

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Department of Religious Studies
REL 2011 Religion: Analysis and Interpretation

Instructor: Mr. Daniel Alvarez

Office Hours: TBA

Office: DM 458A

Class Hours: MWF 12:00-12:50 p.m.

Class Room: Paul Cejas Bldg. (PCA) 135

Spring 2011

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Turnitin.com

Class ID: TBA

Enrollment Password: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the study of religion. It will analyze various elements common to world religions and their expressions. In addition, it will examine the search for the transcendent and its implications at both the personal and the social level.

TEXTBOOKS

Franklin Edgerton, *Bhagavad Gita*, Harvard University Press, 1972. (9780674069251)

Thomas J. Hopkins, *The Hindu Religious Tradition* (Wadsworth, 1971) (9780822100225)

Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (Grove Press, 1974)(9780802130310)

Lavinia and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *A Short History of Judaism* (One World, 1994) (9781851682065)

John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (Harper Collins, 1994)(9780060616625)

Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam: An Introduction* (SUNY, 1992)(9780791413289)

COURSE STRUCTURE

In this course the student will "immerse" him/herself in **five** (5) of the major world religions, as introduced and interpreted by Hopkins, Rahula, Fishbane, Schimmel, and Alvarez, which will provide the raw data for analysis, comparison, and the application of the conceptual tools and categories of the study of religion (for this course, the categories proffered by Smart in the first chapter of his book). To further enhance the appreciation of the religious dimension of the human, the student will select **one** (1) religious traditions outside his/her own for personal observation through visits to places of worship (from the list provided by instructor). The format of the field reports will also be provided by the instructor (see end of syllabus)-. Films/videos giving the student a unique audio-visual perspective into the rituals, symbols, practices, sensibilities, "look and feel" of religious traditions selected for study in this course will complement the lectures and discussions. Last but not least, the reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* will afford the student the opportunity to engage at a serious and sustained level one of the major non-Christian Scriptures.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To provide the student with the "raw materials" for the study of religion by immersing the student in the beliefs, doctrines, rituals, symbols, (select) scriptures, and experiences (through site visits) of five of the major world religions.
2. To facilitate the informed cross-cultural comparison and evaluation of ways of being religious by focused study of select world religions.

3. To introduce the student to the interpretive categories for the study of religion as proffered by a renowned religious scholar, Ninian Smart, and through the focused study and site visits of select world religions assess/test their applicability to actual religious phenomena.
4. To widen, enhance and enrich the intellectual and spiritual horizons of the student by exposure to the spiritual beauty, vitality, coherence, plausibility and richness of non-Christian, non-Western approaches to the transcendent or ultimate reality.
5. To challenge the student to situate him/herself if only for the duration of a term in the "shoes" of a practitioner of at least one of the great world religions and to "see" the world as the practitioner sees it, to adopt the practitioner's "perspective," to enter sympathetically and creatively into the worldview of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
6. To equip the student with the conceptual tools and to provide the context for dialogue and discussion that will enable him or her to live in an enormously complex, interdependent, and religious plural world with patience, understanding, and appreciation for that which is different, and in some cases irreconcilably different, from his or her own "worldview."

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

As a ***Gordon Rule course***, written assignments are required of all students in order to fulfill the State-mandated standards for this course. The Gordon Rule requirement will be met by:

1. A 6-8 page Essay format Mid-Term Exam (Essay format) (30%)
2. A 6-8 page Essay format Final Exam (Essay format) (30%)
3. One (1) Site Visit Report, 4-5 pages, based on visits to places of worship of select world religions represented in the South Florida area. The Site Visit must be written in *essay* form (20%)
4. Cumulative Objective Exam, 50 questions multiple choice/true or false (on WEBCT). (20%)

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

1. Students will have one week to submit assignments. Due dates will be posted on the weeks assignments are due. Papers submitted **any time within one week** after the first week dates will (that is, the second week) be deducted **10 points**; any time during the week after that (the third week) **20 points**. **No paper will be accepted after the third week** (see dates below).
2. This late papers policy does not apply to the final exam. Final exams will be submitted during the announced submission period and will not be accepted after that.
3. Students should print the **Turnitin.com receipt** that verifies the date and the hour you they submitted their work. Receipts are essential to settle disputes as to when and whether a paper was submitted (and avoid possible late submission point deductions).
4. All written work will be submitted through TURNITIN.COM (midterm, final, and site visit).
5. All written work must be typed, double-spaced, and in a "normal" size font (written work submitted in *large* font will not be acceptable); and any quotations should follow the manual of style or the standard style recommended by FIU.
6. This course may also fulfill the ***Critical Inquiry*** requirement of the FIU core curriculum if the student earns a grade of "C" or higher. A "C-" or lower grade will **not** satisfy the Critical Inquiry requirement.
7. Grades will be posted **10 days after the last due date** of the week papers are submitted. Please do not ask for your grade before the ten days are up.
8. **Quotations from internet sources** (Wikipedia, Encarta, and the like) **will not be accepted**. All source quotations must be from the assigned textbooks.

