

Religion in Latin America

Course: REL3381/RGL6387

Term: Spring 2024

Times: T 6 (12:50 PM – 1:40 PM) / R 5-6 (11:45 AM – 1:40 PM)

Location: LIT 0109

Instructor: Dr. Jeyoul Choi

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Office: 107F Anderson Hall

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

Latin America religions are diverse and complex. While no single course could begin to cover the entire range of religious experiences in Latin America, this class will address some of the more significant and interesting varieties of historical and contemporary religious life in South and Central and the Caribbean. Proceeding in roughly chronological order, we will cover indigenous, African-based, Protestant, and Roman Catholic traditions, as well as their interactions in the increasingly pluralistic religious arena in Latin America. Thematically, special attentions are given to (post-) colonialism, race, ethnicity, class, and gender/sexuality that shape the Latin American religions.

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Identify various religious traditions that have emerged and developed in different geographical and historical periods of Latin America
- Analyze the complexity of various religions intertwined with different social contexts of Latin American societies
- Examine overarching themes such as (post-) colonialism, race, ethnicity, class, and gender/sexuality, and and patterns of the continuation and change of each religion in different social and historical Latin American contexts

Humanities Credit

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and analyze the key elements, biases, and influences that shape through. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

International Credit

International courses promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend

the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.

Required Reading Materials

For Purchase (Undergraduate):

Carrasco, David. *Religions of Mesoamerica*. 2nd Edition. Long Grove: Waveland Press. 2014

All other readings (book chapters and articles) marked with (*) will be available on Canva

Required Reading Materials

For Purchase (Graduate):

Silverblatt, Irene. *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Dean, Carolyn. *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999.

Burns, Kathryn. *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999.

Diacon, Todd A. *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality: Brazil's Contestado Rebellion, 1912-1916*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991.

(Optional) Warren, Kay B. *The Symbolism of Subordination: Indian Identity in a Guatemalan Town*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978.

Assignments:

1. Keyword Reading Responses (25%)

Starting in the third week of the class, students will complete a 10-set of reading responses throughout the semester. This assignment helps students with their reading comprehension and in-class discussion each week. For this assignment, students will **provide at least two keywords** after they complete the reading assignment and **write a 2-3 paragraph-long response (200-300 words)** that explains how the keywords they provided explain the details of each week's reading materials. At the end of their responses, **students will also pose their own questions** (at least one) related to the reading materials. The assignment is due every Monday, and Tuesday's class period will begin with discussing their responses.

Graduate students will have a list of extra readings and two-page (single-spaced) reading reflection papers for each reading to complete throughout the semester. The due date for each reflection paper is marked in the schedule of classes below.

2. Class Presentation and Discussion Leading (20%)

Each student will lead one class period in which they will deliver a brief presentation for the assigned readings and discussion leading. While having the freedom to organize their class period, it should convey the key themes, concepts, and examples of the assigned readings with related questions.

4. First Take-Home Exam Essay (Midterm Exam, 20%)

Students will write a take-home exam essay in the eighth week of the semester (the length of the essay should be four double-spaced pages, 1,200-1,500 words). The instructor will provide students with several keywords discussed in each unit covered in the first half of the class. Students will have the freedom to organize their essays to discuss the keywords by drawing from the reading materials. The purpose of the assignment is to evaluate student's ability to discuss different concepts/themes and case studies on religions in Latin American religions in-depth and to weave them into a coherent thesis. This assignment is due March 1.

5. Second Take Home Essay (Final Exam, 20%)

Students will write a take-home exam essay in the last week of the semester (the length of the essay should be four double-spaced pages, 1,200-1,500 words). The instructor will provide students with several keywords discussed in each unit covered in the second half of the class. Students will have the freedom to organize their essays to discuss the keywords by drawing from the reading materials. The purpose of the assignment is to evaluate student's ability to discuss different concepts and case studies on religions in Latin American in-depth and to weave them into a coherent thesis. This assignment is due April 24.

6. Attendance & Class Participation (15%)

Attendance (5%)

Students are expected to attend all classes throughout the semester. Absence of each class will be tracked via Canvas Rollcall check-ins. Absence will be exempted only with documentation of a hardship affecting performance in the classroom such as sickness, family issues, or deployment. Acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to engage in class include illness; Title IX-related situations; special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences); military obligation; severe weather conditions that prevent class participation; religious holidays; participation in official university activities (e.g., music performances, athletic competitions, debate); and court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena). Other reasons (e.g., a job interview or club activity) may be deemed acceptable if approved by the instructor.

