

REL 2011 Introduction to Religion
Fall 2021 Learning Guide
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Instructor: Sharma Dammar

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When and Where do we meet?

Class Discussions: Classes will meet on Tuesdays on-campus,
6:30p.m - 9:05p.m. at the Biscayne Bay Campus, Academic Center Two,
room 115. Course updates will be delivered as an announcement via Canvas.

Office Hours: By appointments on Tuesdays 9:05p.m. to 11:05p.m. at the
Biscayne Bay Campus, immediately after a class meeting ends.

Why Should I Care about Religion?

Why do bad things happen to good people? Is religion irrelevant in our fast-paced technological world? Does the sacred look the same across traditions? How can the study of religion help us understand current events? Is religion a creative or destructive force? How does the study of religion relate to your major? These are just some of the questions that we will explore throughout the semester.

This course is interested in examining the different expressions, practices and interpretations of religion from an interdisciplinary perspective. Although no particular tradition will be favored, materials from several traditions will be chosen to exemplify thematic topics in the experience of the Sacred. We will also focus on the tenets of religions, dispelling common misconceptions and assumptions and looking into the emergence of new practices among the post-denominational generation.

How can this course help you advance in your career?

You do not need to be personally religious, majoring in religious studies, or in a field within humanities to benefit from this course. Whatever your academic field is, this course will train you to make important connections between your career and the world of the sacred and the profane. You will be able to understand the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization, and the role religion plays in local and international affairs.

Religious illiteracy can greatly impact our ability to understand personal and social motivations behind financial decisions, political engagement, science and technological advancement, environmental and migration policies, family planning, diet and food production, gender relations, war and terrorist attacks, and more. Whether you notice or not, religion is a universal phenomenon that continues to transform and be transformed by our societies.

Our approach is interdisciplinary, which means you will be critically reflecting from many fields of study such as philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, history, economics, gender studies, among others. This enhances your ability to think critically, communicate effectively, respond sensitively, collaborate with others and creatively resolve conflict.

How will you succeed in this course?

Examinations (50%): Exam #1 (25%)

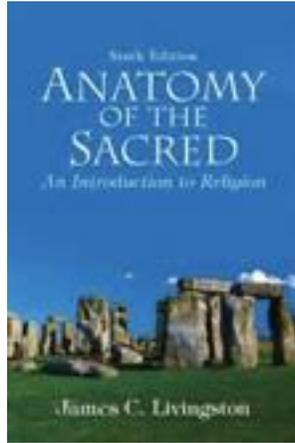
Exam #2 (25%)

Assignments (50%): Comparative Reaction Paper on Chapters 11-15 (25%)

Religious Visitation Paper (25%)

Extra Credit: 5 points

Required Text



Anatomy of the Sacred: An introduction to Religion

By: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Pearson Edition: 6th

ISBN: ISBN 978-0-13-600380-9 ISBN 0-13-600380-x

** Other reading materials will be provided by the instructor.*

Course Breakdown

Course Landmarks	Items	Points	Percentage of final Grade
Academic Papers	2	200	50
Examinations	2	200	50
Total			100%

There will be **two exams**, a **religious visitation paper**, and a **comparative reaction paper on Chapters 11-15** where each is worth ¼ of your final grade. Examinations will entail true and false, fill in the blanks, and multiple-choice questions. Exams will be available via Canvas during a class date and time slot. **The religious visitation paper and the comparative reaction paper are mandatory as this course has a writing requirement. Failure to submit one and/or both writing assignments on time, via Canvas, will result in zero points for the papers as well as zero points for Exam #2.** Extra credit is optional and can only elevate the final grade by 5 points. It is your duty to attend class meetings and complete all graded items before this course is over.

<u>Coursework</u>	<u>Total Points</u>	<u>Percentage of Final Grade</u>
Exam #1	100	25%
Exam #2	100	25%
Comparative Reaction Paper	100	25%
Religious Visitation Paper	100	25%

Grading Scale

A	=	95 – 100	B	=	83 – 86.99	C	=	70 – 76.99
A-	=	90 – 94.99	B-	=	80 – 82.99	D	=	60 – 69.99
B+	=	87 – 89.99	C+	=	77 – 79.99	F	=	below 60

Examination Policy

Exams will cover material from lectures as well as from the assigned textbook. In order to obtain a good grade on exams students need to read and understand material from the chapters of the assigned textbook. It is the student's duty to contact the professor if he/she needs to make up an exam. Make-up exams will only be approved by the discretion of the professor. Students will only be able to take a make-up exam due to legitimate reasons. In order to take a make-up exam, students will need to provide reasonable verification to a suitable department within FIU as to why he/she missed the scheduled exam. There are no make-ups if you miss Exam #2 unless there is/was a true emergency that restricted you from taking it. In other words, if you are absent, you will not be able to take Exam #2 which will result in a failing grade.

