

REL3127: Church and State

Professor Grisel d'Elena

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Course Time Zone | Eastern Standard Time (EST). Course due dates are according to this time zone

About the Professor

Grisel d'Elena is an Adjunct Professor for Religious Studies and Women's and Gender Studies. She is also the Director of Panthers Care in the Dean of Students Office. Professor d'Elena is also a Board Advisor for UN Women | USA | Miami. She has performed fieldwork abroad with U.N. officials, refugee coalition members and ethnic minorities, specifically Southeast Asia, where she began to investigate the Rohingya Muslim ethnic group in Myanmar. As victims of systematic, state-sponsored persecution, she began to question why they faced such discrimination. This question led to the Buddhist 969 Movement in Myanmar, which contributes to the isolation and oppression of the Rohingya. Grisel was able to interview Time Magazine's "Buddhist Terror" U Ashin Wirathu and provide feedback directly from the source of the violence for her ethnographic work. This became the focus of her Master's thesis, "The Gender Problem of Buddhist Nationalism in Myanmar: The 969 Movement and Theravada Nuns." This work has been shared nationally in academic conferences, colleges and local outreach programs for the youth about global awareness.

This Course has an Affordability Counts Medallion

Course Description and Purpose

Should a baker be allowed to refuse to make a wedding cake for two men? Should pastors be able to tell their congregations who to vote for? Should employers be able to decide if their employee insurance covers birth control? Should there be a "wall" between government and religion? Is the U.S. a "Christian nation"? Is "one nation under God" a problematic national motto? Do biblical accounts of history deserve "equal time" in the classroom?

This course explores the dynamic, controversial, breaking-news intersection of religion and American law and values.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Understand and discuss the religion clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
- Trace the historical trajectory of American thinking on the place of religion vis-à-vis government
- Describe key cases affecting the adjudication of church-state issues
- Critically consider the constant stream of church-state conflicts in today's news
- Be more informed citizens and voters

Important Information

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Policies](#)
- [Netiquette](#)
- [Technical Requirements and Skills](#)
- [Accessibility and Accommodation](#)
- [Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](#)
- [Inclusivity Statement](#)

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Textbook and Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, throughout the course, you will read instructor-created lecture materials, be redirected to free articles, and watch videos. These materials are **required!**

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **review the getting started page** located in the course modules;
- **introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- **take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;

- **interact** online with instructor and peers;
- **review** and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines;
- **read/ watch** all the assigned materials
- **write** papers that exhibit the student's ability to grasp the material

Course Communication

Good communication is vital to successful online courses.

Contacting me: Contact me by email at gdelena@fiu.edu. Canvas messages work too, but email is the best way to contact me. If you want an answer to your question or have a problem, this is the way to get me. **DO NOT** try to communicate with me about course housekeeping or problems through the Discussion Board! If you do not email me at that address, I cannot guarantee I will receive your message.

Please notify me via email if you believe you have encountered a quiz or test question that has been mis-graded or for which there is no clear answer listed.

Technical Problems: Generally, I cannot solve technical problems with the content or settings of the course and have to refer them to FIU Online. Your best bet is to contact them first. If you can't resolve the problem, email me and I will get it fixed. Be patient!

Discussion Forums

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

You are expected to read and view all assigned material and be prepared to discuss it intelligently in the discussion forum, the main mode of interaction for the course. Anyone may begin a discussion at any time on the topic assigned for the week or from preceding lectures or notes. Often, I will post a question for consideration, with the expectation that everyone will respond one or more times to the question and to other respondents.

You should post a minimum of twice per week, beginning with Week 1, to demonstrate your comprehension of the course readings and lecture materials. At least one posting per week should be original (some question or observation based on the week's materials), and at least one other should respond to other postings by me or your fellow students.

Original postings should be completed by Friday at 11:59pm and response postings must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm. This ensures that there are enough original postings for other students to respond to during the week.

