only material from the second half of the semester.

Attendance: An absolutely essential part of the course! Some material will inevitably be covered in class that is not to be found in the textbook so that each absence will affect your ability to do well on the tests. Through the course of the semester, there may be a time or two when you just can't make it to class, but to get an A, you should come at least 10 out of the 14 classes.

Globalization Question: Read the article "The Case for Contamination" by Kwame Appiah and use the information you have learned in class this semester to answer the following question in 3-4 pages:

Describe Appiah's approach and discuss its strengths and weaknesses. Then explain how religions help people express their identities both as individuals and as members of a group. Also, what did you learn about the need for and the potential of better understanding between religions? In your view, what is the best way to approach interreligious dialogue (For example, should we all become the same or should we value our diversity? If the latter, how do we do this? Is globalization a help or a hindrance to diversity?)

Extra Credit: If you wish to improve your grade, you may write an optional term paper, the topic of which must be approved by the instructor. You will secure this approval by turning in a proposal by the date noted in the calendar above. The proposal should be

1-2 pages in length and outline as clearly as possible what issue you intend to investigate and why you think it important or interesting. The topic should deal with some matter relating to how religious communities change and adapt as they move to different areas or how they deal with other faith communities. Examples of the former would be how Christianity began in the Near East as a Jewish movement but eventually spread to non-Jews throughout the Roman Empire, or how Buddhism started in India but today has spread to places such as China and Japan where it has exerted immense influence, or how the slave trade led to a synthesis of African religions with Christianity producing the religions we know today as Santeria and Vodou. Examples of the latter, would be how Muslims view Jews and Christians as Peoples of the Book while rejecting polytheistic religions, or how Hindus view the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu (though this doesn't mean they convert to Buddhism).
The paper should be 6-9pp. long, excluding bibliography with lines double-spaced. Margins for the pages should be 1 inch on all sides and the style should conform to either that of MLA or the Chicago Manual of Style. In the body of the paper you may use either footnotes or endnotes**. If you elect to write the optional paper, it will count for an additional 20% of your final grade**.

Syllabus Note on Internet Use in Research: You may cite from the internet in your term papers, but you must be discerning. Anyone can post "information" on the internet, and thus some of what is there is inaccurate, incomplete, and sometimes even blatantly untrue. As in print collections in libraries, only scholarly articles on the internet are acceptable as sources for research papers.

Internet articles should ideally have authors. Some will list individual authors; others will list institutions as sources. The credibility of the information depends on the credibility of the source. Acceptable sources include individual scholars with academic credentials, educational institutions (e.g., Institute of Reformation History, Princeton University), publicly supported national or international institutions (e.g. the World Health Organization or the National Institutes of Health) or other well-known institutions with credible reputations (e.g. the World Council of Churches, the Children's Defense Fund). Most educational institutions have addresses which end with the letters "edu." You must use your judgment since many reputable institutions may not be well known by most students. Also, sometimes websites may list a university as the place from which the material emanates, but which does not sponsor or in any way support the information on that site. (You could set up a website that lists FIU as its origin, and purports that the Pope died last month and was replaced by a ringer!).

There will be some internet sources the reliability of which will be difficult to assess. Sometimes you must judge by the tone and range of an article. If it reads like a magazine or newspaper article and cites none of the sources it used, it is not scholarly. You should ask whether the article demonstrates balance: Does it attempt to tell all sides of the story? Does it ask critical questions of the material it covers? How well does its treatment accord with other treatments of the same material you have found? If you would really like to cite an internet article but have doubts about its acceptability, look up the institution or the author on the internet or in the library. Has the author or institution published other works? Have those been reviewed or cited by other scholars?

When you cite from the internet, you must list the entire address on the web where you found the information and the date you accessed it. When applicable you must also note any search terms needed within the website to find this particular article when these do not appear within the address.
The following are some bibliographic entries:
Musa, Edward, “The Art of the Maya.” http://www.unescape.org/pop/journal/v1onaal.htm. 4/27/2027.
Zarabozo, Jamaal, “Is Family Planning Allowed in Islam?” http://www.albany.edu/~ha4934/famplan.html. 3/5/2027

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.