

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
REL 2011 U10: RELIGION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

|              |                                      |               |                                  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Instructor:  | Thomas Norris                        | Phone:        | (305) 348-2186                   |
| Class Times: | T,R 8:00-9:15AM                      | Office:       | DM 302                           |
| Semester:    | Fall 2014 August 26-December 5, 2014 | Office Hours: | By Appointment                   |
| Classroom:   | C&P 197                              | Email:        | Only use Blackboard course email |

*In a sacred manner  
I live.  
To the heavens  
I gazed.  
My horses  
Are many.*  
Lakota Song

*All of Creation is with the Living.  
All of Creation can Feel the Tender Kiss.  
All of Creation is Learning.  
All of Creation Learns of Beauty.  
We are Evolving Beings.*

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to the academic study of religion and explores several of the major Eastern and Western religious traditions, both ancient and contemporary, as a means to discover beliefs, patterns, themes, methods, practices, rituals, and symbols that shed light on the overall meaning of religion within the context of human existence. This interdisciplinary exploration delves into the various dimensions of the nature of the sacred and religion, while taking into account historical, psychological, sociological, anthropological, archeological, philosophical and theological perspectives.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, the successful student will be able:

- To reflect critically upon the nature of the divine and the nature of religion.
- To give a basic overview of the origins, functions, common themes, types of and definitions of religion.
- To appreciate the early bases and origins of religion among indigenous Native Peoples and Shamanic cultures.
- To grasp the historical, contextual and developmental connections, as well as the similarities and differences between the major Eastern and Western religions.
- To interpret and explain in an organized, critical and analytical fashion the meaning and structure of a selected group of religious texts or practices.
- To understand how an individual's identity and outlook are shaped by religious influences
- To analyze topics in the field of religions studies from multiple perspectives (Global Perspective)
- To critically assess how developments within and between religions affect and are affected by global issues and trends (Global Awareness)
- To demonstrate a willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world (Global Engagement)
- To evaluate the interrelationship between their own and others' religious views as they relate to understanding other cultures and solving common problems (Global Awareness)
- To perform field observation to better understand a particular religious community

## **TEXTBOOK**

In addition to handouts, there are two books that students will read in this course, and one that is recommended for your research papers.

- *Religions of the World*, 12th edition, by Lewis M. Hopfe and Mark R. Woodward, Pearson Prentice Hall Publisher,
- *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, by Karen Armstrong, Harper One Publisher, ISBN: 9780061155772.
- Recommended: *MLA (Modern Language Association) Handbook*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Modern Language Association Publisher

## **COURSE POLICIES**

If you, the student, continue in this course, then you agree to the policies and procedures of this course. The student is responsible to know those policies and procedures as stated in this syllabus. This syllabus is subject to change, but any changes will be announced in class and by Blackboard email to all students.

## **Attendance**

Students are to arrive on time and stay until the class period is over. Repeated tardiness is counted as an absence for that day.

## **Respect, Courtesy and Communication**

- It is the student's responsibility to be attentive, respectful, keep up with the work, and hand in assignments on time.
- Cell phones must be turned off during class. There will be no texting or leaving class to take a telephone call.
- There is no surfing or social media on computers in class! Computers are only used for taking notes!
- If a student is having any difficulties with the assignments, readings, papers, tests, punctuality, attendance, or medical issues, they should speak to the professor before it becomes a problem. Good communication will always lead to a successful resolution of the issue.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities, as defined by law, have the right to receive needed accommodations if their disabilities make it difficult to perform academic tasks in the usual way or in the allotted time frame. However, in order to receive accommodation, students with disabilities must register with the Disability Resource Center. This office will keep the student's written request, notify a faculty member who has a student with a disability enrolled in his/her class, and indicate what kinds of arrangements must be made.

## **Religious Holidays**

By university policy, students must notify the instructor at least two weeks in advance that he/she wishes to observe a religious holy day. The student will be excused from class without penalty. The student is still responsible for the material and will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up any work missed after discussion with the instructor.