Students shall be permitted to a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered during absence from class or inability to engage in class activities because of the reasons outlined above. If possible, please request prior approval from the instructor. If that is not possible, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange the makeup. If an extension

is not granted, the assignment will be marked down 1/3 grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

Class Participation (10%)

Although it is the instructor's responsibility to lead each class with lectures or discussions, students are expected to engage in each class by asking and answering questions concerning the relevant topics. Because immigration can be a controversial topic, students must act and speak respectfully. Comments should be thoughtful and based on information in the readings. Personal opinions based on emotional, gut feelings should be avoided. Consistent high-quality class participation—in large and small groups—is expected. "High-quality" in this case means:

- informed (i.e., shows evidence of having done assigned work),
- thoughtful (i.e., shows evidence of having understood and considered issues raised in readings and other discussions), and
- considerate (e.g., takes the perspectives of others into account).

If you have personal issues that prohibit you from joining freely in class discussion, e.g., shyness, language barriers, etc., see the instructors as soon as possible to discuss alternative modes of participation.

Reading:

Students are expected to do all the reading for this class. Success in the course depends on the student's close reading of the material. Each week requires 70 to 80 pages of reading.

Grading

Keywords Reading Responses (25%)
Class Presentation and Discussion Leading (20%)
First-Take-Home Essay Exam (20%)
Second-Take-Home Essay Exam (20%)
Attendance (10%)
Class Participation (5%)

Grade Scale

94 and up	A
90-92.9	A-
87-89.9	B+
83-86.9	B
80-82.9	B-
77-79.9	C+
73-76.9	C
70-72.9	C-
60-69.9	D
<60	E

Policies, Rules, and Resources

1. Late or Make-Up Assignments: Acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to engage in class include illness; Title IX-related situations; serious accidents or emergencies affecting the student, their roommates, or their family; special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences); military obligation; severe weather conditions that prevent class participation; religious holidays; participation in official university activities (e.g., music performances, athletic competitions, debate); and court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena). Other reasons (e.g., a job interview or club activity) may be deemed acceptable if approved by the instructor.

Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered during absence from class or inability to engage in class activities because of the reasons outlined above. If possible, please request prior approval from the instructor. If that is not possible, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange for the makeup. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down 1/3 grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

2. Completion of All Assignments: You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing any assignment or requirement.

3. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academicregulations/attendance-policies/

4. Common Courtesy: You may take notes on a laptop computer, although the instructor may ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant. The instructor and TA reserve the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, or reading a newspaper) to leave the class.

5. Course Evaluations: 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 professionally and respectfully is available at gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/. 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 ufl.blueria.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/.

6. Honor Code: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which 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 (sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/) specifies several behaviors that violate this code and the possible sanctions. Please note that acts of plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper or assignment that was written by someone else.
- Copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from the work of another author without proper citation and quotation marks.
- Using and copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from Chatgpt or any other AI software for any kind of course assignment.
- Paraphrasing or restating in your own words, text, or ideas written by someone else without proper citation.

For more info, see <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>

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.

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

8. Course grades have two components. The papers are graded both with a numerical points grade and a Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (N) grade. Students who receive an unsatisfactory on a paper will have one additional opportunity to revise and resubmit. ***To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.***

Writing Assessment Rubric

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit at least some evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide at least an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off- topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit at least some identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement but may require readers to work to follow progression of ideas.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.

ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical sentence structure. At a minimum, documents will display a less precise use of vocabulary and an uneven use of sentence structure or a writing style that occasionally veers away from word choice or tone appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, papers may contain some spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive, so they do not muddy the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1: Course Introduction & Understanding Religion

Tuesday (01/09): Course Introduction

Thursday: (01/11): (*) Esposito, et al. Chapter 1—Introduction: Understanding World Religions in Global Perspective

Supplementary Readings:

(*) Smith, Jonathan Z. "Map is Not Territory." In *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978

(*) Smith, Jonathan Z. "Religion, Religions, and Religious." In *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004

Unit I: Pre-Columbian Religions

Week 2: Mesoamerican Religions

Tuesday (01/16): Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, Introduction, Chapter 1

Thursday (01/18): Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, Chapter 2

Week 3: Mesoamerican Religions

Tuesday (01/23): Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, Chapter 3

Thursday (01/25): Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, Chapter 4

Week 4: Mesoamerican Religions

Tuesday (01/30): Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, Chapter 5

Thursday (02/01): (*) Jeanette F. Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest or Liberation?"

