Social

Intro. to Religion in America

REL 2121 Fall 2026 - 84804
Session C (10/12/2026 - 12/10/2026)
Online E-Learning
Gulf Coast State College
Science Division

Instructor: Joseph Kyle Stewart (jstewar21@gulfcoast.edu) Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom	Dr. Robert Saunders Division Chair of Social Science Dept. 850-872-3826 rsaunder2@gulfcoast.edu Ms. Jody Walton Senior Administrative Assistant 850-872-3825 jwalton1@gulfcoast.edu

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Course Description

Through readings, discussions, and selected primary materials, including selections from the Western Canon, this course provides an examination of the origins and social context of American religious history. Emphasis is placed on the rich diversity of American religious life through an examination of American originals (e.g., Native Americans, Mormons, Christian Scientists, Seventh-Day Adventists), imported religions (e.g., Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism), and pop culture religion.

This course is ***a Gordon Rule Writing Course*** in which students will produce extensive college-level writing, requiring completion with a minimum grade of "C" (cf., Florida State Board of Education Rule 6A 10.030).

Prerequisite: **ENC1101 with a minimum grade of "C."** ***(Meets Philosophy/Religion Humanities requirement.)***

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student, through a variety of assessments, will:

- Identify the major religious events, movements, themes, and people in United States history from the colonial era to the present.
- Describe several religious communities in America and compare them through the religious studies rubric of creed, code, cultus, and community.
- Analyze the complex interaction between religious belief and the political, social, economic, cultural, and intellectual context in which religious people inhabit and enact their faith.
- Demonstrate the ability to read, contextualize, and interpret arguments made by scholars.

Required Texts

- Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, & Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History* (2nd ed., Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). ISBN 9780199832699.
- Various other primary sources and scholarly readings will be posted on the course's website.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation

Attendance in an online/hybrid class is defined as active participation and/or completion of online academic assignments. ***Failure to do so prior to the October 26th deadline may result in a student receiving either a "No Show" and/or an "F" for their grade.***

Exit Ticket (10%)

Students will complete an exit ticket at the end of each week's module. The purpose of this assignment is for the students to provide feedback concerning what they liked, did not like, and what they wished they learned more about, which was not covered by the readings or lecture materials.

Reading & Lecture Assignment (30%)

Students are expected to submit and/or complete a variety of assignments based on that week's readings and/or lectures. Assignments can vary from quizzes based on the lecture and/or readings that week, note annotations of weekly readings, and/or defining Key Terms from the reading and/or lecture.

Weekly Review Assignments (30%)

Students are expected to submit and complete a writing assignment based on that Week's lecture(s). In at least 300 words, the student will answer the weekly review question. The students are also expected to provide at least two citations from the textbook and lecture only; no outside sources are permitted.

Final Exam (30%)

There will only be a final exam administered during the course in order to assess a student's comprehension of basic methodological principles and materials covered in class. The exam will consist of various multiple-choice, matching, short-answer, and essay responses. A study guide will be provided to the student prior to each examination; however, the exams will be closed-book.

All examinations will be administered online and will be conducted through Respondus Lockdown Brower proctoring services. For an optimal proctoring environment, Respondus requires that students have a working web camera, do not have a Google Chromebook, and have access to a photo ID prior to testing. Students will also be required to download the necessary program as instructed prior to testing. Any student who has any issue with these requirements must contact the instructor well in advance of their testing in order to arrange for alternative testing.

Students may also choose to take their examinations at the Testing Center at Gulf Coast State College. To do this, you will need to make an appointment with the Testing Center at the link provided. ***You must register your appointment 72 hours in advance of your desired testing date and time***. For questions, call 850-873-3594 or you may email them at testingcenter@gulfcoast.edu.

While make-up tests are permitted, there will be a reduction of 10 points off the final grade. Students will need to email the professor to gain access to a late test.

Course Policies

Class Disturbances

This class covers materials about which many students may have strong convictions and/or opinions. All lectures or course materials are not designed to attack or belittle any particular religion or beliefs. However, in order for the class to be successful, it is essential that everyone show respect for the instructor and their classmates.