The two posts are to be a **minimum of 200 words per post**. Postings should actually say something. Postings of "I liked X" or "I was surprised by Y", while welcomed, are not what I'm looking for or will grade on. I would rather you went out on a limb to say what you really think or to introduce some of your thoughts than that you say "safe" things about the material. Do you

disagree with what was in the lesson? Why? This is a course full of controversial material. What do think about it? There's room for argument on all sides. Just always be respectful!

Each discussion week will be graded separately. **Lateness will definitely cause a drop in your grade for that week, as will superficial responses.** This is a major portion of your grade!

Discussion Forum Debates

From time to time, we will use the Discussion Forum to stage a debate on some question like those at the beginning of this syllabus. The debate will constitute the discussion question for the week. In a debate, contributors are expected to rationally defend one or the other position on the question. You may choose to argue either point of view (as long as everyone doesn't argue the same side!) Of course, this won't be a formal debate, so you may (and should) respond to each other freely—logically, politely, and with reference to reliable sources. Everyone must participate. Only **one 200 word post** is required for debates.

Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the [Practice Quiz](#) from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams.

Please review the [important information about quizzes](#) page.

Assignments

You will have **4 papers** for this course. **Do not go over 200** words of the min word / page count. Points will be deducted for not getting your point across in the same length your classmates did.

1. Your Church and State Reflection is based on an article and video review. You will analyze the material presented in the article and provide an argument for or against the contents of the paper. This is a minimum of **700 words**. You will use the course materials to support your argument.
2. Your free exercise reflection you will provide a **750 word** reflection about the contents of the video lecture and how it relates to our class material. Requirements: APA or MLA . Word Doc or PDF only.
3. Your Research paper should be **5-6 pages** in length. APA or MLA format.

The paper is based on the following:

Choose two of these areas--one dealing with free exercise and one with establishment--and for each of them, do the following:

- **Identify:** whether this issue involves free exercise or establishment.
- **Research:** the history of the issue in terms of court cases. Write at least a few substantial paragraphs on questions such as:
 - - How has it been interpreted over the years?
 - Have there been reverses in later decisions?
 - What is the currently accepted interpretation?
 - Where do we stand today on this issue?
- **Analyze:** the pros and cons of the issue, using your own interpretations, backed with research (properly cited.) This is the meat of your paper, so don't skimp. Deal with such questions as
 - - What are the relevant questions involved?
 - What were the positions on either side?
 - Is the issue now favoring a more conservative or more liberal interpretation?
 - Do you agree with what the courts have decided, especially the current interpretation? Why or why not? Give the arguments for both sides, and analyze the pros and cons, citing cases or other research as relevant.
 - Do you think public opinion has had an effect on the decisions? Do you think this is good? Why or why not?
 - What do you predict will happen with regard to this issue in the future? Are there important cases coming up through the lower courts? Is there an interpretive trend? What factors in the public arena might influence future decisions?

4. Your 4th and final paper you will provide a **1500 word** reflection about the contents of the video lectures and how they relate to our class material. Requirements: APA or MLA . Word Doc or PDF only.

Please review the [important information about assignments](#) page.

Zoom

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities.

Grading

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Weight
Discussions	13	35%
Assignments	3	55%
Quizzes	2	10%
Total		100%

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%
A	93 or above	B	83 - 86	C	70 - 73
A-	90 - 92	B-	80 - 82	D	60 - 63
B+	87 - 89	C+	77 - 79	F	59 or below

Course Calendar

The course is outlined in [Modules](#). Everything you need to read, watch and complete can be found there, in order. You can find specific due dates in the Course Summary below.

Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of the University. The principles of academic freedom are integral to the conception of the University as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and the communication of knowledge in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. The University serves the common good through teaching, research, scholarship/creative activities, and service. The fulfillment of these functions rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of teaching, expression, research, and debate. We affirm that academic freedom is a protected right in addition to a faculty member's

constitutionally protected freedom of expression and is fundamental to the faculty member's responsibility to seek and to state truth as he or she sees it.

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint of belief.