OBJECTIVE FINAL

The objective final will be fifty (50) multiple choice and true or false questions. It will be available through WEBCT. The exam will be open during the Final Exam week.

COURSE GRADES

Mid-Term Exam: 30% of final grade.

Final Exam: 30% of final grade.

Site Visit Report: 20% of final grade.

Cumulative Objective Exam: 20% of final grade.

GRADE CRITERIA

A-A- = Outstanding/Exceptional in terms of content (grasp of concepts, depth of analysis and comprehension) and expression (grammar, diction, syntax, style, organization/structure)

B+-B = Above average to Very Good

B--C+ = Good to above average

C= Achieving minimum standards

C-= Passing but barely meeting minimum standards

F=Not meeting minimum or acceptable standards

A	94-100	C	70-74
A-	90-93	C-	67-69
B+	87-89	D+	65-66
B	82-86	D	63-64
B-	79-81	D-	60-62
C+	75-78	F	0-59

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Since this is a writing-intensive course, the student might feel tempted to "borrow" materials from written sources or another person's work (such as classmate) for the sake of fulfilling the Gordon Rule requirement, whether by directly quoting a source or by paraphrasing it. Regardless of the best intentions, this is known as "plagiarism" and will not be acceptable. According to Professor Christine Gudorf's comprehensive characterization,

Plagiarism is defined as "literary theft" and consists of the unattributed quotation of the exact words of a published text, or the unattributed borrowing of original ideas by paraphrase from a published text. On written papers for which the student employs information gathered from books, articles or oral sources, each direct quotation, as well as ideas and facts that are not generally known to the public at large, or the form, structure or style of a secondary source must be attributed to its author by means of the appropriate citation procedure [in our course, the standard manual of style recommended by FIU]. Only widely known facts and thoughts and observations original to the student do not require citations. (From Christine Gudorf, Spring 1999, Religion 2011 Syllabus, 4, emphasis hers.)

However, extensive quotations from textbooks or other sources mechanically inserted into paper for the sake of padding or bulk will not be accepted either. Your quotations should be selective and should not be strewn throughout the essays overshadowing or disproportional to your own original writing.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1

Introduction: Syllabus, Requirements, Overview of course

The Study of Religion in the 19th century: Historical vs. Dogmatic Method in the Study of Religion

Required Reading: [Alvarez, "Study of Religion in the West: 1800-1900" \(link\).](#)

Recommended Reading: [Ernst Troeltsch, "Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology," in *Religion in History* \(Fortress Press, 1991\), 11-32.](#)

Week 2

The Study of Religion in the 19th century (II)

Required Reading: [Alvarez, "Study of Religion in the West: 1900-1960" \(link\).](#)

NOTE: All future readings will be accessible through Blackboard

<http://online.fiu.edu/login.html>

To log in: Username: PantherID

Password: Birthdate in the following form

MMDDYYYY

If you have problems logging in to Blackboard contact UTS 305-348-2284

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO FIND OUT IF YOU ARE REGISTERED ON BLACKBOARD

History, Relativism, and the Question of Truth

Week 3

The Question of Religious Truth and the Dimensions of Religion: One Truth, Pluralism, Relativism

Recommended Reading: [Ernst Troeltsch, "The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions," in *Christian Thought: Its History and Application* \(University of London Press, 1923\).](#)

Film: Indus Valley Civilization before the Aryans

Week 4

The Hindu Religious Experience (I): Vedic Religion

Required Reading: Hopkins, *Hindu Religious Tradition*, 3-35; Edgerton, *Bhagavad Gita*, 111-119; 3-31 (to be read in that order).

The Upanishads

Required Reading: Hopkins, *Hindu Religious Tradition*, 35-51; Edgerton, *Bhagavad Gita*, 120-135; 32-61.

Week 5

SITE VISIT REPORT DUE (Submission dates:)

The Hindu Religious Experience (II): On the Threshold of Classical Hinduism: Karma, Jñana, Bhakti

Required Reading: Hopkins, *Hindu Religious Tradition*, 52-86; Edgerton, *Bhagavad Gita*, 139-163; 62-91 (again, in that order).

The Hindu Religious Experience (III): Classical Hinduism, Theism, and Devotional Piety

Required Reading: Hopkins, *Hindu Religious Tradition*, 87-140; Edgerton, *Bhagavad Gita*, 164-178.

