

# REL 1144 Religious Extremism

## Quest 1

### I. General Information

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Semester: Spring 2024

Meeting: Monday/Wednesday, period 7 (1:55-2:40)

Location: Monday/Wednesday FAB 0105 (Fine Arts B)

Discussion sessions:

Section 2588 Friday, period 4 (10:40-11:30) – MAT 0112

Section 3055, Friday, period 5 (11:45-12:35) – MAT 0114

Section 3101, Friday, period 7 (1:55-2:40) – MAT 0012

#### **Instructor**

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Office hours: Wednesday 9:30-11:30 am

Phone: (352) 273-2928

#### **Teaching Assistant**

Brahim Afrit

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#### **Course Description**

Religious extremism, and similar words like radicalism, fanaticism, or fundamentalism, is frequently used in the media and the policy world. These concepts are usually meant to depict violent behavior based on ideological outlooks, wherein exclusivist positions categorize humans as either insiders or as opposite “others”. But what is religious extremism? How do we define extremism? Who are the extremists? Is religious extremism meaningful and useful as a concept? And, what should it be understood in relation to its assumed opposite – the moderate. This course digs into these questions and provides students with critical knowledge about what is called extremism within major religious traditions. Rather than examining how Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, or Buddhism define extremism, this course will investigate the concept of extremism in relation to broader topics such as nationalism, race(ism), and gender and sexuality as they intersect with cultural and faith practices. Moreover, it explores extremism in relation to processes of radicalization, and to violence/non-violence, and points to efforts made to counter violent forms of extremism. While rooted in the discipline of religious studies and the humanities more broadly, the course is inter-disciplinary in nature, drawing on perspectives from the social science, such as

political science, anthropology, and security studies. It focuses mostly on the contemporary period, and analyzes particular representations of extremism in different contexts across the globe.

## **Quest and General Education Credits**

Quest 1

Primary General Education Designation: **Humanities**

Secondary General Education Designation (if seeking): **International (N)**

This course accomplishes the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

## **II. Graded work**

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### **Required & Recommended Course Materials (purchase/download)**

Most of the readings will be available as pdf-files on Canvas, while required readings marked with an ‘\*’ should be purchased – while also being available at Library West.

### **Description of Graded Work**

Grades for the course will be calculated through evaluation of the following assignments:

1. Attendance: 5%
  2. Participation: 5%
  3. Reflection notes: 20%
  4. Research Report: 35%
  5. Final Paper: 35%
- Total: 100%

### **Attendance**

Attendance will be taken daily and recorded. We will circulate an attendance sheet, which you should sign. Signing for others is considered Academic dishonesty. Unexcused absence(s) means that 1% of the total attendance grade per absence will be detracted – except unavoidable ones proven with satisfactory explanation/documentation. 3 unexcused absences will not affect your grade, but each absence beyond that will deduct 5 points from the attendance grade. Make-ups will only be allowed in unavoidable circumstances or for compelling reasons that can be convincingly documented.

### **Participation**

You must come to class on time and prepared. This means keeping current on the reading assignments and being aware of the course schedule and activities, as presented in this syllabus, discussed in class, and announced on the course website. It also means bringing the day’s reading to class with you. 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.

## Reflection Notes

Each student will write a reflection note on selected readings each week during the course (200 words for each). You will find info on which reading you are supposed to reflect on through Canvas. This should not be a summary of the reading, but your reflections and reactions to ideas, concepts or topics introduced in each chapter/article. It can also include questions. All notes must be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman. Please also include your name and the date you hand in the assignment. Each note is to be uploaded onto the course's e-learning site in Canvas. The notes will be graded electronically and returned to you electronically. I will consider allowing you to turn in a note late without penalty only if you have a valid and documented reason for doing so. If you turn it in without a valid or documented reason, points will be deducted.

Advances SLOs: 1-6

## Research Report

The students will be organized in groups of 4 and will visit local religious communities (can also be in other localities, if practical) where you will interview the community's leaders/members. The assignment is for each group to write a 4-page research report with the findings and analyses of the findings – related to course readings. The paper will address:

1. The religious community's understanding and interpretation of religious extremism
2. The religious community's ideas and efforts for how to best address religious extremism

The students are responsible for identifying and connecting with the religious communities, but the instructor will assist with this. The students will be introduced to best-practices in how to conduct the research: conducting interviews, making notes, asking follow-up questions, transcribing notes, and ethical considerations.

