

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**  
**Department of Religious Studies**  
**REL 3308, Section B51A**  
**Studies in World Religions**  
**Summer A, 2015**  
**Tues/Thurs 10:50 a.m.-2:10 p.m.**  
**Dr. Jayne A. Klein**

**Office Hours: Tues /Thurs: 2:30-3:30**  
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### **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 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.
- Trace 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. Copyright © 2004 by Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall; 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> edition.

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 one unexcused absence 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. **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  
30% Midterm Examination  
30% Final Examination

### **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 1**

##### **Tuesday, May 12**

Introduction to the course: course overview, review of course syllabus, defining religion, theories about the origin of religion, characteristics of Basic Religions

**Reading Assignment:** Hopfe & Woodward, Introduction/Overview and chapters 1 and 3; Laurenti Magesa, African Religion, Chapter 2, “The Moral Universe” (on Library Course Reserves)

**Thursday, May 14**

African Religion

**Film:** *Sorcerers of Zaire*

**Week 2**

**Tuesday, May 19**

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Middle Passage

**Film:** *The Middle Passage*

**Reading Assignment:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 4 (Hinduism)

**Thursday, May 21**

**Exam #1**

Introduction to Eastern Religions, part one: Hinduism

**Week 3**

**Tuesday, May 26**

Hinduism (continued)

**Reading Assignment:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 6 (Buddhism)

**Thursday, May 28**

Introduction to Eastern Religions, part two: Buddhism

**Film:** *Little Buddha*

**Week 4**

**Tuesday, June 2**

**Exam #2 – Midterm Examination** (on Hinduism and Buddhism)

**Film:** Compassion in Exile: The Story of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama

**Reading Assignment:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 11 (Judaism)

**Thursday, June 4**

Introduction to Judaism

**Film:** *A History of God, Part I*

**Reading Assignment:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 13 (Islam)

**Week 5**

**Tuesday, June 9**

Judaism (continued)

Introduction to Islam and the life of Muhammad

**Film:** *A History of God, Part 3*

**Thursday, June 11**

Islam (continued)

**Film:** *Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way*

**Reading Assignment:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 12 (Christianity)

**Week 6**

**Tuesday, June 16**

Introduction to Christianity and the Life of Jesus

**Film:** *A History of God, Part 2*

**Thursday, June 18**

Christianity (continued)

**Final Exam** (on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)