Film: "330 Million Gods"

Week 6

(2nd week later paper submission: 10 point deduction)

The Buddhist Religious Experience (I): Theravada Buddhism, The Four Noble Truths

Required Reading: Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 1-28.

Recommended: Film: "Siddhartha," or the novel by Hermann Hesse

Nirvana, Anatta, Pratitya Samutpada

Required Reading: Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 29-50.

Recommended Reading: I. B. Horner, "Buddhism: The Theravada," in R. C. Zaehner, editor, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths* (handout).

Required Reading: Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 51-89.

Film: "Footprint of the Buddha"

Week 7

SITE VISIT GRADES POSTED AND AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING:

(3rd week later paper submission: 10/4-10/10: 20 point deduction)

The Buddhist Religious Experience (II): Mahayana Buddhism: India, Tibet, China, Japan

Required Reading: [Edward Conze, "Buddhism: The Mahayana"; "Buddhism: In China and Japan," both in R. C. Zaehner, editor, The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths, 293-341 \(handout\).](#)

Recommended: Film: "Little Buddha."

Buddhism in Japan

Film: "Land of the Disappearing Buddha"

Week 8

MIDTERM EXAM DUE (Submission dates:)

The Jewish Religious Experience: Israel, the Pre-History of Judaism

Required Reading: Cohn-Sherbok, *History of Judaism*, 1-40; Psalm 2, Isaiah 58, 61; Jeremiah 7.

The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism

Required Reading: Cohn-Sherbok, *History of Judaism*, 41-71.

Week 9

(2nd week late paper submission: 10 points deduction)

Judaism from the Middle Ages to the Present

Required Reading: Cohn-Sherbok, *History of Judaism*, 72-135.

Guest Lecturer: Rabbi Hector Epelbaum

- Week 10 **MIDTERM GRADES POSTED AND AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING:**
 The Christian Religious Experience: The Historical Jesus
Required Reading: Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, 1-74.
 The Historical Jesus, continued.
- Week 11 (4th)
 The Historical Jesus vs. the Christ of Faith
Required Reading: Crossan, *Jesus*, 75-201.
 The Historical Jesus, concluded
- Week 12
 Which Jesus: Jewish, Gentile, and Gnostic Christianities
 The Muslim Religious Experience: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammed is His Messenger"
Required Reading: Schimmel, *Islam*, 1-57.
- Week 13
 Film: "There is no God but God"
 After the Prophet to the Rise of Fundamentalism and Arab Nationalism
Required Reading: Schimmel, *Islam*, 59-100.
- Week 14
 Islamic Fundamentalism: The Struggle for Islam
Required Reading: Schimmel, *Islam*, 101-144.
 Wither Islam?
- Week 15 **FINAL EXAM DUE DATE TBA**
 Film: The Message
 Film: The Message, concluded

RELIGIOUS SITES OF SOUTH FLORIDA

A REMINDER TO ALL STUDENTS THAT THE SITE VISIT AND REPORT MUST BE DONE FOR A RELIGIOUS TRADITION **THAT IS NOT THE STUDENT'S OWN**. If a phone number is no longer valid, call information and please let the instructor know that the number(s) has been changed so that the directory can be updated. If you learn about other sites not included below, please let the instructor know also. **I strongly recommend that you visit the site first to familiarize yourself with location and the times officially given by the personnel at the site. Any information concerning service times given below are tentative.**

ISLAMIC: the times to go are Fridays and Sundays at 1:30 p.m. Female students can bring a scarf with them if they don't want to stand out, but it is not required.

Miami Gardens Mosque (Sunni)
4305 N.W. 183 street
Miami, Florida 33055

Mosque of Miami (Sunni)
7350 N.W. 3rd Street
Miami, Florida 33126
305-261-7622

Masjid Al-Ansar (Sunni)
5245 N.W. 7th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33127
305-757-8741

Islamic School of Miami
Masjid al-Noor (Sunni)
11699 SW 147 Ave
Miami, FL 33196
(305) 408-0400
Tasnim Uddin, Principal of School
Friday: 1:30 pm, Islam School on Sundays: 10am-12pm
(behind the Exxon gas station)

Islamic Jafferia Association Imambara (Shia)
10554 N.W. 132nd Street
Hialeah Gardens, Florida 33016
(305) 557-6835
<http://www.ijamiami.org/>

Muhammad's Mosque # 29 (Nation of Islam)
5660 N.W. 7th Ave.
Miami, Florida
305-756-9136

BAHAI

FIU Bahai Club
305-436-2490

Bahai Faith (South)
 9300 S. Dixie Hwy.
 Miami, Florida
 305-570-8886

Bahai Faith (North)
 4365 Rock Island Rd.
 Ft. Lauderdale
 (North of Commercial)
 954-524-4084

