

**The College of the Humanities
Religion Program: RELI 2800A Fall Term
Indigenous Traditions**

Instructor: Manvitha Singamsetty

Office Hours: By appointment

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Lecture: Tue/Thu 16.05-17.25

Course Delivery:

Online synchronous course. Zoom link for class is available on Brightspace

Course Calendar Description:

This course illuminates a recent category of “World Religions” by examining a diversity of cases from all five continents, as well as in diaspora (e.g. Brazilian Candomblé, Roma/Sinti religion). Key considerations include the study of minority religions, religion in oral cultures, myth and ritual studies, colonialism, and globalisation.

Precludes additional credit for RELI 1720 (no longer offered).

Course Description:

This course begins with an introduction to the concepts of religion and indigenous religious traditions. Then students are taken around the globe in studying indigenous traditions from India, Japan, Australia, North and South America, and Western Africa, in that order. In so doing, students will have a chance to acquire and practice employing sociological, anthropological, and philosophical tools in the study of religious and spiritual traditions of indigenous nations across the globe. Each lecture begins with an overview of the historical context of the indigenous nation, and then goes on to explicate the network of cosmological, metaphysical, philosophical, and ritualistic elements that make up their religious/spiritual belief system. The course will include weekly lectures, class discussions, audio and video materials, and guest lectures from Indigenous Knowledge Keepers. This pedagogy will enable students to have a thorough understanding of each of the religious traditions in the course, and it will equip them with the skills required to navigate contemporary issues related to indigenous spirituality. In addition, students will gain analytical and critical thinking skills, reading and writing skills, and engage in deliberative pedagogies all of which are crucial to their University Undergraduate career.

Learning Outcomes:

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Construct an argument and support it with evidence
- Understand the basic history, doctrinal variety, rituals, and social contexts of the religions studied in this course
- Understand the historical development, basic data, and disciplinary vocabulary associated with the religions studied in this course
- Differentiate sources of information on religion: the class, gender, literacy etc. of living informants or ancient textual authors

Teaching Philosophy:

This course has been designed to enhance student-centered learning. Critical analysis, self-reflection and class discussion are all key to the learning mechanisms in this course. Learning involves not only gaining new information but also a critical and ethical application of this newly gained knowledge. In this course we will focus on both of these aspects of learning.

Assignments:**1. Quizzes - 25%**

Online quizzes, hosted on Brightspace, will include questions from readings and class discussions. There will be a total of 10 quizzes worth 2.5% each. Students will benefit greatly if they attempt quizzes soon after the relevant topics are discussed in class. All quizzes will close at 11.59pm ET on 05 December 2025.

2. Midterms – 20% each, in total 40%

- a. Midterm 1 – 02 October 2025
- b. Midterm 2 – 04 November 2025

Both midterms will be hosted during class hours, online on Brightspace. Each midterm will consist of multiple-choice, short, and long answer questions. A midterm review document containing the syllabus for the midterm, format of the questions etc. is available on Brightspace. Please make sure to peruse this document before you study and attempt the midterm.

3. Final Exam – 35%

The final exam will be a scheduled exam and will be hosted on Brightspace. The final exam is not cumulative, and will contain a mix of multiple choice, short and long answer questions. Note that the final exam includes more long answers and analyses than the midterms. A final exam review document containing all details of the final exam – syllabus, exam format, tips on how to present critical analyses etc. – is available on Brightspace. Please make sure to consult this document before you attempt your final exam.

The date of the final exam will be determined and announced by Examination Services. The examination period runs between 08 – 20 December 2025.

Please note that any and all uses of Generative AI are prohibited for this course. All assignments in this course are closed book assignments. Answers that are generated using AI tools will constitute plagiarism and a violation of the academic integrity policy operational in this course.

Please use this [self-declaration form](#) to request deferrals for any missed course work.

