

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Department of Religious Studies
REL 3308, Section B51
Academic One, Room 264
Studies in World Religions
Mon/Wed/Fri 12:00 p.m.-12:50 p.m.
Dr. Jayne A. Klein

Office Hours: Monday: 1:00-2:30 p.m.
Office: AC1 –TBA

Phone: (305) 919-5927
e-mail: martinj@fiu.edu

Course Description

Ever since the beginning of humanity's existence on Earth, religion has been a singularly powerful influence on the lives of a vast majority of its occupants, and it seems likely that it will remain so for as far into the future as our minds can project. While there are some who view religion as a singularly powerful means for promoting goodness and morality in the world, there are others who see it as the source of most of the hatred and violence in the world. Whatever one's opinion, however, it is incumbent upon all of us today to develop a familiarity with a number of the World's major religions, so that we may be better able to understand our neighbors in what, today, is an enormously complex, interdependent, and global world.

This course will introduce students to some of the World's major and most enduring religious traditions – both Eastern and Western – by exploring their history, basic beliefs, practices, rituals, associated narratives, and relevant figures.

Course Objectives

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

- Analyze the differences and similarities between the religions studied.
- Analyze the historical development of the religious traditions presented.
- Compare and contrast religious societies and cultures in their local, national, and global context.
- Recognize the different ways of being religious and of interpreting the sacred.
- Appreciate the importance that the various religious traditions discussed throughout the semester hold for their practitioners.

Textbook: Hopfe, L.M., and Woodward, M.R. Religions of the World. 9th, 10th, 11th, *or* 12th edition. Copyright © 2004 by Pearson Education, Inc. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall.

(Other required readings will be in the form of handouts, which the professor will distribute to you at various times during the course of the semester, **or** they will be posted on the Library Course Reserves.)

Attendance and Class Participation:

Ten percent of your final grade depends on regular attendance and class participation. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. **Regular attendance and punctuality are expected of all.** Only two unexcused absences will go without penalty. Any additional unexcused absence will cause a drop of one rung on the final grading scale, i.e., from an A to an A-, an A- to a B+, and so on.

Lateness, particularly if it is disruptive and/or habitual, will have a similar negative impact on your grade. If you will be unable to attend a particular class, you are expected to inform the professor beforehand via e-mail or telephone and explain your reason.

You are all expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading material, to present your ideas to the class, and to ask questions.

***NOTE: The professor reserves the right to modify the course syllabus at any time. Students will receive verbal notification of any modifications, should they be made.**

Grade Point Distribution:

- 10% Attendance and Class Participation
- 30% Exam #1 – Monday, September 28
- 30% Midterm Examination – Monday, October 26
- 30% Final Examination – Friday, December 4*
(*may be changed to Friday, Dec. 11)

Grading Scale:

94-99	A	74-76	C
90-93	A-	70-73	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
84-86	B	64-67	D
80-83	B-	60-63	D-
77-79	C+	Below 60	F

Class and Reading/Assignment Schedule

Week of Monday, August 24

Introduction to the course: course overview and review of course syllabus; discussion of various assessments of the term “religion”; some theories about the origins of religion

Reading Assignment for Wednesday, August 26: Hopfe & Woodward, Introduction /Overview (pp. 1-10) and Chapter One (Basic Religions, pp. 15-28) – readings will be found on-line at Library Course Reserves

Week of Monday, August 31

Lecture and Discussion: Characteristics of Basic Religions

Film: Excerpt from the film “Zeitgeist”

Reading Assignment for week of September 7: Hopfe & Woodward, Chapter 3(African Religion); and Laurenti Magesa, African Religion, Chapter 2, “The Moral Universe” (on-line at Library Course Reserves)

Week of Monday, September 7

(Monday, 9/7 is Labor Day – University will be closed)

Lecture and Discussion: African Religions

Film: *Sorcerers of Zaire*

Week of Monday, September 14

Lecture and Discussion: African Religions (continued)

Papal Bulls, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the Middle Passage

Week of Monday, September 21

Film: *The Middle Passage*

Reading Assignment for week of September 28: Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 4 (Hinduism)

Week of Monday, September 28

Monday, September 28 – Exam #1

Lecture and Discussion: Hinduism

Reading Assignment for week of October 5: Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 6 (Buddhism)

Week of Monday, October 5

Lecture and Discussion: Hinduism

Introduction to Buddhism and the Life of the Buddha

Week of Monday, October 12

Lecture and Discussion: Buddhism

Film: *Compassion in Exile: The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet*

Week of Monday, October 20

Film: *A History of God, Part I*

Reading assignment for week of October 26: Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 11 (Judaism)

Week of Monday, October 26

Monday, October 26 – Midterm Examination (on Hinduism and Buddhism)

Lecture and Discussion: Judaism

Week of Monday, November 2

Lecture and Discussion: Judaism (continued)

Reading Assignment for week of November 9: Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 13 (Islam)

Week of Monday, November 9

(No class on Wednesday, Nov. 11 – Veteran’s Day – University closed)

Lecture and Discussion: Introduction to Islam and the Life of Muhammad

Film: *A History of God, Part III*

Week of Monday, November 16

Lecture and Discussion: Islam (continued)

Film: *Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way*

Reading Assignment for week of November 23: Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 12 (Christianity)

Week of Monday, November 23

(No class on Nov. 27 – Thanksgiving holiday – University closed)

Introduction to Christianity and the Life of Jesus

Film: *A History of God, Part 2*

Week of Monday, November 30 (Final week of semester)

Lecture and Discussion: Christianity (continued)

Friday, December 4 – *Final Exam* (on Judaism, Islam, and Christianity)