REL 2300

Religions of the World

Section: U12

Hybrid/Certified

Spring Term 2027

Course Meeting Information

Class will meet on Thursdays from 2:00 pm to 3:15 pm in the Sanford L. Ziff Family Education Building (ZEB150)
Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Professor Information

Alfonso Matas Anwandter

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: almatas@fiu.edu

Phone: N/A

Office Hours: After class on Thursdays

Office Location: N/A

Department or Academic Unit: Department of Religious Studies

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Why should we care about religion?

Sociologist Emile Durkheim saw religion as a part of the human condition, and while the content of religion might be different from society to society over time, religion will, in some form or another, always be a part of social life. Therefore, you do not need to be a religious person in order to be in contact with religion. This course will provide you the tools to learn and understand different religious beliefs from around the world and how they interact with your academic field.

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? It might be good to wonder if religion is a force for good or evil to

begin with. Can we still be spiritual without being religious? 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.

This is an introductory course to world religions and one of the many courses that complete the Global Learning requirement. Since it is an extensive subject, we will be focusing on some of the major religions of our world, examining them from their historical, sociological, anthropological, psychological, and ritualistic practices. Furthermore, we will also learn about religions that are no longer in practice and had influenced some of today's religions. We will analyze the differences and similarities between religions and associate their practices, beliefs, and applications to contemporary issues in our world.

Textbook and Course Materials

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Lewis Hopfe, Mark Woodward, and Brett Hendrickson

Publisher: Pearson

Publication Date: 13th edition

Copyright Date: 13th edition

ISBN 10: 0205158609

ISBN 13: 9780205158607

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

- Demonstrate an understanding of themes, definitions, and symbols relating to religion.
- Compare and contrast the key underlying beliefs and principles of the major Eastern, Western, indigenous and shamanic religions.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
- Evaluate religious truth claims as potential sources of knowledge.
- Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.

- Appreciate the history, basic teachings, practices, and underlying beliefs and principles of some of the world religions, analyzing them in a critical way and understanding their similitudes and differences.
- Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
- Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions.
- Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

Expectations of this Course

How does a hybrid class work?

In a hybrid course, 50% of the time dedicated to the course is in person, engaging in learning, clarifying concepts, debating, working in groups, and discussing and developing each of the concepts covered in the course. The other 50% of the time takes place outside the class and includes reading the textbook, writing papers, watching videos, reading articles, providing opinions on different topics, and posting weekly in a discussion board. My responsibility is to provide you with lots of material and activities for you to apply

and put into practice the concepts learned in the readings, as well as clarify all of the questions that may arise from them. If we both do our part, we should be able to use the time in class to actively understand the concepts.

Course Communication

Communication directly with me in this course will take place via the Inbox. Furthermore, you are required be attentive to Announcements via Canvas which is the primary way I communicate with the entire class regarding additional instructions, class policy updates, etc. 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.

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

Attendance is mandatory and graded. Since we have limited 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 via FIU CheckIn 2.0. 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 me 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 lecture presentations. Participation also

includes introducing yourself in the online forum.

Assignments & Assessments

Course Policies on Late Work

Extra Credit and Make-Up Assignments

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

There will be no extra-credit assignment 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.

Online Activities

Every week after covering a topic, you will have to submit one or two activities. Each activity will become available under the corresponding module and is due on different weekdays as necessary by the very compressed summer schedule. All the due dates will be listed on the course's calendar.

Your responses to online activities must demonstrate substantive engagement with the material through critical analysis rather than superficial commentary. Each answer should reflect careful consideration of the question, incorporating relevant concepts and evidence to support your perspective.

While I emphasize content over technical perfection, your writing should remain coherent and clearly communicate your ideas. Minor grammatical inaccuracies will not affect your evaluation, as the primary focus rests on the depth and originality of your thought. However, be advised that any use of artificial intelligence tools - including but not limited to text generators, paraphrasing software, or automated writing assistants - constitutes a violation of academic integrity and will not be tolerated.

When referencing documentary materials, you must clearly indicate the specific timeline segments (e.g., 12:15-18:30) that inform your reflection. This precision allows for more focused discussion and demonstrates your attentive engagement with the source material.

