

RELIGION: Analysis and Interpretation (REL 2011)

Instructor: Logan Beitmen	Course Supervisor: Oren Stier, stiero@fiu.edu
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Class : REL2011 MWF 3:00 – 3:50 PM Chem/Physics 101

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the academic study of religion and explores several of the major religious traditions of the world, 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, archaeological, philosophical, theological and other perspectives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Explain the basic history, development, and belief system of various religious traditions
- Recognize religious themes and concepts found in other cultures
- Identify the meaning behind religious concepts and symbols
- Evaluate their own religious views in regards to other cultures and paradigms of religious thought
- Apply critical thinking to various topics in the field of religious studies
- Think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world
- Perform field research to better understand a particular religious community

TEXTBOOK

Required:

Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion,

[James C. Livingston,](#)

Prentice Hall, 6th Edition

ISBN-10: 013600380X / ISBN-13: 978-0136003809

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS COURSE

- Start your essays early! This cannot be emphasized enough.
- Complete the assigned readings before coming to class
- 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.
- 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.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course.

For more information about prerequisites, [click here](#).

COMMUNICATING WITH THE INSTRUCTOR

- **E-mail:** Contact me via loganbeitmen@gmail.com
- **Or make an appointment to see me at the office during my office hours**

GRADING

Course Requirements	Points	Percentage of Final Grade
Site Visit (consists of two parts). Together, these two essays account for 30% of the final grade.	100	10%
- Site Visit First Draft (Essay1) : 100 points	100	20%
- Site Visit Final Version (Essay 2): 100 points		
Globalization Essay (Essay 3)	100	20%

Class participation and attendance	100	10%
Exam 1 Midterm	100	20%
Exam 2 Final	100	20%
Total		100%

Letter Grade	Range	Letter Grade	Range	Letter Grade	Range
A	above 93	B-	80 - 82	D+	67 - 69
A-	90 - 92	C+	77 - 79	D	64 - 66
B+	87 - 89	C	74 - 76	D-	60 - 63
B	83 - 86	C-	70 - 73	F	< 59

GORDON RULE REQUIREMENT

This is a Gordon Rule course with a three paper 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.

Class participation and Attendance

Students are expected to actively participate in class by making relevant comments, and asking and answering questions.

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

Regular attendance and punctuality is mandatory for this course

3 or more absences will result letter grade reduction.

Regular attendance and punctuality are expected of all. Only one unexcused absences will go without penalty. Any additional unexcused absence beyond that 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. 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.

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.

EXAMS

There will be a Midterm Objective (Exam 1) & Final Objective (Exam 2)

COURSE POLICIES

Late Papers

Late papers will be downgraded one letter grade for each day late.

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 grade of F for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly the course.

ESSAYS

Turnitin.com (accessed through Moodle)

Students will write three 6-7 page essays during the semester. A "Site Visit Report" submitted in both a first draft

(Essay 1) and a final version (Essay 2), and a “Globalization essay” (essay 3).

All Essays will be turned into Turnitin.com through **BLACKBOARD**.

For the first essay, the student will do field research by attending a religious service or ceremony outside of his/her own religious tradition. The student will turn in a draft version of the report, and a final version of the site visit. For the third essay, the student will write an essay related to the article ‘The Case for Contamination’ by Kwame Anthony Appiah. Important: Keep electronic and paper copies of all written work. For your own protection, keep a copy of your turnitin.com digital receipt (confirmation of assignment submission) until you have received your final grade for the course. Specific instructions for each of the essays will be provided in class.

