

## **REL 2011: RELIGION: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

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### **Course Description:**

What do we mean when we say a person is religious or an object has a religious identity? Can we define religion or the religious? What elements make up a Religion? How do religious beliefs and groups originate and why do humans practice religion? How do religious beliefs, including beliefs such as witchcraft in African Religions, which might seem bizarre in the eyes of some outsiders, persist in these cultures? How do such religious beliefs influence behaviors of humans?

These are only a few of the questions we will be seeking answers to in this very exciting and stimulating introduction to the academic study of the phenomenon of religion. Our focus will not be on particular religions. Rather we will draw examples from an array of religious beliefs and practices as we seek answers to questions pertaining to the phenomenon of religion. These traditions will include African and African originated religions, Hindu religious beliefs and practices, the indigenous traditions of the Americas, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity.

### **Required Text:**

*Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*, by James C Livingston [Prentice hall]

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance and participation are important to success in this course, and attendance will be taken at each meeting.

**Grading and Evaluation:** The progress of students and their understanding of the course material will be determined based on attendance and participation in class discussions, and tests. Below are the percentage weights:

Attendance and participation: 20%

Tests: 80%

### **Grading Scale:**

98-100 A+

93-97 A

90-92 A- “As” are awarded for excellent to exceptional work, free of technical and stylistic errors, showing sustained thought and engagement with the material on an appropriate but impressive academic level.

88-89 B+

83-87 B

80-82 B- “Bs” are awarded for good to very good work, with some occasional errors, but nonetheless clearly indicating a good grasp of the material and assigned task.

78-79 C+

73-77 C

70-72 C- “Cs” are awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards but marked with errors, and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.

68-69 D+

63-67 D

60-62 D- “Ds” are awarded for barely passing to below average work, usually riddled with errors and seriously deficient in fulfilling the assignment.

Below 60 F “Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.

## **Syllabus**

Please note: This syllabus can be amended as determined by demands of the course

**Week 1:** chapter 1&2 Defining Religion, and Universal forms of Religious Expression

**Week 2:** Chapter 3&4. **Universal Forms of Religious Expression-** symbol, Myth Doctrine and Ritual

**Week 3:** Chapters 5&6 Sacred Texts, and Society and the Sacred

**Week 4:** Chapters 7&8- Concepts of the Divine and the origins the natural and social order

**Week 5:** Chapters 9 &10 Religion, concepts of the Universe, and the problem of evil.

**Week 6:** chapters 11&12&13. Religion and morality, Concepts of salvation, religion in the modern era