Evaluation: One of the most significant concerns with working in a group and receiving team grades is that some of the members of the team may work harder than others or “free-ride” off those in the group willing to put in more effort. Each student will therefore be tasked with evaluating your team member peers during the project: the fieldwork period, research period, and during writing and editing. Each student in the groups will be provided with an evaluation form/rubric, with questions such as: how did your peers perform during the fieldwork; how were their contributions to the researching, writing, and editing the paper; compliance with agreed deadlines, respect for others' ideas and willingness to cooperate, etc.? The course will use software developed by Teammates to conduct these evaluations

(<https://teammatesv4.appspot.com/web/front/home>). These evaluations are completely anonymous and to be submitted to the instructor. The peer evaluation will count for 30 percent of the grade and the instructor's evaluation will count for 70 percent.

All papers must be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins, 12 pt Times New Roman. Please also include your name, the date you hand in the assignment, and title your essays. Each paper is to be uploaded onto the course’s e-learning site in Canvas. The papers will be graded electronically and returned to you electronically. We will consider allowing you to turn in a paper late without penalty only if you have a valid and documented reason for doing so. If you turn it in without a valid or documented reason, points will be deducted.

Advances SLOs: 4-6

## Final Paper

Each student is required to write a 5-page end-of-the-term analytical paper. This paper will be based on your response papers, and you are asked to further reflect on selected topics covered during the course. You will discuss the particular topic you choose to focus on with the instructor. The purpose with the analytical paper is to give you the opportunity to – and challenge you – to reflect over the themes raised during the course.

You will submit the topic you want to focus on – which needs to be approved by the instructor. The deadline for this will be in week 13. All papers must be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins, 12 pt Times New Roman. Please also include your name, the date you hand in the assignment, and title your essays. Each paper is to be uploaded onto the course’s e-learning site in Canvas. The papers will be graded electronically and returned to you electronically. We will consider allowing you to turn in a paper late without penalty only if you have a valid and documented reason for doing so. If you turn it in without a valid or documented reason, points will be deducted.

Advances SLOs: 4-6

## Grading

It is not truly possible to separate the quality of ideas from the quality of the language through which they are expressed, but we attempt to do so by using a grading rubric for papers. The rubric below for the assessment method clearly identifies how to assign point values to each of four levels of achievement (A, B, C, D), according to what level you have reached with respect to the written assignments.

## Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 – 100% of possible points		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

### III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

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*Note: This schedule may change, students are responsible for all changes announced in class. Literature marked with \* means that this is a book that needs to be purchased.*

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#### **Week 1 (January 8-12): Introduction and Course Preview**

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#### **Week 2 (January 15-19, Monday holiday): The Concept of Religious Extremism**

##### Readings:

- Wednesday: King, M.L Jr. "Letter from the Birmingham Jail". M.L King (ed.), *Why Can't We Wait*. New York: Signet, 2007, p. 64-84.

##### Supplementary Readings

- \*Pratt, D. *Religion and Extremism: Rejecting Diversity*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018, chapter 1-3.

#### **Reflection Note 1 due – January 22**

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#### **Week 3 (January 22-26): The Concept of Religious Extremism**

##### Readings:

- Monday: Hopkins, N. and Kahani-Hopkins, V. "Reconceptualizing 'Extremism' and 'Moderation': From Categories of Analysis to Categories of Practice in the Construction of Collective Identity." *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 48, 2009, p. 99-113.
- Wednesday: Harding, S. "Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other." *Social Research*, 58,2, 1999, p. 373-393.

#### **Reflection Note 2 due – January 29**

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#### **Week 4 (January 29 – February 2): Religious Extremism and Violence**

- Monday: Schmid, A. *Violent and Non-violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?* Hague: ICCT, 2014, p. 1-29.
- Wednesday: Barlett, J. and Miller, C. "The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24,1, 2012, p. 1-21.

##### Supplementary Readings:

- \*Pratt, D. *Religion and Extremism: Rejecting Diversity*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018, chapter 3.

- \*Jurgensmeyer, J. *Terror in the mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, chapter 1, 7, 8.