Requests dealing with midterm exams, assignments or other term work should be sent to your instructor. Requests dealing with final exams should be sent to the Registrar's Office with a [deferral application](#)

Required texts:

1. Textbook - Bahr, Ann Marie B., 2005, *Religions of the World: Indigenous Religions*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publisher. Available on Brightspace.
2. Electronic versions of all other readings and materials are available on Brightspace.

Cost of learning materials for this course - \$0

Reading Schedule:

Sept 04 - Introduction to syllabus, course overview and themes, technology required etc.
Textbook - pp. 2-10

Sept 09 – What are “Indigenous” Religions?
Wright, R., 2013, “Indigenous Religious Traditions” in L. Sullivan (ed), *Religions of the World: A Cultural Introduction to the Making of Meaning*. Minneapolis: Fortress. Pp.33-45

Sept 11 – What are “Indigenous” Religions? (contd.)
Wright, R., 2013, “Indigenous Religious Traditions” in L. Sullivan (ed), *Religions of the World: A Cultural Introduction to the Making of Meaning*. Minneapolis: Fortress. Pp.33-45

Sept 16 – Adivasis in India
Textbook - pp. 10-20
Online Quiz - Adivasis

Sept 18 – Ainu in Japan
Irimoto, T., (1996), “Ainu worldview and bear hunting strategies”, In J. Pentikainen, *Shamanism and Northern Ecology*, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 293-301
Online Quiz – Ainu

Sept 23 - Inuit
Textbook - pp.90-104
Online Quiz – Inuit

Sept 25 – First Nations Spiritualities
Religion and Spirituality of Indigenous Peoples of Canada Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia
Online Quiz – First Nations

Sept 30 - Métis in Canada
Métis Spiritualism - entry by Darren R. Préfontaine, Todd Paquin and Patrick Young. Source: Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research

Oct 02 – Midterm 1

Oct 07 – Documentary ‘Gather’ on Land, Food, and Indigenous Lifeways – link on Brightspace

Oct 09 – Australian Aboriginal Religions
Textbook – pp. 61-69

Oct 14 – Australian Aboriginal Religions (continued)
Textbook – pp. 70-85
Online Quiz – Australian Aborigenes

Oct 16 – African Indigenous Religions
Textbook - pp. 35-43

Oct 21 – Reading Week. No Class.

Oct 23 – Reading Week. No Class.

Oct 28 - African Indigenous Religions (continued)
Textbook – pp. 44-53
Online Quiz – African Indigenous Religions

Oct 30 – The Mayas
Textbook - pp. 105-116
Online Quiz – Mayas

Nov 04 - Midterm 2

Nov 06 - The Quechuas
Textbook - pp. 124-134
Online Quiz – Quechuas

Nov 11 - Indigenous religions in diaspora - Candomblé
Prandi, R., (2001), African Gods in contemporary Brazil, *International Sociology*, 15(4), pp. 643-653
Online Quiz – Candomblé

Nov 13 – Indigenous religions in diaspora - Roma/Sinti Mythology
Lecouteux, C., (2018), Mythology in *Charms, Rites, and Magical Traditions of the Roma*, Rochester: Imprint Traditions, pp. 164-173
Online Quiz – Roma/Sinti

Nov 18 – ‘The Wild Unknown’, link on Brightspace

Nov 20 – Class Discussion on ‘Wild Unknown’

Nov 25 – “Moana” Film on Polynesian peoples, link in Ares

Nov 27 – Class Discussion on Polynesian Spiritual Traditions

Dec 02 - Decolonizing the study of Indigenous Religious Traditions-
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoxNyNWFvZw>

Dec 04 – Final Exam Review

December 08 - 20 – Final Exam Period. Final exam date will be decided and announced by Examination Services.