Goals

- Foster tolerance of and appreciation for differences in human culture and diverse religious expressions.
- Develop fluency in ancient and contemporary religious history.
- Expand ability to apply different methodologies to the study of religion.
- Create an atmosphere of self-exploration and self-understanding.
- Nurture creative and critical thinking.
- Identify the relevance of studying religion to contemporary life, human thought, and professional development.

Objectives

1. Classify and utilize various approaches to the study of religion, including but not limited to ethnographic, psychological, anthropological, ethical, phenomenological, and so on.
2. Compare and contrast the key underlying beliefs and principles of the major Eastern, Western, indigenous and shamanic religions.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
4. Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, film, and so on.
5. Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.
6. Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs outsider/academic sources, and scholarly vs journalistic sources.

Gordon Rule Requirement

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write a minimum of two major assignments. Each paper will be at least 1500-2000 words and will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using MLA Style and long quotes should be avoided. Please be aware that papers with an originality score of over 35% similarity will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur additional penalties, up to and including receiving an F (0 points).

Global Learning Objectives

As a Global Learning course, students will be meet the following objectives through text readings, assignments, and class discussions:

1. Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
2. Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
3. Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

Plagiarism

Do you know what plagiarism is? Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by asking me, a representative from the writing center or our library to explain. Many students end up plagiarizing material because they do not know what it entails. In short, 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 (0 points) for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly for the course. Please be aware: Previously submitted papers are not allowed, even if it is your own work and even if you are retaking this class. You may not “reuse” papers.

Course Policies

1. Read each assignment prior to the date on which it is scheduled to be discussed. Students are expected to complete the required readings for each session and formulate Discussion Points concerning the readings to facilitate class discussion.
2. Take exams and turn in assignments at the scheduled times.
3. Be on time to our class meetings. If a student must arrive late or leave early, he /she should be courteous and observe silence.
4. Be respectful of the beliefs of others. This is of utmost importance in a world religions class. This course acknowledges and honors the vast array of individual and group disparities in our community. In this course, there is no place for racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, ageism, religious intolerance, and other forms of oppression. Any behaviors that threaten, harass, or discriminate against another individual will not be tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary actions. Together, we will embrace a diverse and inclusive learning environment.
5. Know and abide by FIU's Student Conduct and Honor Code. Cheating and plagiarizing will result in an "F" for this course.
6. Turn off all cellular phones. Texting is not permitted in the classroom.
7. The use of any recording software and/or device (visual and/or audio) are prohibited.
8. Silence is golden when your professor/classmate is speaking. Essentially, one individual at a time has the right to speak unless otherwise instructed by your professor.
9. Disrespectful behavior (sleeping, using headphones as well as using electronic devices to oppose academic purposes, verbal disruption, and physical disruption) is unacceptable and may result in removal from the course.
10. Physical contact with your professor is forbidden such as hugs, handshakes, etc.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor. Changes will be announced in a fair and timely fashion. Assignments, homework, and exams will be adapted for the benefit of the student; students will always know of any changes ahead of time. Monitor Canvas consistently to keep up with any potential changes or modifications to our class as we progress through the semester, especially if you are not sure, were absent, or were late. Check the "Announcements" section of your Canvas account daily for possible course updates.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is an expectation of this course and attendance will be tracked. Any student who misses **more than 3 class meetings** will be subject to losing one letter grade for the course. Students may be excused at the professor's discretion for legitimate reasons to be absent, such as verified illnesses, emergencies, etc. Reasonable verification as to the nature of the absence must be provided, such as a doctor's note, etc. Being absent because of work, vacations, or sport activities will not be excused. It is the student's responsibility to obtain missed notes and assignments. **Communicating with your professor before you are absent is a key to your success.**

COURSE OUTLINE

CLASS DATE	SUBJECT
August 24	Welcome, Introduction to Class, Dimensions of Religion
August 31	Video
September 7	Fieldworks
September 14	Instructions for Comparative Paper, Instructions for Religious Visitation Paper, What is Religion?
September 21	Ways of Studying Religion
September 28	The Sacred and the Holy
October 5	Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine
October 12	Sacred Ritual
October 19	Exam #1 & Comparative Reaction Paper (Due via Canvas)
October 26	Sacred Scripture
November 2	Society and the Sacred: The Social Formations and Transformations of Religion
November 9	Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality
November 16	Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order Religious Visitation Paper (Due via Canvas)
November 23	Views of the Human Problem
November 30	Exam #2 & Extra Credit (Due via Canvas)
December 7	Closing Lecture & Evaluations

EXAM	SUBJECT ON EXAM
Exam One	What is Religion? Ways of Studying Religion The Sacred and the Holy Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine Sacred Ritual
Exam Two	Sacred Scripture Society and the Sacred: The Social Formations and Transformations of Religion Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order Views of the Human Problem