Recording Lectures

Under federal and state privacy laws, students may record class lectures for their personal educational use, in connection with a complaint to the college, or as evidence in internal or external legal proceedings. Students may not publish or upload the recordings or any components thereof without the knowledge and written permission of the faculty member. Failure to obtain permission to publish could lead to the student(s) paying damages, attorney fees, and court costs. For more information about what can be recorded, please see the guidelines in the GCSC Student Handbook: https://www.gulfcoast.edu/current-students/student-handbooks/2021-2022-student-handbook.pdf

Instructor Communication

The instructor will check daily and respond to messages sent to their gulfcoast.edu email account and/or their Canvas Inbox account, barring illnesses or emergencies. All communications must go through those two means of communication. A Canvas Announcement will be posted if communications may be delayed due to special circumstances. The instructor may not check emails during holidays.

Missed Quizzes or Exams

If there is a medical or family emergency, official university activity, or religious holiday that requires you to miss an examination, you must notify the instructor in advance if at all possible and provide appropriate written documentation of the excuse. If you miss an examination without prior permission from the instructor and without an excuse, do not assume that you will be allowed to make it up without a penalty.

All examinations must be completed by December 10th at 11:59 pm. There are no exceptions following the posted date and time, as grades will be turned in the following day.

Late Papers or Assignments

All assignments are due by class time on the day listed in the Course Calendar and must be submitted to Turnitin on the course's website. **Late papers will be penalized 10 points off their cumulative grade**, unless acceptable documentation (medical emergencies, religious holidays, official university activities, or something similar) is submitted. ***E-mailing papers is not an***

option unless prior permission is given by the instructor or issues with Canvas. Late papers are penalized according to the day and time when the instructor receives the paper. It is the student's responsibility to ensure a paper is submitted. Contact the instructor with any questions.

All paper assignments must be completed and turned in by December 10th at 11:59 pm. There are no exceptions following the posted date and time as grades will be turned in that day.

Grades Submission
All grades will be turned in to the College and finalized by Friday, December 11th at 12:00 pm CST. There will be no exceptions.

Withdrawals and Incompletes
A student may withdraw from any course until the published withdrawal deadline date for that term; see the Academic Calendar for those deadlines. A student wishing to withdraw from a course and receive a "W" must complete a withdrawal form and submit the document to the Office of Enrollment Services prior to the scheduled withdrawal date. However, if a student feels as if they have a unique situation that warrants removal after the withdrawal deadline has passed, they may contact the Vice President of Student Affairs to discuss their situation.

To receive a grade of an "I" or "an incomplete," ***a student must submit a written request to the instructor prior to the last day of the course. The student must also have completed no less than 60% of the coursework in order to qualify***. The "Incomplete" option is only intended to assist students who have an emergency arise in the last two weeks of the class that prevents a student from finishing all their work. If work is not submitted during this time period, the grade will automatically change to an "F."

A student with an incomplete will have 30 days from the end of the semester to finish the course. All students are expected to regularly email the instructor and update them on their progress.

Course Website
A student must have a Gulf Coast email account and have access to the course's website. All grades will be posted on this site, and all class emails and announcements will be made through this site. Any copyrighted materials are for class use only and must not be distributed. You are responsible for all information and material posted on this site.

Emails
Any emails directed to the instructor and/or teaching assistant should observe professional language and structuring. Emails should contain a greeting, an appropriately written body, and a signature line. Any email that does not meet this guideline may or may not receive a response at the discretion of the professor/teaching assistant. If you are not sure how to write a professional email, see this site.

Grading Scale
The grading scale used in this class is as follows:

A 90-100
B 80-89
C 70-79
D 60-69
F 59 and below

If your Canvas Final Grade percentage is one point away from an A, B, or C, the professor will round it up by one point when submitting grades (so, if you are at 89.1% or 79.1, I will round it up).