Tips for doing well:

1. **Read.** Students are expected to do the readings before class
2. **Attend Classes.** Make sure to attend all synchronous classes. The readings and all topics related to the course assignments will be discussed in detail in class. This information will not be repeated outside of class, so attendance for lectures is highly recommended.
3. **Study.** On average, you will spend about five hours on this class every week – 3 hours in lectures and 2 hours in preparation and reading for class. Approximately, you will spend another 6 hours each preparing for the tests and final exam, so please schedule your semester accordingly.
4. **Communicate.** The course website on Brightspace will be updated regularly after each class. The presentations used in class will be available online. All course related announcements and communication will also be channeled through the website. Should you require any course related assistance outside of these materials, please do not hesitate to reach out to the instructor.

Class resources and policies:

- You are encouraged to approach the academic writing help center in case you need any assistance with learning how to write essays etc. The CSAS holds regular workshops on writing, taking notes etc. that you may find helpful. You can learn more about these workshops and services [here](#)
- If you feel stressed or overwhelmed you are encouraged to access the resources on the University website to manage your time, stress levels, seek mentors etc. More information can be found [here](#)
- You are expected to be on time to the lectures.
- You are required to be respectful of your colleagues and the professor during class discussions and interactions
- Please note that lectures will not be recorded, and you are prohibited from recording online classes and discussions
- Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).
- Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials (including all PowerPoint presentations, videos, outlines, and similar materials) for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).
- The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not

limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

- Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
 - any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
 - using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
 - using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
 - submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own
 - failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks

If I can ensure your full participation in any way not already addressed in this syllabus/course outline, please do not hesitate to contact me with your queries/requests.

University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses (Updated July 21,2025)

Academic Dates and Deadlines

[This schedule](#) contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the [Important Dates and Deadlines section](#) of the Registration Website.

Copies of Written Work Submitted

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

Online Learning Resources

[On this page](#), you will find resources collected by Carleton Online to help you succeed in your online courses; Learning Strategies and Best Practices, Study Skills, Technology and Online Interaction and Engagement.

Academic Integrity Policy

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of

sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous [process for academic integrity allegations](#), including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Co-operation or Collaboration

An important and valuable component of the learning process is the progress a student can make as a result of interacting with other students. In struggling together to master similar concepts and problems and in being exposed to each other's views and approaches, a group of students can enhance and speed up the learning process. Carleton University encourages students to benefit from these activities which will not generally be viewed as a violation of the Policy. With the exception of tests and examinations, instructors will not normally limit these interactions.

Students shall not co-operate or collaborate on academic work when the instructor has indicated that the work is to be completed on an individual basis. Failure to follow the instructor's directions in this regard is a violation of the standards of academic integrity. Unless otherwise indicated, students shall not co-operate or collaborate in the completion of a test or examination.

Group Work: There are many cases where students are expected or required to work in groups to complete a course requirement. Normally, students are not responsible for violations of this policy committed by other members of a group in which they participate.

More information on the process [here](#).

Academic Accommodations

Academic accommodation refers to educational practices, systems and support mechanisms designed to accommodate diversity and difference. The purpose of accommodation is to enable students to perform the essential requirements of their academic programs. At no time does academic accommodation undermine or compromise the learning objectives that are established by the academic authorities of the University.

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the *Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances*, are outlined on the [Academic Accommodations website](#).

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes can be [found here](#).

Addressing Human Rights Concerns

The University and all members of the University community share responsibility for ensuring that the University's educational, work and living environments are free from discrimination and harassment. Should you have concerns about harassment or discrimination relating to your age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), or sexual orientation, please contact the [Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities](mailto:equity@carleton.ca) at equity@carleton.ca.

Grading System at Carleton University

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

[The system of grades used](#), with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion can be found [here](#).

Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course

materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s). [More information](#)

Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

Deferred Term Work

In some situations, students are unable to complete term work because of extenuating circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work. Requests for academic consideration are made in accordance with the [Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical or Other Extenuating Circumstances](#).

Students who claim short-term extenuating circumstances (normally lasting up to five days) as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the instructor concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor. If the instructor requires supporting documentation, the instructor may only request submission of the University's self-declaration form, which is available on the [Registrar's Office website](#). The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule.

1. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of term. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.
2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to extenuating circumstances lasting for a significant period of time/ long-term (normally more than five days), the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.
3. If a student is concerned the instructor did not respond to the request for academic consideration or did not provide reasonable accommodation, the student should follow the appeals process described in the [Academic Consideration Policy](#).
4. If academic consideration is granted, but the student is unable to complete the accommodation according to the terms set out by the instructor as a result of further illness, injury, or extraordinary circumstances beyond their control, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses). Please note, however, that the course instructor will be required to submit an earned final grade and further consideration will only be reviewed according to established precedents and deadlines. (More information: [Undergraduate](#) | [Graduate](#)).

Deferred Final Exams

Students who are unable to write a final examination because of extenuating circumstances, as defined in the [Academic Consideration Policy](#), may apply for accommodation. Normally, the accommodation for a missed final examination will be granting the student the opportunity to write a deferred examination. In specific cases when it is not possible to offer a deferred examination, and with the approval of the Dean, an alternate accommodation may be made.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing to the Registrar's Office no later than three (3) working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination; and,
2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation. In cases of short-term extenuating circumstances normally lasting no more than five (5) days, students must include the University's self-declaration form, which can be found on [the Registrar's Office website](#). Additional documentation is required in cases of extenuating circumstances lasting longer than five (5) days and must be supported by a medical note specifying the date of onset of the illness, the (expected) date of recovery, and the extent to which the student was/is incapacitated during the time of the examination. The University's preferred medical form can be found at the Registrar's Office [here](#).

Academic Consideration Policy

As per the [Academic Consideration Policy](#), if students encounter extenuating circumstances that temporarily hinder their capacity to fulfil in-class academic requirements, they can request academic consideration. The Academic Consideration for Coursework is only available for accommodations regarding course work. Requests for accommodations during the formal exam period must follow the [official deferral process](#).

NOTE: As per the Policy, students are to speak with/contact their instructor before submitting a request for Academic Consideration. Requests are not automatically approved. Approving and determining the accommodation remains at the discretion of the instructor. Students should consult the course syllabus about the instructor's policy or procedures for requesting academic consideration. [More information here](#).

Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

Make sure that you are aware of the separate deadlines for Financial and Academic withdrawal!

Making registration decisions in Carleton Central involves making a financial and academic commitment for the courses you choose, regardless of attendance. If you do not attend, you must withdraw in Carleton Central within the published deadlines to cancel your registration. A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load. A course dropped after the deadline for financial withdrawal will receive a grade of Withdrawn (WDN), which appears on your official transcript.

Even if you miss the deadline for financial withdrawal, you might decide to drop a course to avoid a failure or a poor grade showing up on your student record and bringing down your

CGPA. It is your responsibility to drop the course via Carleton Central within the published [deadlines](#) (see Academic Withdrawal).

If you are considering withdrawing from a course, you may want to talk to an advisor first. Course withdrawal may affect your student status, as well as your eligibility for student funding, immigration status, residence accommodation and participation in varsity sports, etc. Additionally, remember that once you choose your courses, you must use the “Calculate amount to pay” button to determine the correct amount of fees to pay.

Carleton Central is your one-stop shop for registration activities. If you are interested in taking a course, make sure to complete your registration. Simply attending a course does not mean you are registered in it, nor is it grounds for petition or appeal.

Mental Health and Wellness at Carleton

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>

Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))

- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

Carleton Resources

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me Counselling Service: call 1-844-741-6389 or connect online at <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service <https://walkincounselling.com>

The Centre for Indigenous Support and Community Engagement

The Centre for Indigenous Initiatives is proud to offer culturally centered individual counselling to students who self-identify as First Nation, Metis or Inuk. Through this service, Indigenous students [can access confidential, individual sessions for support with personal, mental health or academic challenges.](#)

Department Contact Information

Bachelor of the Humanities 300 Paterson Hall
CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca

Greek and Roman Studies 300 Paterson Hall
GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca

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