COURSE CALENDAR		
Date	Topic	Text
Week 1 Jan 7	Section I. The Study of Religion Topic: Defining Religion. Why Are Humans Religious? Why Study Religion? The Perspective of the Student–Commitment and Objectivity. The Ways Religion Is Studied. Interpreting and Explaining Religion.	Chapters 1-2 p. 3-34
Week 2 Jan 14	Section II. Universal Forms of Experience and Expression. Topic: The Concept of Sacred Power. The Ambivalence of Sacred Power. The Holy as <i>Mysterium Tremendum and Fascinans</i> . Sacred Space and Sacred Time. Religion as Ultimate Concern.	Chapter 3 p. 37-52
Week 3 Jan 21 (Holiday Monday)	Monday is MLK Day. Class will be held on Wed and Fri. Topic: Symbolic Communication. Religious Symbols. Metaphor, Parable, and Story. Religious Myths. Models and Doctrines.	Chapter 4 p. 53-73
Week 4 Jan 28	Topic: Ritual Action. Types of Sacred Ritual. Ritual and Sacrifice. Rituals as Sacraments.	Chapter 5 p. 74-95
Week 5 Feb 4	Topic: The Pervasive Role of Sacred Scripture. Using the Term Scripture. Some Distinctive Features of Sacred Scripture. The Authority and Canonicity of Scripture. Reception, Uses and Interpretation of Scripture.	Chapter 6 p. 96-123

Week 5 Feb 4 (continued)	Site Visit Essay #1 DRAFT VERSION FRIDAY, Feb 8	SITE VISIT DUE
Week 6 Feb 11	Topic: The Reciprocal Relationship between Religion and Society. Types of Religious Communities. Voluntary Religious Communities. Protest and Change in Voluntary Religious Communities. The Sect. The Cult: New Religious Movements.	Chapter 7 p. 124-149
Week 7 Feb 18	Section III. Universal Components of a Religious Worldview Topic: Polytheism and the Worship of Nature. Dualism. Pantheism and Monism. Monotheism.	Chapter 8 p. 153-182
Week 8 Mar 4	Topic: The Practical Basis of Cosmogony. Emergence or Procreation from a Primal Substance or Being. The Sexual Union of a Primal Male and Female. Creation by Conflict and the Ordering of Chaos. Creation by a Divine Craftsman. Creation by Decree or from Nothing. The Rejection of Cosmogonic Speculation. Cosmogony Today.	Chapter 9 p. 183-210
Week 9 Mar 11-16	SPRING BREAK---NO CLASSES	Spring Break
Week 10 Mar 18	Monday: Class presentations of Site Visit reports. Wednesday: Review for Midterm Friday: MIDTERM EXAM Essay #2 : Site Visit FINAL VERSION FRIDAY OCT 26	MIDTERM EXAM SITE VISIT DUE
Week 11 Mar 25	Topic: Modern Views of Our Human Plight. Stoicism. Christianity. Theravada Buddhism. Confucianism. Topic: The Persistent Demand for Theodicy. Theodicy of "Mystical Participation." A Future, This-Worldly Theodicy. Other-Worldly Theodicy. Dualism. The <i>Karma-Samsara</i> Theodicy. Monotheistic Theodicies.	Chapter 10 p. 211-234 Chapter 11 p. 235-258
Week 12 April 1	Topic: Virtues and Obligations. The Sources and Norms of Moral Authority.	Chapter 12 p. 259-286

Week 13 April 8	Topic: Ways of Salvation and Liberation. The Way of Grace through Faith. The Way of Devotion. The Way of Action and Obligation. The Way of Mediation and Insight. Goals of Salvation and Liberation. Psychic Wholeness and a Healthy Social Order. Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life. <i>Samadhi</i> and Nirvana.	Chapter 13 p. 287-338
Section IV. The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity		
Week 14 April 15	Topic: Secularization and Pluralism. The Reactions of Religious Fundamentalisms Today. The Characteristics and Definitions of Contemporary Religious Fundamentalisms. The Status and Roles of Women in Religion. Relations between Religion and State.	Chapters 14-15 p. 339-398
Week 15 April 26	LAST WEEK OF SEMESTER Essay #3 - Globalization essay due MONDAY, APRIL 26 Date for Final Exam will be posted online.	PAPER DUE Final Exam
May 2	SPRING 2013 GRADES POSTED	