

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY/
RELIGION PROGRAM, COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES

ANTH 2550 / RELI 2736
RELIGION AND SOCIETY

2026 SPRING TERM

Instructor: Alyshea Cummins

Office Hours: by appointment

Office Location: Online via Zoom

Email: alyshea.cummins@carleton.ca

Teaching Assistant:

See Brightspace Homepage

Online/Blended: Asynchronous Online Learning with Synchronous Class Discussions

Course Content: Available on Mondays (except for holidays)

Live Class Discussions (via Zoom): Tuesdays from 11:35-2:25PM EDT

*Thursdays are reserved for Students to Complete Modules

NOTE: Course Requires Reliable Internet Connection, Camera, and Microphone. See Brightspace for Zoom meeting details

Algonquin Land Acknowledgement: Carleton University is situated on the traditional, unceded, and continually inhabited territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation. We honour the Algonquin people, whose stewardship of this land has endured since time immemorial, and we recognize their ongoing presence, culture, and contributions.

As educators and learners, we acknowledge our responsibility to engage with the land, its history, and its original caretakers with respect and reciprocity. This includes a commitment to listening, learning, and acting in ways that honour Algonquin knowledge systems and cultural protocols.

Let this acknowledgment be more than a statement — let it guide how we teach, learn, and relate

to one another in this shared space.

Description: Cross-cultural survey of religious institutions, focusing on theories and methodologies in the study of religion. Topics may include myth, totemism, cults, ritual, belief systems, altered states of consciousness, new religious and/or new age movements and the relationship of religion with other social institutions and processes.

Rationale: This course serves as an introductory exploration into anthropological perspectives on the study of religion. It delves into the historical evolution of this subdiscipline, examines key theoretical frameworks, explores fundamental conceptual terminology, and engages with the various challenges and considerations inherent in research methodology within the field. Throughout the course, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the foundations, theories, and methodological intricacies involved in anthropological investigations of religion.

Learning Outcomes: This course aims to give students a broad understanding of the study of religion in its social context(s). Through the lectures, readings, videos, and selected case studies we will investigate the role of religion in shaping society and how context, in turn, shapes religion. Students taking this course will learn disciplinary vocabulary associated with the religion(s) studied in this course. They will also be able to recognize personal situated-ness and personal bias in confronting religious phenomena. Through class discussions, students will gain confidence in presenting, arguing, and defending their ideas while engaging with course content. Through assignments, students will develop skills in research and writing. Further, students taking this course will be able to distinguish different methods of increasing knowledge in the field of the study of religion, including historical (largely based on texts) and social scientific (largely based on field work).

Class Time: Each class we will meet over Zoom to discuss the respective modules, lectures, and readings. Through discussions and in-class assignments and activities, students will engage further with class material and gain confidence in expressing their ideas. Participation in class counts towards the participation grade (20%; see details below).

Welcoming Classroom Commitment: We each come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and we will inevitably approach discussions and the subject matter in unique ways. Throughout the course we will collectively try to make sure that everyone feels safe and respected when presenting their ideas and understandings about course content. We will be respectful towards one another and do our best to reflect on our own biases and assumptions in order to make

space for diverse views and ways of thinking.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy: We are living in a new era of technology, and I want to give students the opportunity to engage with AI ethically and responsibly. The primary goal is to ensure that all work submitted reflects the student's own learning and ideas—not those of AI. That said, AI can be a helpful tool when used appropriately and transparently.

Permitted Uses of AI: Students may use AI tools, such as [Microsoft Copilot](#) for basic writing and support tasks, including:

- **Grammar and spell checking**
- **Basic formatting and design support**

Students may also use AI tools for idea development and conceptual support, such as:

- **Brainstorming** (e.g., generating essay or project topics)
- **Creating outlines** (e.g., structuring an essay or presentation flow)
- **Clarifying complex concepts** (e.g., asking for simplified explanations of difficult theories)
- **Feedback based on rubrics** (e.g., pasting a draft and rubric into Microsoft Copilot to identify areas for improvement)

Documentation of AI Use: Students must maintain a record of how AI was used. If you're unsure whether a particular use is permitted, please consult the instructor.

Why This Policy? This policy encourages thoughtful, transparent, and limited use of AI as a supplementary learning tool. While AI can support idea generation, learning, writing, and structure, it does not replace personal engagement with the material. Students are encouraged to think critically about AI-generated content, and revise and reflect to ensure their own learning remains central.

Prohibited Uses of AI: Students may not use AI tools for the following:

- Quizzes, tests, or exams
- Research content generation (i.e., summaries or citations of academic sources)
- Completing major assignments on their behalf (e.g., full essays, reflection papers, infographics)

Instruments of Evaluation: The Evaluation Procedures of the university are described in the Undergraduate Calendar. Final grades are subject to the Dean's approval and are not official until that approval has been received. There are three instruments of evaluation plus potential bonus marks. As stated in the Academic Regulations of the University, Section 2.1: "To obtain credit in a course, students must meet all the course requirements for attendance, term work and examinations as published in the course outline."