## **ACADEMIC AND CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR**

### **Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism**

- 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*.
- **Plagiarism** is the theft of someone else's intellectual property: their ideas, theories, concepts, opinions, or words. It consists of the unattributed (no reference citation) quotation of the exact words of a published text, or the unattributed borrowing of original ideas by paraphrase from a published text. On written papers for which the student employs information gathered from books, articles or oral sources, each direct quotation, as well as ideas and facts that are not generally known to the public at large, must be attributed to its author by means of the appropriate MLA citation procedure. Only widely known facts, or thoughts and observations original to the student do not require citations.
- You may not submit a paper that you have submitted for another class or one that you submitted previously for this course. **All work is required to be fresh, original and new.**
- Student papers with extensive quotations from sources mechanically inserted (cut and paste) into the paper for the sake of padding or bulk will not be accepted.
- Less is better than more when it comes to quotations. You should only quote if it is essential to your point or the quote is exceptionally powerful and succinct. In college, you must learn to paraphrase. That means putting the

author's words and ideas into your own words. Since it still is the author's idea, opinion, comment or theory simply restated in your own words, it still needs to be cited.

- Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will cause the guilty student to be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs and possibly fail the class. Whenever a student is unsure as to what constitutes plagiarism, they are encouraged to consult their professor.

## Behavioral Misconduct

Any student who is subject to sexual harassment, stalking, physical or verbal abuse should immediately speak to the instructor. The university has policies to protect students in these instances and the instructor will immediately refer the student to the appropriate program or resource.

## GRADING

| Course Requirements            | Weight |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Ten Online Quizzes (@ 4% each) | 40%    |
| Discussion/Participation       | 5%     |
| Appiah Essay                   | 10%    |
| Site Field Visit and Essay     | 20%    |
| Research Paper                 | 20%    |
| Attendance                     | 5%     |
| Extra Credit Paper             | 2%     |
| Total                          | 102%   |

| Letter Grade | Range   | Letter Grade | Range   | Letter Grade | Range   |
|--------------|---------|--------------|---------|--------------|---------|
| A            | 93-100  | B-           | 80-83   | D+           | 67 - 69 |
| A-           | 90 - 92 | C+           | 77 - 79 | D            | 64 - 66 |
| B+           | 87 - 89 | C            | 74 - 76 | D-           | 60 - 63 |
| B            | 84 - 86 | C-           | 70 - 73 | F            | 0-59    |

## Grading Rubrics Guideline

### Who Receives an A Grade?

- This student provides consistent, excellent, high quality work on all assignments and exams.
- This student actively participates in class and Discussion Boards on a regular basis with knowledgeable, insightful and relevant comments and answers to questions.
- This student exhibits superior college level writing skills and has mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
- This student knows how to conduct and demonstrate solid research to support their paper's arguments.
- This student demonstrates superior observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit.
- This student turns in all assignments on time.
- This student demonstrates near perfect attendance and punctuality.
- This student is highly motivated to learn and improve academic skills.

### Who Receives a C Grade?

- This student provides consistent, average quality work on all assignments.
- This student participates in class and Discussion Boards on a regular basis with relevant comments and answers to questions.
- This student exhibits average college level writing skills and has mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
- This student knows how to conduct and demonstrate basic research to support their paper's arguments.
- This student demonstrates adequate, average observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit.
- This student turns in all or most assignments on time.
- This student demonstrates good attendance and punctuality.

- This student shows average motivation to learn and improve academic skills

### Who Receives an F Grade?

- This student provides extremely poor quality work on most or all assignments that does not meet even minimal academic standards.
- This student does not participate in class and Discussion Boards at even a minimal level and is unable to provide knowledgeable, insightful and relevant comments and answers to questions.
- This student does not exhibit college level writing skills and has not mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
- This student does not demonstrate college level observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit.
- This student does not know how to or fails to conduct and demonstrate research skills to support their paper's arguments.
- This student does not turn in assignments on time or fails to turn in assignments.
- This student may demonstrate extremely poor attendance and punctuality.
- This student has not shown the motivation to learn and improve their academic skills.