BUDDHIST

(Nichiren Buddhist)
 Sokka Gakkai International
 Miami Community Center
 20000 S.W. 36th St.
 Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33332
 954-349-5200

Avalokitesvara Buddhist Study Center (Buddhist)
 7550 S.W. 82nd Court
 Miami, Florida 33143
 305-271-6361
 267-8000

International Zen Institute of Florida (Buddhist)
 Dharma House
 3860 Crawford Avenue
 Miami, Florida 33133
 305-448-8969

Wat Buddharangsi Temple (Thai, Buddhist)
 15200 S.W., 240th Street
 Homestead, Florida
 305-245-2702

Amida Temple ("Pure Land" Buddhist)
 c/o Kuang-Hsi Wu
 12815 S.W. 119 Terrace
 Miami, Florida 33186
 305-385-2866

International Dharma Center (Buddhist)
 P.O. Box 141728
 Coral Gables, Florida
 33114-1728
 305-267-8000 (Ileana Davis)

Kagyü Shedrup Chöling (Tibetan Buddhist)

1905 Monroe Street
Hollywood, Florida 33020 954-920-1346

HINDU: Plan to attend Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.

Shiva Vishnu Temple 5661 Dykes Rd.

(S.W. 160th Ave)

Pembroke Pines (Davie)

954-689-0471

webmaster@shivavishnu.org

(I-75 north, exit at Sheridan, go west to Dykes Road, then go north for about a mile, temple on the left)

The South Florida Hindu Temple

13010 Griffin Road

Davie, Florida

954-438-3675

info@sfht.org

Hare Krishna Temple

3220 Virginia St.

Coconut Grove, Florida

305-442-7218

SIKH: Plan to attend Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.

Sikh Society of Florida

16000 Sterling Rd.

Pembroke Pines, Florida

954-680-0221

(Same directions as to Shiva Hindu Temple, but closer to Sheridan on Dykes Road)

JAIN

Contact Professor Neptune Srimal

Srimal@fiu.edu

AC1-389

305-919-5969

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN

Synagogues: Friday evenings, near Sundown; and Saturday mornings, 8:00 a.m. only.

Christian churches: 11:00 a.m. morning service. Consult Yellow Pages for synagogue or church nearest where you live.

Students are encouraged to do detective work and find representatives of the other major world religions in Miami or the South Florida area: **Taoism**, **Confucianism** (Chinese), **Shinto** (Japanese), and **Zoroastrianism** (Persian/Iranian, and mostly in Bombay, India).

FORMAT FOR SITE VISIT REPORT

Name of site visited	Site location (complete address)
Sect/branch and/or subsect	Phone number
Contact person (if any)	Hours of worship: Days and Times

1. Fundamental beliefs (important if you are visiting a sectarian group, and note differences in belief and practice from its parent group), and sources of authority or basis for the religion or sect (such as inspired scriptures, teachers, direct revelations, and the like). Specify both the religion and the sect or branch you have visited (e.g., Hindu temple [Shiva, Vishnu, Hare Krishna]; Synagogue [Orthodox, Reformed, Conservative]; Buddhist sect [Pure Land, Nichiren, Tibetan, Mahayana, Theravada] Islamic sect [Nation of Islam, Sunni, Shia], etc.).

2. Why is the religion here in South Florida, whose needs is the religion/sect meeting. Narrate the reasons for the appearance of sect in South Florida.

***3.** Describe art, symbols, images, cultic objects (including sacred scriptures, if of artistic or aesthetic merit) of the religion.

4. Distinctive dress, articles of clothing, of members and/or clergy of the religion you witnessed during visit. Inquire as to whether normally there is a distinctive dress, etc. in other locations. Include how much adaptation or concessions to "American" ways of worshipping you witnessed during your visit (for this you may also have to tap a knowledgeable person for information).

***5.** Forms of ritual, worship/liturgy, special ceremonies, particular/distinctive practices that you saw practice during your visit.

6. Major religious festivals or sacred days (and their dates and days during the year) celebrated in South Florida (and those elsewhere, such as in the country of origin of religion or where religion is strongest).

***7.** Describe how what you saw and heard impacted you; did visit enhance your appreciation for that particular religious faith and/or for religion in general; did you feel you were "worshipping"?; did anything strike you in a negative way?; what was the most positive result of your visit?

*** Starred/boldfaced items should constitute the bulk of your report**, what you should give priority to when you write your report. Also, it is important that you make an effort to enter sympathetically into the religion you will be visiting. You do not have to agree with what you see and hear, but you should make an effort to understand it. After your visit and as you write your report, you will have the opportunity to express your opinion about what you witnessed.