REL 3127

Church and State

Section: RVC

Internet/Fully Online

Spring Term 2027

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

Professor Information

Dr. d'Elena

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: gdelena@fiu.edu

Phone: 305-348-2186

Office Hours: By Appointment

Office Location: By Zoom Only

Department or Academic Unit: SIPA and DOS

Additional Notes

About the Professor

Dr. d'Elena is an Adjunct Professor for Religious Studies, Politics and International Relations, and SLS. Professor d'Elena is also the Director of the Panthers Care Program at the Dean of Students Office overseeing the crisis management team. She has performed fieldwork abroad with U.N. officials, refugee coalition members and ethnic minorities, specifically in Southeast Asia, where she began to investigate the minority women and ethnic Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. As victims of systematic, state-sponsored persecution, she began to question why they faced such discrimination. This question led to the Buddhist 969 Movement in Myanmar, which contributes to the isolation and oppression of the Rohingya and minority women in Myanmar. Dr. d'Elena was able to interview Time Magazine's "Buddhist Terror" U Ashin Wirathu and provide feedback directly from the source of the violence for her ethnographic work. This led to several conferences and publications to raise awareness to the issues the Rohingya face in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Her work has been shared in both national and international academic conferences, colleges, non-profits, and local outreach programs for the youth about issues related to race, class, religion, violence, and politics.

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Should a baker be allowed to refuse to make a wedding cake for two men? Should pastors be able to tell their congregations who to vote for? Should employers be able to decide if their employee insurance covers birth control? Should there be a “wall” between government and religion? Is the U.S. a “Christian nation”? Is “one nation under God” a problematic national motto? Do biblical accounts of history deserve “equal time” in the classroom?

This course explores the dynamic, controversial, breaking-news intersection of religion and American law and values.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- Understand and discuss the religion clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- Trace the historical trajectory of American thinking on the place of religion vis-à-vis government.
- Describe key cases affecting the adjudication of church-state issues.
- Critically consider the constant stream of church-state conflicts in today’s news.
- Be more informed citizens and voters.

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.

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;
- **read/ watch** all the assigned materials
- **write** papers that exhibit the student's ability to grasp the material

Course Communication

Good communication is vital to successful online courses.

Contacting me: Contact me by email at gdelena@fiu.edu. Canvas messages work too, but email is the best way to contact me. If you want an answer to your question or have a problem, this is the way to get me. If you do not email me at that address, I cannot guarantee I will receive your message.

Please notify me via email if you believe you have encountered a quiz or test question that has been mis-graded or for which there is no clear answer listed.

Technical Problems: Generally, I cannot solve technical problems with the content or settings of the course and have to refer them to FIU Online. Your best bet is to contact them first. If you can't resolve the problem, email me and I will get it fixed. Be patient!

FAQs:

1. Reading is fundamental to this course and your functioning in the real world. **PLEASE READ THE SYLLABUS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.**
2. **Discussions:** Pay attention to the discussion guidelines in the syllabus because you will be graded for your ability to communicate, the quality of your responses, and following all the directions in your syllabus for discussions. Debates are 1 response (200 words and all work cited) Discussions are 2 responses (200 words each) and again, all work cited. If you are citing from the lectures you will cite as follows: d'Elena 2024, Week 1

3. You will notice I have your extra credit open until a day after the semester ends. I do this with the purpose that you can focus on the materials without worrying about every other courses deadlines the week prior. If you turn it in before, it is ok, but I leave it open so that you have an opportunity to prioritize whatever you are having the most difficulty with.

4. **Grading:**

   When I grade, I will leave comments on your intro posts and discussion posts. PLEASE READ THEM. Comments for discussions can be found on the grade panel. I advise all of you review the syllabus and instructions for your posts. I do not post publicly so that no one feels called out. I will not leave comments for everyone. However, some of you will warrant commentary from me due to errors you made in your discussions or some common ground in your post.

   If you do not get a perfect score on your discussion, **there is a reason** in the comment section in the gradebook. If you have any questions about how you can make your posts more profound and worthy of a perfect score, please feel free to reach out. **I want all of you to succeed in this!**

5. Please keep in mind: **I do not read responses to my comments on Canvas. If you have a response to my comment on your assignment, please email me through canvas. Again, I do not get notifications for this: please email / canvas message me instead.**

6. **Extra credit** is located under assignments tab and all students have the opportunity to do 10 points of extra credits toward

their final grade. This is game changing. However, because it is game changing I will not be providing extensions unless there is documented evidence of it needed.