If you have a question regarding a grade, you must meet with the instructor within one week after the work in question is graded. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

Tutoring Services
On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Gulf Coast State College. For our course, the Writing and Reading Lab offers free tutoring services and will provide any student with assistance in reading, grammar, essay development, and/or formatting. For more information, visit the Writing and Reading lab that is located in the Rosenwald Classroom Building, Room 108, or visit their website at https://www.gulfcoast.edu/campus-life/tutoring.html for more information. Please, do take advantage of these services! Points will be given to students who visit and use this service.

Academic Integrity
Students are expected to uphold the Academic Integrity statement that is published in the Gulf Coast State College's General Catalog and the Student Handbook.

Honest participation in any academic endeavor fosters an environment in which optimal learning can take place and is consistent with the college's mission. Academic misconduct, including cheating or plagiarism, is destructive to the spirit of an educational environment. It is the duty of the instructor to report every instance of student academic misconduct to the college as part of the permanent academic record.

- Cheating includes, but is not limited to, the use of any unauthorized assistance in completing coursework.
- Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment.
- Self-plagiarism occurs when a student submits the same or a considerably similar document to fulfill requirements in different classes. For example, if a student submits a term paper in Religion that they originally wrote for an English class, this constitutes self-plagiarism. Once a paper receives a grade in any course, it must not be submitted again for another class.

Sanctions for incidents of academic misconduct, depending on the severity of the incident and/or its repetition, range from receiving an F grade (or 0) for the test, assignment, or activity, to failure of the course, to suspension or dismissal from the college.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) Policy
Limited Assistive Use Only: Students may use basic assistive technologies for spelling, grammar, and formatting (e.g., PaperRater or SpellCheckPlus); however, the use of AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft CoPilot, Google Gemini, etc.) for generating, rewriting, or enhancing content is not permitted. All work must reflect the student's original ideas and writing. Representing work created by A.I. as one's own is a violation of academic integrity and may result in penalties, including a zero on the assignment and additional disciplinary actions as outlined in the college's academic integrity policy.

See the GCSC Student Handbook for further information. Students with questions about acceptable use should consult their instructor.

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) contact, register with, and provide subsequent documentation to Student Accessibility Resources; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to Gulf Coast State students with any disabilities, contact the:

Student Accessibility Resources
Panama City Campus, Student Union East, Rm. 60
Phone: (850) 747-3243 or Fax: (850) 767-8034
Email: sar@gulfcoast.edu

This syllabus and any other class materials can be made available in an alternative format upon request.

Weather Policy
The campus is susceptible to weather-related events that range from thunderstorms, flash flooding, tornadoes, and hurricanes. If these weather events escalate to the point of an emergency, Gulf Coast State College will notify you with instructions using various methods detailed on the Campus Safety webpage. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and register for these services.

If the campus is closed due to severe weather conditions, students are not required to attend class and are encouraged to stay home. Notification will be provided by the instructor, and subsequent changes to the course will be addressed. If the weather is severe in your area(s) but the campus is still open, a student is not required to attempt to come to class. Students are, however, still responsible for notifying the instructor of their situation and are accountable for any material covered in class that day or that has been previously assigned by the syllabus.

Course Disclaimer

The instructor holds the right to change any aspect of the syllabus – course requirements, course assignments, course policies, course schedule, etc. – as is needed. Students must be given ample time and proper notification of any changes made to the course by the instructor, which will be in effect. Notices will come in the form of classroom announcements, email notifications, and an updated syllabus that will be posted to the course's website.

