

# Religious Analysis and Interpretation

Course Syllabus – FALL 2014 CP III

REL: 2011 Sec. U -12 T/TH 2-3:15 pm  
 Religious Studies Dept.: 305 348 2186  
 Office: DM 301B

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 Office Hours: TBA

## Course Objectives

This course is designed to delve into religion and understand its complex nature. We will explore the various elements and dimensions that make up most religions around the globe today. Essentially, we will try to engage in an earnest study of religion.

We will discuss these elements and dimensions through case studies based on a range of different traditions. Class assignments, discussions, as well as a sacred site visit that are all geared to make the student really think and analyze the ins and outs of religion. In essence the student will explore how they are important in the lives of people and societies, especially in this increasingly globalized world and economy.

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will understand how an individual's identity and outlook are shaped by religious influences
- Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives
- Students will be able to explain the history and development of the belief systems and practices of various religious communities
- Students will be able to apply critical thinking to important topics in the field of religious studies
- Students will be able to appreciate the need and willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world
- Students will be able to evaluate their own and others' religious views as they relate to understanding other cultures and solving common problems

## Required Texts

Livingston, James C Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion (6<sup>th</sup> edition)

**ISBN-10:** 013600380X

**ISBN-13:** 978-0136003809

**\*\*\*All other articles available on course reserves from library catalog\*\*\***

## Gordon Rule Course

This is a Gordon Rule course which means you must demonstrate “college level writing skills” throughout your assignments. You will not receive any credit as a Gordon rule course for a C- or lower upon completion of this course. Your written assignments must show good control over grammar, style, and structure. A clear thesis, supporting material,

and conclusion must be evident. The student should try to utilize the writing lab to improve writing if needed.

### **Grade Components**

10% Participation/Attendance  
 10% Site Visit Draft (3-4 pgs)  
 25% Mid-term  
 20% Site Visit Final Draft (6-7 pgs)  
 10% Class Presentation  
 25% Final Exam

### **Participation and Attendance Policy**

- These elements are key and essential components for satisfactory completion of this course. The course is highly interactive and requires heavy student engagement and class presentations.
- Each student is allowed three absences but keep in mind your own responsibilities and how it might affect your grade. Any religious observances should be discussed with me ahead of time.

### **Reading Policy**

All readings are to be done for the day they appear on the course calendar.

### **Site Visit Essays**

Students will write a **6-7 page essay** during the semester.

The essay will be handed in twice:

- as a **draft** worth 10% of the final grade to be turned in **via turnitin.com**, and
- as a **final paper** worth 20% of the final grade to be turned in **via turnitin.com**.

For each essay, the student will do field research by attending a religious service or ceremony outside of their own religious tradition. **A handout with specific requirements will be handed out in class.**

Keep electronic and paper copies of all written work. For your own protection, keep a copy of your turnitin.com electronic receipt (confirmation of assignment submission) until you have received your final grade for the course.

### **Mid-term Exam**

The mid-term will be a timed 50 question multiple choice exam and a timed short-essay targeting major concepts and ideas in the study of religion.

### **Class Presentation**

A class presentation will be done based on the experience of the sacred site visit. **A handout with specific requirements will be handed out in class.**

### **Final Exam**

The final will be given during finals week during the scheduled exam date. There will be a timed 50 multiple choice question exam and a timed final short-essay targeting major concepts and ideas in the study of religion.

**No make-up final exams will be allowed.**

### **Turnitin and Grading Scale**

The three major written assignments will all be submitted through [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) by **11:59 pm on the due dates specified on the course calendar.**

Turnitin ID: TBA

Password: TBA

Each assignment will be graded on the following criteria

50% Content  
25% Grammar  
25% Style and Structure

93-100	A	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	0-59	F
90-92	A-	83-86	B	73-76	C	63-66	D		
		80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-		

### **Plagiarism**

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 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 0 for the plagiarized assignment

### **Late Policy**

For each late day I will deduct 5% off the total percentage for that assignment. The latest day an assignment will be accepted is FOUR DAYS after its original due date with a 20% deduction from the late assignment

*Again, there will be no make-up final exams*

## **Course Calendar**

### **Week 1: Defining and Studying Religion**

- Readings: Chapter 1 and 2 from Anatomy of the Sacred (AS)

### **Week 2: The Sacred and the Holy**

- Small Assignment (SA): Craft a definition of religion based on the class discussion/lecture and assigned readings
- Readings: Chapter 3 Anatomy of the Sacred (AS)

### **Week 3: Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine**

- Readings: AS Chapter 4
- SA: Bring a “myth” from a tradition to discuss in class
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### **Week 4: Sacred Ritual**

- Readings: AS Chapter 5
- Film: “Inside Mecca”

### **Week 5: Sacred Scripture**

- Readings: AS Chapter 6
- Film: “Inside the Qu’ran”

### **Week 6: Society and the Sacred**

- Readings: AS Chapter 7
- Film: “Inside the Vatican”

### **Week 7: Concepts of the Divine**

- Readings Chapter 8
- **Site Visit Draft, Due 10/9 @turnitin.com by 11:59 pm**

### **Week 8: Cosmogony**

- Readings: AS Chapter 9
- SA: Bring a cosmogony from a tradition to discuss in class
- **Mid-term, 10/14 AND 10/16**

### **Week 9: The Human Problem**

- Readings: AS Chapter 10
- Film: PBS Special “The Buddha”

### **Week 10: Theodicy**

- Readings: AS Chapter 11

### **Week: 11: Ethics**

- Readings: AS Chapter 12
- Film: “The Gift of the Jews”

### **Week 12: Soteriology**

- Readings: AS Chapter 13

### **Week 13: Secularization**

- Readings: AS Chapter 14 and “The Case for Contamination” by Kwame Anthony Appiah on Course Reserves

- **Site Visit Final Draft, Due 11/20 @turnitin.com by 11:59pm**

**Week 14: Meaning**

- Readings: “The Meaning of Life in the World’s Religion” by Houston Smith, “The Nature of Religion: Multiple Dimensions of Meaning” Ninian Smart on Course Reserves

**Week 15: Visit Presentations**

- This whole week will be dedicated to student presentations

**Final Exam**

- Finals Week: 12/8-13: **Check University Final Exam Schedule**

**References**

Academic Advising

<http://undergrad.fiu.edu/advising/cv.html>

**\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to change as the course develops but any changes will be notified to students in a timely fashion.**

Last Revised: 7/26/2014