Instruments of Evaluation Summary:

Participation	20%	Tuesdays 11:35-2:25pm
Quizzes	40%	Each Module
Reflection Paper	40%	June 18
*BONUS MARKS	3%	*Due Friday June 12

Participation (20%)

- Every Tuesday the class meets over Zoom for live discussions and activities.
- Students are expected to complete the respective modules prior to each meeting
- Students will earn marks for their active participation in class activities and discussions (See Brightspace for further clarification)
- There will be a total of 6 classes and participation is counted for 5
- See the Class Schedule on Page 7 for more details

NOTE: There are no makeups for missed classes, however extra credit opportunities will be made available and will be announced on Brightspace (see *bonus marks*).

Weekly Quizzes (40%):

- Module quizzes gauge your attentiveness and help prepare you for tests
- There will be a total of 11 Quizzes and the best 10 will count towards the final grade
- Quizzes are open-book and can be located and completed on Brightspace
- Available until 12:00pm EST each following Monday with one exception for Quizzes 3 & 4

(see Schedule on page 7 of Syllabus)

NOTE: There are no makeups for quizzes, however extra credit opportunities will be made available and will be announced on Brightspace (see *bonus marks*).

Reflection Paper (40%)

- The Reflection Paper is due on Thursday, June 18
- The Reflection Paper is designed to gauge student understanding of a general course topic or theme
- The Instructions and Rubric can be found on Brightspace

NOTE: Late submissions are subject to a **-5%** penalty each day they are late up to 3 days after the deadline. After 3 days, late work will no longer be accepted for grading.

Bonus Marks (+3%):

Extra Credit Assignment (ECA): The ECA allows students to earn up to 3% on top of their final grade and/or make up for missed quizzes. To participate, students must attend an approved public university lecture (online or in-person) on the topic of religion and write a short critical reflection on the content (see Instructions and Rubric on Brightspace). Students must submit their ECA 1-week after the posted event. Eligible events will be posted on the “Extra-Credit Opportunities” discussion forum on Brightspace. Opportunities are subject to availability.

NOTE: Please email the professor if you are doing an ECA to replace a quiz grade. Late submissions are subject to a **-5%** penalty each day they are late up to 3 days after the deadline. After 3 days, late work will no longer be accepted for grading. The final day to submit an ECA is **Friday June 12, 2026**, no late submissions will be accepted.

Required Readings

Textbook

Rebecca L. Stein, Philip L. Stein, Benjamin R. Kracht, and Marjorie M. Snipes. 2024. *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft*, 5th edition. Allyn and Bacon, Boston.

Note: The textbook is on hold at the library and available for purchase at the University Bookstore

(they price match!). There is also an online version available through the library, but it is limited to 6 simultaneous users.

Cost of Educational Material:

New	\$174.00 (Campus Bookstore)
Used	\$130.50 (Campus Bookstore)

Additional Readings

Additional readings will be posted on Brightspace and may include PDFs, links to online sources, and Multi-Media Readings. See the respective module for full list of required readings.

FAQs

1. ***Do I have to attend live meetings?*** Yes. Students are expected to attend live class meetings over Zoom every Tuesday at 11:35am EDT. Participation in class counts towards your participation grade (20%). Lecture videos, notes, and Multimedia Readings will be posted weekly on Brightspace to be completed asynchronously.
2. ***Do I need the textbook?*** Yes. There is a free online version available through the Carleton Library, but access is limited to 6 students. The textbook can also be ordered online through the University Bookstore (they price match).
3. ***Are there any weekly activities that I need to complete?*** Yes. Each module requires you to complete a quiz. See Brightspace for a complete list of all required readings, videos, and activities.
4. ***Is there a final exam?*** No. Instead of an exam there is a final reflection paper worth 40%. Details can be found on Brightspace.
5. ***Can I earn bonus marks in this class?*** Yes, students can complete one Extra-Credit Assignment (ECA) to earn up to 3% on top of their final grade. Students can also complete additional ECA if they missed a class or quiz. See Brightspace for more details.
6. ***What if I miss a quiz or a class?*** If a student misses a quiz or a class, they can complete an ECA to replace the missed quiz or class. See details on Brightspace.
7. ***What is the best way to reach you?*** Email, Office Hours, or the “Ask the Instructor Q&A” online forum on Brightspace.

SCHEDULE of CLASSES, READINGS, and ACTIVITIES

WEEK 1

Available: May 6

CLASS MEETING: No class meeting this week

Students should review the Syllabus and complete the modules

Module 1 Studying Religion

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 1 – “The Anthropological Study of Religion”

COMPLETE: Module 1 on Brightspace

QUIZ #1 – Due at 12:00pm, Monday 05/11

Module 2 Religious Symbols

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 2 – “Religious Symbols”

COMPLETE: Module 2 on Brightspace

QUIZ #2 – Due at 12:00pm, Monday 05/11

WEEK 2

Available: May 11

CLASS MEETING: Tuesday 05/12 to discuss Modules 1 & 2

Module 3 Importance of Myths

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 3 – “Mythology”