Critical Dates – Fall 2026

Date	Event
Monday, August 17	Fall Session A & B starts
Friday, August 21	Add/Drop period for Fall Session A & B ends
Monday, September 7	Labor Day – No Classes
Tuesday, September 1	Attendance Verification for Fall Session A & B
Thursday, September 10	Midterms for Fall Session B
Thursday, September 17	Deadline for student-initiated withdrawals – B
Monday, September 28	Graduation Application Deadline
Wednesday, October 7	Midterms for Fall Session A
Friday, October 9	Grades Due for Fall Session B
Monday, October 12	Fall Session C starts
Tuesday, October 13 Wednesday, October 15	Add/Drop period for Fall Session C ends Deadline for student-initiated withdrawals – A
Tuesday, October 27	Attendance Verification for Fall Session C
Friday, November 6	Midterms for Fall Session C
Friday, November 13	Deadline for student-initiated withdrawals – C
Wednesday, November 25 – Friday, November 27	Thanksgiving Break
Friday, December 4 – Thursday, December 10	Final Exam Week for Fall Session A & C
Friday, December 11	Grades Due for Fall Session A & C

Course Assignment Schedule

Date	Lecture Topic	Assignments
Week 1	Welcome Message & Introduction to the Course	Lecture 1 - Aamir Hussain, "How Religious Literacy Can Save Lives," *Religion News Service* (PDF); William Graham, "Why Study Religion in the Twenty-first Century?" *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (PDF)

10/12 – 10/18	Lecture 1 - Why Study Religion and why Religion in America? Lecture 2 – What is Religion? & What are the Scholars Saying?	Lecture 2 - Lopfe, *Religions of the World*, 2-8 & 12-20 (PDF) **Weekly Review Assignment 1 & Welcome Survey Quiz due 10/18**
Week 2 10/19 – 10/25	Lecture 3 - Religion in America before White People Lecture 4 - America's Religious Baggage – European History (1500-1740)	Lecture 3 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 1 Lecture 4 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 2-3 **Reading & Lecture Assignment 2, Weekly Review Assignment 2, and Exit Ticket 2 due 10/25**
Week 3 10/26 – 11/01	Lecture 5 – Religion in the American Colonies Lecture 6 - The Great Awakening, Revolution, & America's New Invention in Religion	Lecture 5 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 4-5 Lecture 6 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 6-8 **Reading & Lecture Assignment 3, Weekly Review Assignment 3, and Exit Ticket 3 due 11/01**
Week 4 11/02 – 11/08	Lecture 7 - American Evangelicalism, New Religious Movements, and Minority Voices in Religion Lecture 8 - Rise of Nativism, Early Catholic & Jewish Experiences in America	Lecture 7 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 9-11 Lecture 8 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 12 & Chapter 14 **Reading & Lecture Assignment 4, Weekly Review Assignment 4, and Exit Ticket 4 due 11/08**
Week 5 11/09 – 11/15	Lecture 9 - Abolition, African-American Churches, & the Civil War Lecture 10 - Urbanization, Immigration, & Religious Responses	Lecture 9 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 13 Lecture 10 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 17 **Reading & Lecture Assignment 5, Weekly Review Assignment 5, and Exit Ticket 5 due 11/15**

Week 6 11/16 – 11/22	Lecture 11 - New Intellectuals, Alternatives, and Reactions Lecture 12 - Shifting Religious Configurations in America	Lecture 11 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 15-16 Lecture 12 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 18-19 **Reading & Lecture Assignment 6, Weekly Review Assignment 6, and Exit Ticket 6 due 11/22**
Week 7 11/23 – 11/29	Lecture 13 - Reaction, Retreat, Race in American Religion **--- Thanksgiving Break ----**	Lecture 13 **-** Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 20 & Chapter 22 **Reading & Lecture Assignment 7, Weekly Review Assignment 7, and Exit Ticket 7 due 11/29**
Week 8 11/30 – 12/06	Lecture 14- Vatican II, Sexuality & Abuse, and the 3rd Wave of New Religious Movements Lecture 15 - Globalism & Religious Pluralism in America	Lecture 14 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 21 & Chapter 23 Lecture 15 - Butler, *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 24 **Reading & Lecture Assignment 8, Weekly Review Assignment 8, and Exit Ticket 8 due 12/06**
Week 9 12/07 – 12/11	**Final Exam Week & Final Research Paper**	**Exam will be conducted online, but you can take it at the Testing Center.** **Final Exam Due 12/10** **All Grades Due 12/11 at 12pm CST**