

Vodou and Christianity in Haiti

[Jump to Today](#)

Vodou and Christianity in Haiti (HAI 3930; LAS 3930; AFA 3930; REL 3938)

Benjamin Hebblethwaite, associate professor, hebble@ufl.edu

Office hours and location: 10:30 am - 12:30 am Fridays, Dauer Hall 363

Anthony Baxter, teaching assistant. abaxter1@ufl.edu

Office hours and location:

Class times: M,W,F | Period 7 (1:55 PM - 2:45 PM)

Class location: [CBD 0210](#)

Introduction to your instructor: My name is Ben Hebblethwaite and I am an associate professor. I teach courses in the languages and cultures of Haiti, Jamaica and France at UF! I love to do research on the social sciences and the humanities. I published [Vodou Songs in Haitian Creole and English \(Links to an external site.\)](#) in 2012 in collaboration with various UF students. My recent books include [Stirring the Pot of Haitian History \(Links to an external site.\)](#), with Mariana Past, and another called, [A Transatlantic History of Haitian Vodou \(Links to an external site.\)](#) ([wh](#) (which we'll read!)). I argue for Haitian Creole over French in the Haitian state and schools in this Op-Ed published by [Foreign Policy \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (there is no pay-wall if you read it on a phone).

Introduction to your instructor: My name is Anthony Baxter and I am earning an MA in Latin American Studies at UF.

Modality

This course is taught in person. Office hours are in-person. Zoom is not used.

Course Description

This course examines the histories, cultures, and traditions of Vodou, Protestantism, and Catholicism in Haiti and its Diaspora. The course examines the role of the Catholic church and its priests in the colonization of French Saint-Domingue as well as Catholic influence in contemporary Haiti, especially politics and education. The various Catholic orders operating in Saint-Domingue and their political and economic activities are analyzed. The schism and the concordat of 1860 are major events of the 19th century. The emergence of liberation theology in the context of Latin American dictatorships receives attention for its impact on Vatican II in the 1960s. The emergence of *Ti Legliz* and the expansion of Haitian Creole in Catholic churches points to the long term impacts of emphasizing the condition of the poor in Catholicism. The election of former Catholic priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide points to the connections of the Church and state.

Haitian Vodou was practiced early in the French colony's history, but clandestinely because all religions beside Catholicism were illegal in French colonies according to the *Code noir* of 1685. Nevertheless, over the centuries it has maintained a high degree of popularity and competitiveness. The course examines the African political and spiritual roots of Haitian Vodou through an analysis of the West African kingdoms of Allada, Hueda, and Dahomey, and the religious cultures that thrived in them. The slave trade in those kingdoms and the circumstances of enslavement in the African context are of importance for understanding the creation of Haitian Vodou in Saint-Domingue and Haiti. Vodou specialists' inclusion of various African ethnic and linguistic religious traditions reflects the remarkable preservation of multiple cultures in Haitian Vodou. Integrated traditions are kept pristinely separate under one umbrella tradition in *Sèvis Ginen* which includes 21 rites. The class carefully examines the features and structure of the Rada Rite and Gede Rite, two of Vodou's major traditions. Areas of borrowing and syncretism with Christianity are significant.

This course also examines the rise of Haitian Protestantism in the 19th and 20th centuries, starting with Methodist missionaries. The history and culture of Haitian Protestants are examined both in Haiti as well as the Bahamas, an important outpost in the Haitian Diaspora. Concerns include pastors, churches, and the transnational ties that characterize Protestant religion, particularly with the deep financial and political ties with North American churches. The structure of Haitian Protestant liturgy is examined and the signal issue of rejecting Vodou and converting to Protestantism is explored. Notions of Haitian nationalism, identity, exploitation, and marginalization are pivotal. Attention is given to the publication of *Bib la* (The Bible) in Haitian Creole in 1985, an achievement brought forward by Haitian Bible translators of the Protestant faith.

