REL 4150

Spiritual Power & Spiritual Abuse

Section: RVC

Internet/Fully Online

Spring Term 2027

Professor Information

Eric Isaac

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: eisaac@fiu.edu

Phone: 305-348-2186

Office Hours: By Appointment

Office Location: DM 351

Department or Academic Unit: Religious Studies/ Honors College

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

This course takes a mixed methods social science approach to analyzing the phenomenon of spiritual power and spiritual abuse in religious communities. In this course we will rely on theories offered by Max Weber, Peter Berger, and other prominent social scientists to analyze both spiritual power and the abuse of that power in religious communities. This course will also rely on historic accounts from the Caribbean and Colonialism, as well as modern accounts from local, national, and international sources to help better understand the phenomenon. Our fundamental aim will be to better understand the connection between the symbolic spiritual power held by individuals and how that power is used to abuse others.

Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

https://digitalscholarship.fiu.edu/record/13895?ln=en&v=pdf

Textbook and Course Materials

Understanding Spiritual Abuse

Subtitle: Incentives to Preserve Spiritual Power & Reducing Abusive Experiences

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Eric Isaac

Publisher: FIU Electronic Thesis and Dissertations

Publication Date: 2024-03-28

Copyright Date: 2024-03-28

ISBN 10: N/A

ISBN 13: N/A

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

- CLO 1: Students will be able to analyze topics such as power, abuse, religious communities, and religious governance of communities from multiple academic perspectives.
- CLO 2: Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions, specifically in the space of spiritual power and abuse.
- CLO 3: Students will be able to articulate a working definition of spiritual power and spiritual abuse informed by data, theory, and history.

Expectations of this Course

Statement on Plagiarism

You are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity if you need further clarification. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

1. A written work that is entirely or partially stolen from another source;
2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and

3. Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations.

Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity at http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm if you need further clarification. Offenders will receive a grade of F (0 points) for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly for the course. Please be aware: Previously submitted papers are not allowed, even if it is your own work and even if you are retaking this class. You may not "reuse" papers.

Assignments & Assessments

III. Course Assessment

The course will include a combination of in-class activities, written reflections, and major assignments. Emphasis will be placed on applying legal frameworks and interdisciplinary knowledge to real-world scenarios.

A. Final Essay (30%)

Students will submit a research essay (1,000–1,500 words) that analyzes an instance of spiritual abuse or theoretical issue related to spiritual abuse from the year 1950-the present day. The essay should integrate social science theory with interdisciplinary perspectives, providing a comprehensive analysis of the issue. The essay should be submitted via Canvas and formatted

according to the Chicago stlyle of citation.

B. Midterm Essay (30%)
Students will submit a research essay (1000-1,500 words) that analyzes an instance of a person abusing their spiritual power from the year 4000 B.C.E. to the year 1850. The essay should integrate social science theorys from the class and assess a historical person providing a comprehensive analysis of the issue. The essay should be submitted via Canvas and formatted according to the Chicago stlyle of citation.

C. Discussions (40%)
Discussion posts on canvas responding to audio recordings of podcasts or the central text of the course.

IV. Plagiarism, Academic Integrity, and Late Assignment Policy

Plagiarism, or the use of someone else's work without proper citation, is strictly prohibited. Violations will result in a grade of zero for the assignment and possibly for the entire course. For further details, please review the University’s Code of Academic Integrity.

Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 25% for each day they are late. No assignments will be accepted after the final

class unless otherwise specified.

V. Required Technology

This course uses Canvas for submitting assignments and accessing readings. All assignments must be submitted through Canvas; please do not send them via email.

Grading

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

This is a tentative outline of the course. It is subject to change with written notice.

Week	Activities
Week 1	**<u>Syllabus+Assignment overview</u>** 1. Introductions, syllabus review, class plan
Week 2	Examples of Spiritual Abuse
Week 3	Bodies Behind the Bus Definition

Week 4	**Theoretical Frameworks: A social science foundation for spiritual power**
Week 5	**Spiritual Power**
Week 6	**Spiritual Abuse**
Week 7	**Historical Accounts of Spiritual Abuse**

Week 8	**Historical Accounts of Spiritual Abuse II**
Week 9	**Experiences of Abuse I**
Week 10	**Experiences of Abuse II**
Week 11	**Experiences of Abuse III**

Week 12	**Writing Week**
Week 13	**Spiritual Power and Abuse Across Varieties of Religious Experience**
Week 14	**Non-Abusive Faith Communities**
Week 15	**Non-Abusive Faith Communities II**

Week 16	FINALS WEEK

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.