

REL 2011-U07 (90952) Introduction to Religion: Analysis and Interpretation
Fall 2015

Days and Times: M, W, F, 2:00 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.
Room: DM 110

Instructor: Adam D. Gorelick
Office Hours: DM 224, Tuesdays 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or by appointment
P: 305-348-4100 | F: 305-348-2118 | agorelic@fiu.edu



PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change. Students should e-mail the instructor with any questions about the assignments and schedule.

Course Description

This course introduces methods of critical reflection on religion and some of their applications to fundamental topics such as knowledge, value, the sacred, the individual, and human society. While we will examine specific examples and respect the particularity of diverse religious traditions, the course will also focus on broad analytical themes applicable to religion in general and interpret these themes using methods from various academic disciplines.

Course Outcomes

Students will be able to...

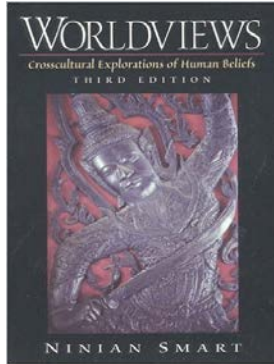
- Apply critical thinking skills to various topics in the field of religious studies.
- Explore the origins, nature, functions, and definitions of religion.
- Bracket out personal bias and attempt to understand the point of view of religious adherents.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems—as pertaining to the development and practice of religions.
- Analyze topics in religious studies through multi-perspective analyses of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
- Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world and to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.
- Conduct field research to better understand a religious community.
- Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, etc.

Texts

Smart, Ninian. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 200.

ISBN-13: 978-0130209801

ISBN-10: 0130209805



Additional selected readings will be assigned.

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 of grammar, style, and structure. Your papers must have a clear thesis, supporting material, and a conclusion.

Guidelines for Written Work

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. For more information, go to <http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/>.

All written work is submitted through <http://turnitin.com>. Plagiarism can result in expulsion from the university and will have a negative effect on your entire college career. All written work must include your name, Panther ID number, course number and the name of the professor on the title page. It must be double spaced, have 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) and be typed in 12 point font, Times New Roman or Calibri.

Religious Holidays

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements scheduling. Please make sure to notify your

instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. Should you require accommodations, contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) (DRC), if you have not done so already.” Please note that if you have a student who is registered with the DRC, you will receive notification about the student’s disability and a detailed description of accommodations the student will require.

Grading Scale

94 - 100 A
90 - 93 A-
87 - 89 B+
84 - 86 B
80 - 83 B –
77 - 79 C+
74 - 76 C
70 - 73 C-
67 - 69 D+
64 - 66 D
60 - 63 D -
0 - 59 F

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation – **25% of final grade**

Quizzes – Quizzes will be unannounced and will cover material from the readings and lectures. **15% of final grade**

Midterm Exam – The midterm exam will be a take-home essay exam. Students will answer two of three questions (in total, 1000-page minimum). See below for dates. **15% of final grade**

Final Exam – The final exam will be multiple-choice. See below for date. **15% of final grade**

Site Visits Essay – Students will conduct field research by attending a religious services or ceremony outside of his/her own religious tradition. Students will take notes on site and prepare a (1000-page minimum) paper applying Smart’s dimensions as an analytical tool. A first draft with field notes will be due on 11/4 and will count as **15% of final grade**. The final draft will be due on 11/18 and will count as an additional **15% of final grade**.

Calendar

Week 1 (8/24 to 8/30)

Class introductions, syllabus review, course plan
Reading: Smart, Introduction

What is Religion?

Week 2 (8/31 to 9/6)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 1

Week 3 (9/7 to 9/13) [No Class Meeting on Labor Day, 9/7]

Reading: Smart, Ch. 2

The Experiential or Emotional Dimension

Week 4 (9/14 to 9/20) [No Class Meeting on Rosh Hashanah, 9/14]

Reading: Smart, Ch.3

The Experiential Dimension

Week 5 (9/21 to 9/27) [No Class Meeting on Yom Kippur, 9/23]

Reading: TBA

The Mythic and Narrative Dimension

Week 6 (9/28 to 10/4)

Midterm Take-Home Essay-Exam: available 9/28; due 10/5, 11:59 p.m.

Reading: Smart, Ch. 4

Week 7 (10/5 to 10/11)

Reading: TBA

The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension

Week 8 (10/12 to 10/18)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 5

The Ethical or Legal Dimension

Week 9 (10/19 to 10/25)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 6

Week 10 (10/26 to 11/1)

Reading: TBA

The Ritual or Practical Dimension

Week 11 (11/2 to 11/8)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 7

Site-Visit Essay (First Draft with Notes): Due, 11/4, 11:59

Week 12 (11/9 to 11/15) [No Class Meeting on Veterans Day, 11/11]

Reading: TBA

The Social or Institutional Dimension

Week 13 (11/16 to 11/22)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 8

Site-Visit Essay (Final Draft): Due 11/18, 11:59 p.m.

Week 14 (11/23 to 11/29) [No Class Meeting over Thanksgiving Break, 11/25 and 11/27]

TBA

Conclusion

Week 15 (11/30 to 12/6)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 9 and Postscript

Week 16 (12/7 to 12/12) Finals Week – **Final Exam: 12/9, 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.**