

REL 2011: Religion, Interpretation and Analysis

Professor Janet McDaniel

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Office Hours: DM 301B, MWF @ 9:00 a.m. or by appointment

Course Description: This is a Gordon Rule class that serves as an introduction to the study of religion. The course explores the ways in which people understand and express religious experience.

Course Objectives

- Students will be able to articulate 6 dimensions of religion and be able to apply them to a religious system.
- Students will be able to recognize that one's personal worldview affects or preconditions the understanding of a given subject.
- Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
- Students will be able to assess the interrelatedness of religious belief with global issues.
- Students will be able to appreciate the need to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world e.g. the affinities between secularized and traditional religious views.
- Students will perform a site visit to better understand a community's perspective.

Required Texts:

Smart, Ninian. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*. 3rd ed. Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 2000.

ISBN: 0-13-020980-5

Moore, Christopher. *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal*. Harper Collins: New York, NY, 2002.

ISBN: 978-0-380-81381-0

Course Requirements:

Class Participation: 5 points

- Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than 5 class periods will lower your grade by 5 points..
- Classroom conduct and respectful discourse. Regardless of attendance, if classroom conduct is repeatedly disruptive, your grade can be lowered by the entire 10 points. Respectful discourse includes but is not limited to the following: one person speaking at a time, refraining from interrupting or carrying on a conversation with those around you while I am lecturing or persistent off topic commentary/questions. If your discourse becomes problematic, you will receive an email as a warning through regular FIU/Panthersoft email.
- Being prepared for and participating in class discussions
- Completion of the Global Learning Requirements

Additional Responsibilities:

- Checking FIU email before each class.
- Understanding your course progress which includes checking that grades are recorded accurately in the grade-book. For example, it is your responsibility to confirm points have been added and recorded accurately especially with Turnitin. Turnitin only allows whole number submissions but this course utilizes a decimal system. Whole number grades are dropped in the grade book automatically but I must manually change to include decimal points. Occasionally this causes unintentional mistakes. It is your responsibility to make sure your grades are recorded correctly. Notification of any such discrepancies must be emailed to me by Dec. 5.
- Any questions or disagreements with grades must be sent via FIU email and discussed before the end of the semester.

Course Work: Full descriptions, rubrics, dates etc..see below and posted on Blackboard.

Worldview Essay: 15 points. Formal essay format, 1000 words min.

Site Visit: 15 points Formal essay format, 1000 words min

Required Article: 10 points: Formal essay format, 800 words min.

Class Exams: There will be 3 Multiple Choice exams, each worth 5 points. Dates posted on Blackboard. Multiple Choice questions on the last exam meet a Global Learning Requirement.

Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff Assignment 15 points

Project: 25 points, 1500 word min. You will choose either a visual topic (e.g. artist, art subject, architecture) or compose a short story that highlights at least 4 of the 6 dimensions of religion.

The final week of class will be utilized for the embedded text questions and Gospel According to Biff assignment.

Academic Conduct

- **Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a zero.** Plagiarism is 1) copying any written material without using proper citation – this includes material from the internet; 2) incorporating another person’s ideas without giving proper credit/citation (literary theft). 3) cutting and pasting sections of text from the internet, even if it does not have a listed author, into your own work.
- 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 to 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.

Citations Bibliographies and citations should be in MLA or Chicago Style format.

Grading Scale: This is a Gordon Rule class and the University requirement to complete the requirement is a C (not a C-) Grades are based on accumulated points, 100 in total

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

Students registered through Disability Services will receive accommodations. Students with extended time on exams may take the exams at Disability Services or see me for alternate arrangements.