Online Reflections

Online Reflection assignments in this course serve as an opportunity for you to engage critically with the assigned readings, demonstrating not only comprehension but also thoughtful analysis. These are not informal reactions or summaries; rather, they should reflect a substantive engagement with the material, drawing connections, raising questions, and articulating insights that emerge from your reading. Your work must directly reference and interact with the textbook and other assigned sources.

While I encourage you to express your ideas in your own voice, clarity and coherence remain important. Minor grammatical or stylistic errors will not affect your grade, as the primary focus is on the depth of your engagement with the content. However, the use of artificial intelligence—including but not limited to text generators, paraphrasing tools, or automated writing assistants—is strictly

prohibited. Submissions must be entirely your own original work. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct.

Writing requirements

As this is a Gordon Rule course, you are required to demonstrate "college level writing skills" throughout your assignments. Your written assignments must show good control of grammar, style, and structure. Your papers must have a clear thesis, supporting material, and a conclusion. All written work must consistently adhere to the MLA Formatting and Style Guide. Students are advised to carefully proofread all papers before submitting them.

All students are encouraged to take advantage of the University resources for writing to be found in the Center for Excellence in Writing, a full-service writing center providing writing assistance and feedback to university students.

While I encourage you to express your ideas in your own voice, clarity and coherence remain important. Minor grammatical or stylistic errors will not affect your grade, as the primary focus is on the depth of your engagement with the content. However, the use of artificial intelligence—including but not limited to text generators, paraphrasing tools, or automated writing assistants—is strictly prohibited. Submissions must be entirely your own original work. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct.

Term Paper

Each student will write a term paper on some topic 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 topic must receive the approval of the instructor before it is handed in. The proposals will receive a completion grade. This assignment will include both a preliminary outline—so that you can get feedback and receive the best grade possible on your final version—and a final version.
- The paper should be six to nine pages long, excluding bibliography with 12 point font and lines double-spaced. Margins for the pages should be 1 inch on all sides and the style should conform to MLA formatting.

Weekly Chapter Quizzes

There are 13 weekly chapter quizzes (one quiz per textbook chapter). The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Please review the specifics for each quiz below:

- As it is the general case with this compressed summer calendar, the quizzes, as well all other assignments are not due on the same day of the week. Please review your canvas quiz assignment due dates.
- 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.

All quizzes require that you activate the Lock Down Browser

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.

All exams require that you activate the LockDown Browser

Midterm Exam

- Covers the first half of the course and will include 50 multiple choice and true/false questions.
- Administered online in Canvas
- Total score is available immediately upon submission

Final Exam

- Covers the second half of the course and will include 50 multiple choice and true/false questions.
- Administered online in Canvas
- 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.

1. Attendance & Participation (10%)

Attendance is mandatory and will be recorded during each session. Penalties may apply for arriving late, leaving early, or extended absences during class. Participation entails: Completing assigned readings before each session, actively contributing to discussions, maintaining engagement during lectures and posting an introduction in the online forum

2. Online Activities (15%)

Thirteen (13) short-answer activities based on course documentaries. Responses must demonstrate critical analysis (300 words each), not superficial commentary. Clearly reference specific documentary timestamps when applicable.

3. Online Reflections (15%)

Thirteen (13) analytical reflections engaging with textbook readings. Submissions should show comprehension and original insight (300 words each). Direct textual engagement is required.

4. Term Paper (15%) Research paper (6–9 pages) analyzing: Religious adaptation in new cultural contexts or interfaith dynamics between communities. Thesis-driven with scholarly sources.

5. Chapter Quizzes (25%)

Thirteen (13) weekly quizzes (10 MC questions per chapter). Lowest score will be dropped.

6. Midterm Exam (10%)

Covers first half of course material. Take home exam. Fifty (50) MC/true-false questions via Canvas.

7. Final Exam (10%)

Covers second half of course material. Take home exam. Fifty (50) MC/true-false questions via Canvas.

Grading

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Weight
Attendance & Participation	10%
Online Activities	15%
Online Reflections	15%
Term Paper	15%
Weekly Chapter Quizzes	25%
Exams	20%
Total	**100%**

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A	95 to 100
A-	90 to 94.99

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
B+	87 to 89.99
B	83 to 86.99
B-	80 to 82.99
C+	77 to 79.99
C	70 to 76.99
D	60 to 69.99
F	0 to 59.99

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

Please refer to the module page on Canvas.

Course Communication

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

I will respond to all correspondence within **2 days.**

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

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** (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.

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.