The course is concerned with academic religious studies, history, Latin American studies, the music, songs, and liturgies of the religious traditions, sacred written and oral texts, and the sociological experience of people engaged with or against the traditions. Social sciences, history, ethnomusicology, politics, economics, literary and cultural criticism, linguistics, art criticism, exegesis and interpretation, and comparative studies are all helpful tools for studying religion in Haiti.

Grade distribution

6 short essay assignments (20%): 300 words per assignment [click on the "Assignments" tab for details]

1 Essay (25%): 1,500 words [click on the "Assignments" tab for details]

1 In-Class Midterm (15%) [In-Class]

1 In-Class Final (15%) [In-Class]

Participation (10%) [Attendance in-Class]

+/- 7 Quizzes (10%): announced and unannounced [In-Class]

In-Class Presentation (5%): 5-slide PowerPoint required [In-Class]

Total: 100%

What do you do if you have a problem with Canvas?

Contact the UF Help Desk:

UF Computing Help Desk

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Phone: (352) 392-HELP (4357)

Email: helpdesk@ufl.edu
Web: <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>

Assignment Descriptions (Total percentage possible: 100%)

6 Short Essays (20%)

Students analyze various topics in Vodou, Catholicism, and Protestantism to develop their skills in analysis and writing.

Midterm (15%) [*Feedback within 1 week*]

Students will take the 50-minute midterm exam in class.

Final (15%) [*Feedback within 1 week*]

Students will take the 50-minute final exam in class. It is not cumulative.

1,500 Word Essay (25%) [*Feedback within 2 weeks*]

This assignment asks students to write an analysis focused on one or overlapping aspects of Vodou, Catholicism and Protestantism in Haiti.

The 1,500-word essay should be structured with an **title, introduction**, including a **thesis statement, 3-6 numbered main section headings with boldface titles**, in-depth **analysis** in the passages, **short paragraphs, transitions** between paragraphs and sections, and a **conclusion** in order to assist the reader in following your arguments and ideas. The conclusion offers **new insights** while emphasizing the **main arguments** and the **thesis**.

The essay should follow the Chicago style formatting found in *A Transatlantic History of Haitian Vodou*. Essays must be **double-spaced, .12 font, Times New Roman** with the **word-count clearly noted below your name**. Failure to follow these guidelines results in a 3% reduction on the assignment.

The essay may examine religious, linguistic, literary, cultural, historical, religious, ethno-musicological, sociological, anthropological, and other aspects of the course. Essays should include at least 5 print-sources. Additional online sources are welcome. The essay should combine close reading with critical concepts, scientific analyses, and historical and cultural information and interpretation. The goal is for students to produce a strong conceptual argument supported by textual, audiovisual, and contextual evidence. **Students can resubmit their essay** for additional points after it is graded at the end of the semester.

One 10-minute Presentations (5%)

Student present on the topic of the 1,500-word essay

Participation (10%)

This score is based on attendance in class.

Quiz (10%)

Quizzes may be in-class or on Canvas and will include short answer, multiple choice, true/false, and other question types.

Grading Scale & GPA equivalent:

Percent	Grade	Grade Points
93.4-100	A	4.00
90.0-93.3	A-	3.67
86.7-89.9	B+	3.33
83.4-86.6	B	3.00
80.0-83.3	B-	2.67
76.7-79.9	C+	2.33
73.4-76.6	C	2.00
70.0-73.3	C-	1.67
66.7-69.9	D+	1.33
63.4-66.6	D	1.00
60.0-63.3	D-	0.67
0-59.9	E	0.00

More information on grades and grading policies is here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Privacy and Data Protection

All student data is kept private within Canvas. No lectures are recorded to ensure student privacy.

Class Attendance and Make-Up Policy

Class attendance is expected. Students can have 3 unexcused absences, thereafter there is a penalty of .5% per absence from the final grade.

Late work is penalized at a reduction of **10%**. After **7 days**, no late work can be submitted. Late work can be submitted with an excused absence note, including letterhead, email and phone number.

Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog and require appropriate documentation.

Students who can demonstrate that they were unable to submit an assignment by the deadline due to an excused absence and who can provide appropriate documentation for the absence will be given a reasonable period of time to make up the late work.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/ ([Links to an external site.](#))) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

Materials and Supplies Fees

There are no additional fees for this course.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge that states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/> ([Links to an external site.](#)))

specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 302 Tigert Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

Privacy Policies

<https://www.instructure.com/policies/privacy>Links to an external site.

<https://www.instructure.com/canvas/accessibility>Links to an external site.

<https://zoom.us/privacy> (Links to an external site.)

<https://zoom.us/accessibility> (Links to an external site.)

Important links to the Office of Academic Support Services, Student Life Success Services, and Academic Advisors.

<https://oas.aa.ufl.edu/services/> (Links to an external site.)

<https://www.ufl.edu/student-life/success-services/> (Links to an external site.)

<http://www.ufadvising.ufl.edu/college-remote-advising-contacts/> (Links to an external site.)

Course Evaluation information

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/> (Links to an external site.). Students will be notified

when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/> (Links to an external site.). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.” (Links to an external site.)

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Readings

Mondays: TCCH *The Catholic Church in Haiti* (available as a PDF in UF Libraries)

Wednesdays: MSIH *My Soul is in Haiti* (available as an e-book in UF Libraries)

Fridays: ATHHV *A Transatlantic History of Haitian Vodou* (available as a PDF in the Files Canvas link).

Daily assigned readings:

Week 1 (January 3)

No class on Monday

Wednesday - Introduce the syllabus

Friday - ATHHV pp. 3-29 *Introduction*

Week 2 (January 10)

Monday - TCCH pp. 1-20 *Church and State in Latin America*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 1-12 *Introduction*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 29-44 *Introduction*;

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/447418/assignments/4973411>

Week 3 (January 17)

Martin Luther King, Jr Day -- No class at UF

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 12-18 *Introduction*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 45-67 *African Political Roots of Haitian Vodou*

Week 4 (January 24)

Monday - TCCH pp. 21-39 *The State in Haiti*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 19-29 *Haitian Protestant Culture*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 67-90 *African Political Roots of Haitian Vodou*;

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/447418/assignments/4973412>

Week 5 (January 31)

Monday - TCCH pp. 39-55 *The State in Haiti*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 29-45 *Haitian Protestant Culture*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 91-113 *African Spiritual Roots of Haitian Vodou*

Week 6 (February 7)

Monday - TCCH pp. 73-94 *The Church in Haiti*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 47-58 *Haitians in the Bahamas*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 113-124 *African Spiritual Roots of Haitian*

Vodou; <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/447418/assignments/4973413>

Week 7 (February 14)

Monday - TCCH pp. 94-116 *The Church in Haiti*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 58-69 *Haitians in the Bahamas*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 124-133 *African Spiritual Roots of Haitian Vodou*; Exam Review

Week 8 (February 21)

Monday - TCCH pp. 129-142 *The Church and JCD*; Exam Review

Wednesday - ***In class Midterm Exam***

Friday - ATHHV pp. 134-142 *Rada*

Week 9 (February 28)

Monday - TCCH pp. 142-152; *The Church and JCD*;

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 71-80 *Pastors, Churches, and Transnational Ties*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 142-155 *Rada*;

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/447418/assignments/4973414>

UF Spring Break, March 5-12**Week 10 (March 7)**

Monday - TCCH pp. 152-164 *The Church and JCD*;

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 80-93 *Pastors, Churches, and Transnational Ties*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 155-166 *Rada*

Week 11 (March 14)

Monday - TCCH pp. 191-205 *Role of the Church in the Overthrow of JCD*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 95-105 *Haitian Protestant Liturgy*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 166-183

Rada; <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/447418/assignments/4973416>

Week 12 (March 21)

Monday - TCCH pp. 211-220 *The Post-Duvalier Church*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 105-118 *Haitian Protestant Liturgy*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 184-196 *Gede*