Class Calendar

(subject to change: students will be given reasonable notice to any changes)

Updates to class calendar will be posted on Blackboard

1/7

- Introduction: Explanation of class content and course requirements

1/9 – 1/11

- What does it mean to be a Global Citizen?
- What is a Worldview?
- What is Social Location?
- Why Study Religion? Understanding our Culture, Ethnocentricity
- Ninian Smart's Model of the Six Dimensions of Religion
- Readings: "Introduction" in *Worldviews*, pp. 1 – 10

1/14, 1/16, 1/8

1/15 Last day to drop without \$\$ penalty

- Writing Requirements: Project & Site Visit Explanations
- What is a Worldview?
- Why Study Religion? Achieving a Global Perspective
- Gender and Self Identity
- Readings: "Chapter 1: "Exploring Religion and Analyzing Worldviews"
- How do we study Religion? Methods of religious exploration: Past and Present
- Apologetics & Religious Studies
- Assignment: Begin Writing Assignment #1, My Worldview

1/21 NO Class MLK DAY

1/23, 1/25, 1/28

- Major Themes in World Religions
- Some Major Religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Asian Religions
- Nationalism and Secular Humanism
- Readings: "Chapter 2: Worldviews, An Inventory."

1/30, 2/1, 2/4

- Readings: “Chapter 3: The Experiential Dimension.”
- Ways of Experiencing the Sacred
- Sacred Space/Sacred Time,
- Concepts of the Divine or Ultimate Reality
- **Due 2/2** Writing Assignment #1, My Worldview

2/6, 2/8, 2/11

- Readings: “Chapter 4, The Mythic Dimension.”
- Ways of Interpreting Myth
- History and Myth
- Metaphors and Parables
- **Quiz 1**

2/13, 2/15, 2/18

- Readings: Chapter 5, The Doctrinal Dimension.”
- Sacred Scripture
- Authority and Interpretation: Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Reader-Response Criticism
- Social Function of Doctrine: Doctrine and the Community’s Worldview
- Arguments for the existence of God
- Theodicy: God and Suffering
- Soteriology: Salvation and Liberation

2/20, 2/22, 2/25, 2/27

- Readings: “Chapter 6, The Ethical Dimension.”
- Ethics and Morals: Religious and Secular
- Comparing Religious Ethics
- Kombai Video and Discussion
- **Due 2/23** Project Proposal

3/1, 3/4, 3/6, 3/8

- Readings: “Chapter 7, The Ritual Dimension.” and Appiah Article: *The Case for Contamination*
- Rituals of Sacrifice
- Rituals of Passage: Life Cycle and Calendar/Seasonal
- Ritual and Myth
- Iboga Drug Ritual Video and Discussion
- Appiah Article : In Class Group Discussion
- **Due 3/9** Appiah Article

Spring Break 3/11 – 3/15

3/18, 3/20, 3/22

- Readings: “Chapter 8, The Social Dimension.”
- Social Theories of Religion
- Types of Religious Communities
- Religion and the Secular State
- Relationship between Religion and Society/Social Constructions – Gender

3/25, 3/27, 3/29

- Readings: “Chapter 9, Reflections on the Twentieth Century.”
- Reading *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff*: Chapters 1 – 12
- Religion and Globalization: What does it mean to be a Global Citizen?
- Separation of Religion and State
- Capitalism
- Environmentalism
- Feminism
- Fundamentalism
- Homosexuality
- **Quiz 2**

4/1, 4/3, 4/5

- Readings: *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff*: Chapters 13 -22
- Discussion: Free Speech, Religious Expression and Sacrilege
- Cynicism, Pharisees, Sadducees, Gnosticism
- **Due 3/21** Site visit Paper

4/8, 4/10, 4/12, 4/15

- Readings: *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff*: Chapters 23 – End.
- Novel Discussion
- Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism.
- **Due, 4/11** Semester Project

4/17, 4/19

- **Presentation of Projects for Extra Credit: Time Permitting**

Week of April 22

- **Due 4/25:** Gospel of Biff Assignment
- **Quiz 3:** taken on Moodle. Imbedded test questions for Global Learning Requirement and questions from Gospel of Biff.