### **Reflection Note 3 due – February 5**

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#### **Week 5 (February 5-9): Radicalization**

##### Readings:

- Monday: FBI. *The Radicalization Process: From Conversion to Jihad*. Unpublished doc; Sedwick, M. “The concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22,4, 2010, p. 479-494.
- Wednesday: Kundnani, A. “Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept.” *Race and Class*, 54,2, 2012, p. 3-25

### **Reflection Note 4 due – February 12**

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#### **Week 6 (February 12-16): Radicalization**

##### Readings:

- Monday: Hegghammer, T. 2012. “The recruiter’s dilemma: Signaling and rebel recruitment tactics. *Journal of Peace Research* 50,1, 2012, p. 3-16.
- Wednesday: Kirby, A. “The London Bombers as ‘Self-Starters’: A Case Study in Indigenous Radicalization and the Emergence of Autonomous Cliques”. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, 2007, p. 415-428.

### **Reflection Note 5 due – February 19**

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#### **Week 7 (February 19-23): Religious Extremism and Conspiracy Theories**

##### Readings:

- Monday: Robertson, D. “Crippled Epistemologies: Conspiracy Theories, Religion, and Knowledge.” *Social Research*, 89, 3, p. 651-677.
- Wednesday: Argentino, M. 2022. “Qvangelicalism: QAnon as a Hyper-Real Religion.” In *Religious Dimensions of Conspiracy Theories: Comparing and Connecting Old and New Trends*, eds. Piraino, F., Pasi, M., Asprem, E. London: Routledge, p. 257-279.

#### **Week 8 (February 26 – March 1): Fieldwork and Academic Writing**

##### Readings:

- Monday: \*Ghodsee. K. 2016. *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone can Read*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Wednesday: \*Sword, H. 2016. *The Writer's Diet: A Guide to Fit Prose*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### **Reflection Note 6 due – March 4**

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#### **Week 9 (March 4-8): Religious Extremism and Nationalism**

##### Readings:

- Monday: Minkenberg, M. "Religion and the Radical Right." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 366-393
- Wednesday: \*Jurgensmeyer, J. *Terror in the mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, chapter 3, p. 48-67.

##### Supplementary Readings:

- \*Pratt, D. *Religion and Extremism: Rejecting Diversity*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018, chapter 5.
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#### **Week 10 (March 11-15): Spring Break**

### **Reflection Note 7 due – March 18**

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#### **Week 11 (March 18-22): Religious Extremism and Nationalism**

##### Readings:

- Monday: Video: *When India's Mix of Religion and Nationalism Becomes Deadly*. YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tUGIkT5xcQ>
- Wednesday: Schonthal, Benjamin, "Making the Muslim Other in Myanmar and Sri Lanka," in *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist Relations and the Politics of Belonging*, ed. Crouch, M. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 1-23

##### Supplementary Readings:

- Oberoi, H. "Mapping Indic Fundamentalisms through Nationalism and Modernity," in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, eds. Marty, M. & Appleby, S. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Silva, K.T. "Gossip, Rumor, and Propaganda in Anti-Muslim Campaigns of the Bodu Bala Sena." *Buddhist Extremism and Muslim Minorities: Religious Conflict in Contemporary Sri Lanka*, ed. Holt, J.C., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, chapter 5.

### **Research Report due – March 25**

### **Reflection Note 8 due – March 25**

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## **Week 12 (March 25-29): Religious Extremism and Race(ism)**

### Readings:

- Monday: Film: [\*White Right: Meeting the Enemy\*](#).
- Wednesday: Gardell, M. "White Racist Religions in the United States: From Christian Identity to Wolf Age Pagans," in *Controversial New Religions*, ed. Lewis, J and Aasgard Petersen, J. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p 387-458.

### Supplementary Readings:

- Camus, J. "The European Extreme Right and Religious Extremism." *Central European Studies Review*, 9,4, 2007, p. 263-279

## **Identify topic for Final Paper due –April 1**

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## **Week 13 (April 1-5): Religious Extremism and Race(ism)**

### Readings:

- Monday: Gardell, M. "Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26,1, 2014, p. 129-155.
- Wednesday: Taras, R. "Islamophobia never stands still: Race, Religion, and Culture. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36,3, 2013, p. 417-433.

## **Reflection Note 9 due – April 8**

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## **Week 14 (April 8-12): Religious Extremism, Gender, Sexuality**

### Readings:

- Monday: Mahmood, S. "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology*, 16,2, 2001, p. 202-236.
- Wednesday: Loken, M. & Zelenz, A. "Explaining Extremism: Western Women in Daesh." *European Journal of International Security*, 3,1, 2017, p. 45-68.