COMPLETE: Module 3 on Brightspace

QUIZ #3 – Due at 11:00am, *Tuesday 05/19 *Due on Tuesday before class
due to holiday

Module 4 Religious Rituals

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 4 – “Ritual”

COMPLETE: Module 4 on Brightspace

QUIZ #4 – Due at 11:00am, *Tuesday 05/19 *Due on Tuesday before class
due to holiday

WEEK 3

Available: May 19

CLASS MEETING: Tuesday 05/19 to discuss Modules 3 & 4

Module 5

Religious Experience

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 5 – “Altered States of Consciousness”

COMPLETE: Module 5 on Brightspace

QUIZ #5 – Due 12:00pm, Monday 05/25

Module 6

Religious Authorities

READ: Stein & Stein chapters 6 – “Religious Specialists” – shamanism

COMPLETE: Module 6 on Brightspace

QUIZ #6 – Due 12:00pm, Monday 05/25

WEEK 4

Available: May 25

CLASS MEETING: Tuesday 05/26 to discuss Modules 5 & 6

Module 7

Magic and Society

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 7 – “Magic and Divination”

COMPLETE: Module 7 on Brightspace

QUIZ #7 – Due 12:00pm, Monday 06/01

Module 8 **Death and the Afterlife**

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 8 – “Souls, Ghosts, and Death”

COMPLETE: Module 8 on Brightspace

QUIZ #8 – Due 12:00pm, Monday 06/01

WEEK 5

Available: June 1

CLASS MEETING: Tuesday 06/02 to discuss Modules 7 & 8

Module 9 **God(s) and Society**

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 9 – “Gods and Spirits”

COMPLETE: Module 9 on Brightspace

QUIZ #9 – Due 12:00pm, Monday 06/08

Module 10 **Witchcraft and Society**

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 10 – “Witchcraft”

COMPLETE: Module 10 on Brightspace

QUIZ #10 – Due 12:00pm, Monday 06/08

EXTRA-CREDIT ASSIGNMENT(S) – Due at 23:59, Friday, June 12

WEEK 6

Available: June 8

CLASS MEETING: Tuesday 06/09 to discuss Modules 9 & 10

Module 11 **A Changing Landscape**

READ: Stein & Stein chapter 12 – “The Search for New Meaning”

COMPLETE: Module 11 on Brightspace

QUIZ #11 – Due 12:00pm, Monday 06/15

WEEK 7

CLASS MEETING: Tuesday 06/16 to discuss Module 11

Reflection Paper (40%) –Due at 23:59, Thursday June 18th

Additional Information

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar Regulations, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F = Below 50	WDN = Withdrawn from the course	DEF = Deferred	

Academic Regulations, Accommodations, Plagiarism, Etc.

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here: <https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/>

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Academic Accommodations:

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 (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at **613-520-6608** or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*).

*The deadline for contacting the Paul Menton Centre regarding accommodation for June examinations is June 1, 2026 and August 1, 2026 for August examinations.

For Religious Obligations:

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: www.carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

For Pregnancy:

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: www.carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

For Survivors of Sexual Violence:

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: www.carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities:

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else's work as your own and is a serious academic offence. For the details of what constitutes plagiarism, the potential penalties and the procedures refer to the section on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the Carleton University Student Academic Integrity Policy (See <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>). The Policy is strictly enforced and is binding on all students. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Students who infringe the Policy may be subject to one of several penalties.

What are the Penalties for Plagiarism?

A student found to have plagiarized an assignment may be subject to one of several penalties including but not limited to: a grade of zero, a failure or a reduced grade for the piece of academic work; reduction of final grade in the course; completion of a remediation process; resubmission of academic work; withdrawal from course(s); suspension from a program of study; a letter of reprimand.

What are the Procedures?

All allegations of plagiarism are reported to the faculty of Dean of FASS and Management. Documentation is prepared by instructors and departmental chairs. The Dean writes to the student and the University Ombudsperson about the alleged plagiarism. The Dean reviews the allegation. If it is not resolved at this level then it is referred to a tribunal appointed by the Senate.

Assistance for Students:

Mental Health: 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/>

Academic and Career Development Services: <https://carleton.ca/career/>

Writing Services: <http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/group-support/pass/>

Important Information:

- Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the

author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

- Students must always retain a hard copy of all work that is submitted.
- 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.
- Carleton University is committed to protecting the privacy of those who study or work here (currently and formerly). To that end, Carleton's Privacy Office seeks to encourage the implementation of the privacy provisions of Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) within the university.
- In accordance with FIPPA, please ensure all communication with staff/faculty is via your Carleton email account. To get your Carleton Email you will need to activate your [MyCarletonOne account](#) through Carleton Central. Once you have activated your MyCarletonOne account, log into the [MyCarleton Portal](#).
- Please note that you will be able to link your MyCarletonOne account to other non-MyCarletonOne accounts and receive emails from us. However, for us to respond to your emails, we need to see your full name, CU ID, and the email must be written from your valid MyCarletonOne address. Therefore, it would be easier to respond to your inquiries if you would send all email from your connect account. If you do not have or have yet to activate this account, you may wish to do so by visiting <https://students.carleton.ca/>.