### Textbook and Readings

Students are expected to keep up with coursework and be prepared for the each class by making sure they have read all the materials for that class and turned in any assignments on time.

### Attendance

It is my requirement and a requirement of the university that you attend class on a regular basis. This is 5% of your grade and is calculated by the percentage of times present and absent. However, if you miss more than three classes, a greater percentage is deducted. The 5% Attendance grade is for regular attendance, but missing too many of the classes in the course is not acceptable and leads to failure. Much of the course is based on lecture, discussion and participation, and not just taking quizzes or turning in papers.

### Exams

Students will take ten online quizzes (4% each): Multiple Choice, Matching, Fill-in-the-blank and True/False. Quizzes will be based upon both lecture and textbook material (about a 50-50 ratio), so passing will require **regular attendance**, **taking good notes**, and **reading the textbook**. It is not recommended that you take these [quizzes](#) as an open book test as they are time limited and you will not have time to look up material and answer all of the questions. In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Online Learning Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements.

### Discussion/Participation

This is 5% of your grade. Students are expected to actively participate in class by making relevant comments, and asking and answering questions. It is mandatory that students participate in the two Team Discussion Forums, the Appiah Essay and the Muhammad Book Discussion. A minimum of three substantive, thoughtful comments (at least 50 words/5 lines each) is required for each assignment. Doing the minimum earns you a C (75%); anything more brings a higher grade, as long as comments are substantive and thoughtful. Keep in mind that forum discussions are public, and care should be taken when determining what to post. If you need to send a private message to an instructor or student, please use Blackboard email.

### Appiah Essay

Think, Pair, Share: One 500 Word Opinion Essay (10%) involving a small group discussion of **"The Case for Contamination"** by Kwame Anthony Appiah. You will answer the following questions: What roles do religions play in Appiah's analysis? How is your approach similar to or different from his? This essay will be posted on Blackboard. You must participate in the group discussion and the instructor will monitor your discussion group's Blackboard Discussion Board on the topic. Your paper will not be accepted if you do not participate in the discussion with a **minimum of three substantive, thoughtful comments (at least 50 words/5 lines each)**. The paper should reflect your discussion points. If you use outside sources, you must cite according to MLA format and add a Works Cited page.

## Site Field Visit and Essay

One 1000 Word Site Field Visit Essay (20%). Visit a worship service or ceremony (temple, mosque, church, cathedral or worship facility) outside of your own religious background or current religious practice. [Note: Remember that if your religious background or current practice is Christian, you cannot do this Field Visit Essay on any other Christian Churches (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal, etc.) If you do, the paper will not be accepted.] Write about your experience: what you observed, what you learned, how you felt (personal reflection), and anyone you interviewed. As an ethnographic exercise, detail is essential. At least one interview with a priest, minister, rabbi, imam, lay leader or church official is required with the key questions and responses integrated into the body of the paper. **Provide an appendix at the end of the paper listing the questions you asked.** Describe the service, building structure, art and cultic objects, clothing, rituals, ancillary practices (such as serving special foods), “the feel of the place,” demographics of the participants, and anything else relating to the religion and the service. Demonstrate that you have done some research ahead of time (citations and a Works Cited page) so that you have some basic knowledge of what you are going to experience. Identify your own religious background or practice in the introduction. Specify the religion and the branch or sect you attended for the site visit. [Note: Respect the church, temple, or mosque. **DO NOT TAKE NOTES DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE, PRAYERS OR MEDITATIONS.** Do your research ahead of time and in interviews. Sit quietly and participate appropriately during the worship service, following the other worshippers in what to do. **DO NOT MAKE ANY CRITICAL OR DISPARAGING COMMENTS TO ANYONE WHILE ATTENDING SOMEONE ELSE’S SACRED SPACE.**] When you use outside sources, you must cite according to MLA format and add a Works Cited page.