Week 13 (March 28)

Monday - TCCH pp. 220-234 *The Post-Duvalier Church*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 119-141 *Not converted yet*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 196-215 *Gede*;

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/447418/assignments/4973417>

Week 14 (April 4)

Monday - TCCH pp. 245-252 *Plus Ça Change*

Wednesday - MSIH pp. 143-152 *Conclusion*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 215-231 *Gede*

1,500 word essay due Sunday April 10 11:59 pm;

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/447418/assignments/4976444>

Week 15 (April 11)

Monday - *Student Presentations*

Wednesday - *Student Presentations*

Friday - ATHHV pp. 232-239 *Conclusion*

Week 16 (April 18)

Monday - *Review*

Wednesday - *In Class Final Exam*

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Fri Jan 14, 2022	Assignment Short Essay 1: What was the role of Catholics in the French colonial and imperial history of Saint-Domingue?	due by 11:59pm
Fri Jan 28, 2022	Assignment Short Essay 2: What was the role of "royal Vodunists" in the kingdom of Dahomey and how did it contrast with non-royal Vodun in the kingdom?	due by 11:59pm
Fri Feb 11, 2022	Assignment Short Essay 3: What are defining features of Haitian Protestantism and what are its features in the Haitian Diaspora like the Bahamas?	due by 11:59pm
Wed Feb 23, 2022	Assignment In-Class 50-minute Midterm Exam	due by 11:59pm
Fri Mar 4, 2022	Assignment Short Essay 4: What were the relationships of François and Jean-Claude Duvalier with the Catholic church? Discuss two aspects.	due by 11:59pm
Fri Mar 18, 2022	Assignment Short Essay 5: What is the "Rada Rite" and where does it come from? What are key features of the Rada Rite? What are the properties of the spirit-traditions in Rada?	due by 11:59pm
Fri Apr 1, 2022	Assignment Short Essay 6: What are political and economic dimensions of Haitian Protestantism and its Diaspora in the Bahamas and the United States?	due by 11:59am
Sun Apr 10, 2022	Assignment 1,500 word essay	due by 11:59pm
Wed Apr 13, 2022	Assignment In-Class Presentation	due by 11:59pm
Wed Apr 20, 2022	Assignment In-Class 50-minute Final Exam	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment Quiz 1	
	Assignment Quiz 2	
	Assignment Quiz 3	
	Assignment Quiz 4	
	Assignment Quiz 5	
	Assignment Roll-call attendance	

Course Status

December 2021

Calendar						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 November 2021 28 Previous month	29 November 2021 29 Previous month	30 November 2021 30 Previous month	1 December 2021 1	2 December 2021 2	3 December 2021 3	4 December 2021 4
5 December 2021 5	6 December 2021 6	7 December 2021 7	8 December 2021 8	9 December 2021 9	10 December 2021 10	11 December 2021 11
12 December 2021 12	13 December 2021 13	14 December 2021 14	15 December 2021 15	16 December 2021 16	17 December 2021 17	18 December 2021 18
19 December 2021 19	20 December 2021 20	21 December 2021 21	22 December 2021 22	23 December 2021 23 Today	24 December 2021 24	25 December 2021 25
26 December 2021 26	27 December 2021 27	28 December 2021 28	29 December 2021 29	30 December 2021 30	31 December 2021 31	1 January 2022 1 Next month
2 January 2022 2 Next month	3 January 2022 3 Next month	4 January 2022 4 Next month	5 January 2022 5 Next month	6 January 2022 6 Next month	7 January 2022 7 Next month	8 January 2022 8 Next month

Assignments are weighted by group:

Group	Weight
6 short essays (20%)	20%
Essay (25%)	25%
In-Class Midterm Exam (15%)	15%
In-Class Final Exam (15%)	15%
Participation (10%)	10%
Quizzes (10%) [5-7 announced or unannounced]	10%
In-Class Presentation (5%)	5%
Total	100%