### Supplementary Readings:

- Sjoberg, L & Gentry, C. "It's Complicated: Looking Closely at Women in Violent Extremism." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 17,2, 2016. p, 23-30

## **Reflection Note 10 due – April 15**

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## **Week 15 (April 15-19): Countering Religious Extremism**



Readings:

- Monday: Mandeville, P & Nozell, M. *Engaging Religion and Religious Actors in Countering Violent Extremism*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, p. 1-14.
- Wednesday: Schanzer, D., Kurzman, C. and Moosa, E. *Anti-Terror Lessons for Muslim Americans*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2010, p. 1-21.

Supplementary Readings:

- Cohen, J. “The Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies at Home: Expanding Opportunities for Intervention.” *The ANNALS*, 668,1, 2016, p. 118-128.

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**Week 16 (April 22-26): Conclusions**

**Final Paper due – April 29**

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## IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

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At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) learning outcomes as follows:

**Content:** *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories, and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain how the resources available in the humanities (and social sciences) can help in understanding religious extremism as a concept (**Quest 1, H**). **Assessment:** Response notes, research report, analytical paper.
- Identify different theoretical frameworks in humanistic traditions of thought relevant for understanding religious extremism as a concept and phenomenon (**Quest 1, H**). **Assessment:** Response notes, research report, analytical paper.

**Critical Thinking:** *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Critically analyze the relations between different theoretical approaches in humanistic traditions of thought relevant for understanding religious extremism as a concept and phenomenon (**Quest 1, H**). **Assessment:** Response notes, research report, analytical paper.
- Identify and analyze divergent processes of radicalization in different parts of the world (**Quest 1, H, I**). **Assessment:** Response notes, research report, analytical paper.
- Critically analyze different aspects of religious extremism, such as nationalism, race, gender, etc. as these appear in different contexts of the world (**Quest 1, H, I**). **Assessment:** Response notes, research report, analytical paper.
- Critically evaluate different strategies applied to counter religious extremism in different parts of the world (**Quest 1, H, I**). **Assessment:** Response notes, research report, analytical paper.

**Communication:** *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Develop and present in writing the analysis of relevant data related to different aspects of religious extremism as a phenomenon around the world and draw reasonable conclusions based on their analysis on a specific problem (**Quest 1, H, I**). **Assessment:** Response notes, research report, analytical paper.

**Connection:** *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- Analyze and compare relevant empirical data and apply relevant theoretical perspectives with regard to current representations of religious extremism as a phenomenon around the world and make connections to relevant theoretical frameworks in order to make reasonable conclusions (**Quest 1, H, I**). **Assessment:** Response notes, research report, analytical paper.

## V. Quest Learning Experiences

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### **Details of Experiential Learning Component**

Experiential Learning will be an integrated part of the course, enabling students to apply and reflect on the course topics outside the classroom. The Experiential Learning Component will consist of physical and/or virtual visits to local religious communities (churches, mosques, temples, etc.) where they will identify relevant interview objects, interact with them and interviews with them. These could be leaders and/or ordinary members of that community. The students will be organized into groups of 3, working together; and each group will identify, select, and visit one separate religious community. This entails setting up appointments with the community and organize interviews.

The topic for the conversations with the religious community will be the same for each group, where they will seek answers to the following two broad questions:

1. What is the religious community's understanding and interpretation of religious extremism?
2. What are the religious community's efforts/strategies in addressing the question of religious extremism within the community.

This will be the bases for a 4-page research report with findings and analyses of findings – related to course readings. Each group will decide on the division of labor when it comes to the fieldwork, analyzing the data, and writing the report. In order to avoid the issue of “free-riding”, the efforts of each group's members will be checked by using software developed by Teammates to conduct these evaluations (<https://teammatesv4.appspot.com/web/front/home>). Details about this is outlined above, under evaluation of the “Research Report.”

### **Details of Self-Reflection Component**

It is important that the students get the opportunity – and are challenged – to reflect over the themes raised during the course. This will of course be something integrated in the course as such; during class discussions, etc. Moreover, reflections will be part of the required response papers students will write. These response papers will in addition be the basis for a 5-page end-of-the-term paper where students are asked to further reflect on selected topics covered during the course. The students will discuss the topic are free to choose which particular topics/themes they want to write on.

## VI. Required Policies

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### **Attendance Policy**

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:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

## **Students Requiring Accommodation**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

## **UF Evaluations Process**

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/>. 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.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## **University Honesty Policy**

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 (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) 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 or TAs in this class. Violations of the honor code can result in failing an exam, paper, or the course. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php>. Important here is plagiarism which 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 assignments.
- 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>

## **Counseling and Wellness Center**

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

## **The 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 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

## **In-Class Recordings**

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.