First Reading Reflection Paper due February 1 for Graduate Students

Week 5: Mesoamerica & Andes

Tuesday (02/06): (*) Irene Silverblatt, "New Christians and New World Fears in Seventeenth-Century Peru," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42.3 (2000): 524-546

Thursday (02/08): (*) Shannon Dugan Iverson, "Resignification as Fourth Narrative: Power and the Colonial Religious Experience in Tula, Hidalgo

Unit II: Conquest, Colonization, Independence, and Millenarianism

Week 6: Amazonia

Tuesday (02/13): (*) Robin M Wright, TBD

Thursday (02/15): Guest Lecture: Dr. Robin M Wright

Supplementary Readings:

(*) Robin M. Wright, "Guardians of the Cosmos: Baniwa Shaman and Prophets, Part I, *History of Religions* 32.2 (1992): 32-58

(*) Robin M. Wright, "Guardians of the Cosmos: Baniwa Shaman and Prophets, Part II, *History of Religions* 32.2 (1992): 126-145

Week 7: Modern Brazil

Tuesday (02/20): (*) Robert M. Levine, "Canudos in the National Context," *The Americas* 48.2 (1991): 207-222.

Thursday (02/22): (*) Todd A. Diacon, "Peasants, Prophets, and the Power of a Millenarian Vision in Twentieth-Century Brazil," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32.3 (1992): 488-514.

Second Reading Reflection Paper due February 22 for Graduate Students

Week 8: Midterm Week

Tuesday (02/27): Review

Thursday (02/29): No Class

First Take-Home-Exam Essay due March 1

Unit IV: Contemporary Religious Life (Changes & Continuities, Diversity, and Conflicts)

Week 9: Liberation Theology

Tuesday (03/05): (*) Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1971, Chapters 2 and 9

Thursday (03/07): (*) Anna L. Peterson, "Religious Narratives and Political Protest," *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 64.1 (1996): 27-44.

Week 10: Spring Break

Tuesday (03/12): No Class

Thursday (03/14): No Class

Week 11: Contemporary Mayans and Feminism

Tuesday (03/19): (*) Ruth J. Chojnacki, "Religion, Autonomy, and the Priority of Place in Mexico's Maya Highlands," *Latin American Perspective* 43.3 (2016): 31-50.

Thursday (03/21): (*) Sylvia Marcos, "Mesoamerican Women's Indigenous Spirituality: Decolonizing Religious Beliefs," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25.2 (2009): 25-45.

Third Reading Reflection Paper due March 21 for Graduate Students

Week 12: African-Originated Religions

Tuesday (03/26): (*) Stephen Selka, "Mediated Authenticity: Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Brazilian Candomblé," *Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 11.1 (2007): 5-30.

Thursday (03/28): (*) Cheryl Sterling, "Women-Space, Power, and the Sacred in Afro-Brazilian Culture," *The Global South* 4.1 (2010): 71-93.

Week 13: Protestantism

Tuesday (04/02): (*) Anne Motely Hallum, "Taking Stock and Building Bridges: Feminism, Women's Movements, and Pentecostalism in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 38.1 (2003): 169-186.

Thursday (04/04): (*) Robert Brennenman, "Wrestling the Devil: Conversion and Exit from Central American Gangs," *Latin American Research Review* 49 (2014): 112-128.

Supplementary Readings:

(*) David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*, Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990. Chapters 1 and 2

(*) Manuel A. Vasquez, *The Brazilian Popular Church and the Crisis of Modernity*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, Chapter 4.

Week 14: Contemporary Religious Landscape

Tuesday (04/09): (*) Nicolas M. Somma, et al., "Mapping Religious Change in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 59.1 (2017): 119-142.

Thursday (04/11): (*) Maria M. Acosta, "Bridging Religion and Sexual Diversity in Latin America," *Open Society Foundation* (July 27, 2022).

www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/bridging-religion-and-sexual-diversity-in-latin-america

Fourth Reading Reflection Paper due April 11 for Graduate Students

Week 15: Review

Tuesday (04/16): Peer-Review

Thursday (04/18): Peer-Review

Week 16: Final Exam Week

Tuesday (04/23): No Class

Thursday (04/25): No Class

Second Take-Home-Exam Essay due on April 24