## Research Paper

One 1500 Word Research Paper (20%): Please read *The MLA Handbook* and *Dr. Norris Tips for Excellent Papers* on Blackboard for everything you need to write a solid research paper. You must provide a minimum of five references (books, journal articles, interviews, etc.) of which only one may come from the Internet (except for full e-books and e-articles). The Internet source must be a scholarly, professional expert source. You may not use the Hopfe and Woodward textbook or other course textbooks as one of your references. You may not use encyclopedias or dictionaries as one of your references. You may not use original sources, such as the Bible, the Torah or the Quran as one of your references. Choose one of the four topics below:

- ***Matriarchy Versus Patriarchy—The Treatment of Women within Religion throughout History***: Do not focus on just one religion or just one individual within a religion. Instead, compare ancient versus modern religions, or compare across modern religions, but show the similarities and differences in the treatment of women (beliefs, practices, symbols, rituals, patterns and themes).
- ***Indigenous Versus Colonial—The Differences between the God of the Native Americans and the God of the White European Settlers***: Do not just provide a listing of similarities and differences, but compare and contrast by exploring underlying themes, beliefs, rituals, symbols and practices.
- ***Moral Versus Immoral—The Moral Teachings of Religion***: Compare and contrast the moral teachings of various religions (ancient, indigenous, and/or modern), particularly with regard to their history, cross-cultural connections, similarities and differences.
- ***The Historical and Modern Reasons for Hostility between the Religions of the People of the Book***: Explore why the Abrahamic Religions have been at war in one way or another throughout their history. Is this hostility primarily based upon religion or does it have socio-economic and socio-political roots as well?

## Extra Credit

The student may write one Extra Credit Essay (2%) from the following choices.

- 500 Word Extra Credit Essay: Of all the religions we studied (besides the one you practice or the one you were raised in), which had the most positive impact on you and why?
- 500 Word Movie Review Essay on *The Peaceful Warrior* with Nick Nolte, or *The Da Vinci Code* with Tom Hanks, or *Joshua* (F. Murray Abraham, Tony Goldwyn). Explain and discuss the religious themes of the movie, the spiritual and religious traditions, how the story affected you, and what it means today.
- 500 Word Movie Review Essay on *Jesus Camp*. Analyze the movie, especially what you liked/disliked about the religious training depicted and the larger issue of the separation of religion and state.

## WRITING AND RESEARCH POLICIES

- This is a Gordon Rule course with a three paper written word requirement and you must attain at least a C (not a C- or less) to pass a Gordon Rule course. Under the Gordon Rule, FIU requires that student papers: 1) have a clear thesis or controlling idea; 2) have a thesis supported with adequate reasons and evidence; 3) be organized clearly and logically; 4) show sustained analysis and critical thought; 5) show knowledge of conventions of standard written English; and 6) show awareness of disciplinary conventions in regard to content, style, form, and delivery method. Each type of paper (opinion, research, and site visit) will be graded according to the following criteria.
- **OPINION ESSAY**
  - **Knowledge of Subject Matter (25%)**
    - Understanding: How well do understand the subject?
    - Clarity: How well did you explain, present, and discuss the topic? Will the reader understand what you are talking about?
    - Accuracy: How accurate are you with the facts and issues?
  - **Strength of Argument (30%)**
    - Strong Thesis Statement: Is your Thesis Statement clear and to-the-point, and does it tell your audience exactly what the paper is about?
    - Rationale: Did you build your case logically and step-by-step?
    - Details/Examples: Did you give adequate details and provide useful examples to make and fill out your points?
    - Coverage: Did you cover the topic adequately enough to make the essential points?
    - Connections and Transitions: Did you provide good transitions from topic to topic and paragraph to paragraph.
  - **Strength of Organization and Structure (25%)**
    - Outline: Did you outline the paper so it is organized and logical in its presentation?
    - Title: Did you provide a clear and interesting title?
    - Introduction: Did you provide a clear and interesting introductory paragraph that adequately introduces the essay? Is your Thesis Statement in the introduction???
    - Paragraphing: Do you understand how to paragraph and provide good transitions between paragraphs, that is, one paragraph should naturally lead into another.
    - Focus: Does your paper stay focused and on track?
    - Conclusion: Do you provide a clear summary and concluding paragraph that pulls the paper together and provides a logical conclusion to the subject?
  - **Strength of Grammar and Writing Style (20%)**
    - Diction: Do you demonstrate good word choice, that is, use of the correct word?-
    - Grammar: Do you demonstrate a good knowledge of the fundamentals of grammar?
    - Sentence Structure: Do you write solid sentences that are clear, concise and focused—not wordy, fragments, run on or overly complicated?
    - Interesting Style: Do you write in a way that interests the reader—variety of words, challenging ideas, vibrant language?
    - Glittering Generalities: Are your sentences too general and vague, or are they backed up with specific facts, examples and details?
- **RESEARCH PAPER**
  - **Knowledge of Subject Matter (20%)**
  - **Strength of Argument (25%)**
  - **Strength of Organization and Structure (20%)**
  - **Strength of Grammar and Writing Style (15%)**
  - **Strength of Research (20%)**