7. I also leave all assignments open for the whole semester. This means you will lose 7% per day it is late but even if you turn your work in past that you will never get less than a 50 for late work. A 50 is better than a 0. it makes a huge difference. **For this reason I will not make exceptions. Late is late.** You have chances to fix your mistakes and you are welcome to. Please take advantage of it but be aware i will not allow you to cross boundaries because of this rare opportunity in my pedagogical style.
8. I have a very open door and as the Director of the Panthers Care Program at the Dean of Students Office. I hold student wellness high up on a pedestal. **Communicate with me.**

In the same light, I have a responsibility to report academic misconduct as I work directly with the office of conduct. I must report any plagiarism. **If your papers come up as plagiarized over 25% or anything over 25% AI use, you will be sent to conduct and I will not be grading the assignment until the review has been completed by the office of Student Conduct for Academic integrity (SCAI).** Please understand this is university policy. Professors do not have the authority to say something is AI. We get alerted by Turnitin and must report it to SCAI for them to decide with the student. False flags are abundant, so being flagged does not mean anything until the student and SCAI have reviewed the work. I have given you more than the average university professor provides in opportunities to

succeed when you fall behind:

1. Extra credit on canvas open until the end of the semester (plus a day). Up to 10 points to change your entire grade.
2. Allowing you to turn in late work for a maximum of 50% or a 7% deduction per day if less than a week late.
3. Open door policy to talk about your struggles.

Late Assignment Policy: All delays in turning in work due to illness or extenuating circumstances require justification via documentation. Doctor's note or proof of extenuating circumstances is required, but does not need to contain HIPAA or FERPA protected information.

Textbook and Course Materials

All Materials Provided in Course Shell

Required/Recommended: Recommended

Authors: All Materials Provided

Publisher: All Materials Provided

Publication Date: All Materials Provided

Copyright Date: All Materials Provided

ISBN 10: All Materials Provided

ISBN 13: All Materials Provided

Chapters/Pages: All Materials Provided

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.

Grading

Course Grading Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Weight
Discussions	13	35%
Assignments	3	55%
Quizzes	2	10%
Total		100%

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %
A	93 or above	B	83–86	C	70–76
A-	90–92	B-	80–82	D	60–69

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

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place 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.

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. We will be utilizing this tool to conduct course meetings.

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.

Schedule of Topics

This is an online course

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

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.

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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.

You are expected to read and view all assigned material and be prepared to discuss it intelligently in the discussion forum, the main mode of interaction for the course. Anyone may begin a discussion at any time on the topic assigned for the week or from preceding lectures or notes. Often, I will post a question for consideration, with the expectation that everyone will respond one or more times to the question and to other respondents.

You should post a minimum of twice per week, beginning with Week 1, to demonstrate your comprehension of the course readings and lecture materials. At least one posting per week should be original (some question or observation based on the week's materials), and at least one other should respond to other postings by me or your fellow students.

The two posts are to be a **minimum of 200 words per post.** Postings should actually say something. Postings of "I liked X" or "I was surprised by Y", while welcomed, are not what I'm looking

for or will grade on. I would rather you went out on a limb to say what you really think or to introduce some of your thoughts than that you say "safe" things about the material. Do you disagree with what was in the lesson? Why? This is a course full of controversial material. What do think about it? There's room for argument on all sides. Just always be respectful!

Each discussion week will be graded separately. **Lateness will definitely cause a drop in your grade for that week, as will superficial responses.** This is a major portion of your grade!

ALL WORK IN THIS COURSE MUST BE CITED. Including in discussions.

Discussion Forum Debates

From time to time, we will use the Discussion Forum to stage a debate on some question like those at the beginning of this syllabus. The debate will constitute the discussion question for the week. In a debate, contributors are expected to rationally defend one or the other position on the question. You may choose to argue either point of view (as long as everyone doesn't argue the same side!) Of course, this won't be a formal debate, so you may (and should) respond to each other freely—logically, politely, and with reference to reliable sources. Everyone must participate. Only **one 200 word post** is required for debates.

Quizzes

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.

Proctored Exams

Not Applicable here.

Course Awards

Affordability Counts Award!

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.