- Strength of Sources: Did you provide the required reference sources? Remember that dictionaries, encyclopedias, and Wikipedia are not acceptable sources, nor are direct sources such as the Bible, the Quran, the Torah, and so on.
- MLA: Did you follow MLA format?
- Citation: Did you properly cite all the information sources in the body of the paper. Remember that anything that does not come from your own brain needs to be cited, that is, anyone else's words, ideas, theories, concepts, comments, and so on that you quote, paraphrase, summarize.
- Works Cited: Did you provide a separate and properly formatted Works Cited page?
- **FIELD SITE VISIT/RESEARCH PAPER**
  - **Knowledge of Subject Matter (25%)**
  - **Strength of Organization and Structure (15%)**
  - **Strength of Grammar and Writing Style (15%)**
  - **Strength of Research (15%)**
    - Strength of Sources: Did you provide the required reference sources? Remember that dictionaries, encyclopedias, and Wikipedia are not acceptable sources, nor are direct sources such as the Bible, the Quran, the Torah, and so on.
    - MLA: Did you follow MLA format?
    - Citation: Did you properly cite all the information sources in the body of the paper. Remember that anything that does not come from your own brain needs to be cited, that is, anyone else's words, ideas, theories, concepts, comments, and so on that you quote, paraphrase, summarize.
    - Works Cited: Did you provide a separate and properly formatted Works Cited page?
  - **Strength of Reflection (15%)**
    - Personal Background information: Did you discuss your own religious background and your reaction to the religious service you attended for your Site Visit?
    - Reflection: Do you provide personal information and insights that reflect an inner process of evaluation and how the subject applies to your life?
    - Personal Examples: When appropriate, do you mix in personal examples as you make your points throughout the paper?
  - **Strength of Interview (15%)**
    - Interviewee: Was the person you interviewed a good subject for the paper?
    - Questions: Did you ask well thought out, clear questions that adequately covered the topic?
- We use ***The MLA Handbook*** for writing papers in this course. You must know how to perform parenthetical referencing to provide appropriate citations for your sources.
- Read ***Dr. Norris' Excellent Tips for Writing Papers*** on Blackboard to guide you in writing your essays. All written assignments are formal essays and should follow college essay format.
- All essay assignments will be turned in through **Turnitin** in Blackboard on the day they are due. There is a grade penalty of one grade decrease per day for late papers.
- **You may write more than the minimum word requirement, but not less without penalty. In fact, most of your papers will need more than the minimum to adequately cover the topic and make your points.**
- While there is a wealth of sound research information at your disposal on the Internet, there is a greater deal of dubious material, so please be discerning. Acceptable authorship includes individual, recognized experts, educational institutions (e.g. Institute of Reformation History, Stanford University), publicly supported national or international institutes (e.g. World Health Organization), and other well-known institutions with solid reputations (e.g. World Council of Churches). Go to <http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/guide-headings.aspx> for excellent religious studies sources. This site will also be posted on Blackboard.
- Please take advantage of the (free) Writing Lab that will provide you with someone to go over your papers for grammatical, format, and content issues before you hand it in. Stop by to set up an appointment with them in PC

247! Their website also contains examples of MLA style and other helpful tools:  
<http://casgroup.fiu.edu/writingcenter/>. This site will also be posted on Blackboard.