

Carleton University
Department of Sociology & Anthropology
ANTH 2550A/RELI 2736A
Religion & Society
Fall 2026

Dr. Ariel Fuenzalida
Office Hours: Mondays 1:15 – 2:15 p.m.
Office Location: Loeb A701
Email: ariel_fuenzalida@carleton.ca
Method of Delivery: In Person
Class Time: Wednesdays 8:35 a.m. to 11:25 a.m.
Brightspace page link: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/452646>

Teaching Assistant: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

This course will introduce students to the anthropological study of religion with a specific focus on theories and methodologies in the study of religion. We will begin with an overview of the main anthropological theories of religion and then concentrate on exploring key concepts and ideas around ritual, myth, non-ordinary states of consciousness, shamanism, mystical experience, collective effervescence, new religious movements (such as Santo Daime), and the relationship of religion with other social institutions and processes. After establishing these key concepts, we will delve into a detailed case study of shamanic traditions, specifically the Indigenous Amazonian and Mesoamerican traditions and their use of entheogens. In addition, the course will also include an experiential learning activity on non-ordinary states of consciousness.

Learning Outcomes

1. Enhance academic reading and writing skills, as well as skills in expressing ideas in other mediums, such as oral presentations.
2. Develop an understanding of anthropological approaches to the study of religion.
3. Develop the ability to critically engage with a range of key concepts, such as animism, ritual, collective effervescence, syncretism, non-ordinary states of consciousness, plant teachers, and entheogens, among others.
4. Learn to connect and analyze seemingly disparate phenomena using the theoretical tools introduced in class.

CLASS POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

You are expected to attend all virtual meetings and be prepared to actively engage with course material. **This means having read the required readings** for the week **before** the meeting begins. This point cannot be stressed enough: **you must read the required material!** If you do not read the required texts you will not do well in the course. You are also expected to **actively**

participate and contribute to group discussions both in meetings and the online discussion forums that will take place on Brightspace. Should you need to miss a class then you should let me know by email of your absence and it will be up to you to catch up on any missed material that was covered.

Additionally, in this course, you are expected to learn from your texts, your teacher and from one another. This requires striving towards understanding each other, but it does not imply striving towards finding agreement. Our class will be racially, religiously, politically, culturally, generationally, and economically diverse. We will be of different gender identifications and sexual orientations and our lived experiences and reactions to the course material will reflect this diversity. Sharing our perspectives and interpretations on the course material will enhance everyone's learning experience and you are encouraged to openly express any disagreements with the authors you will read, with your fellow classmates, or with the Professor in the different participation fora that are available for this course. However, you are expected to conduct yourself in such a way that shows the utmost respect to others who may – or may not – share your views. Derogatory comments and hateful behavior towards others (and their views) will not be tolerated.

In this course the use of artificial intelligence (AI) programs, such as ChatGPT, for the purposes of handing in course work that is to be graded **is strictly forbidden**. This means that you should not be using AI programs to generate answers, essays, presentations, or any element of the course that will be graded by the professor or the teaching assistants. Any work that is found to be generated by AI will receive a zero.

Acknowledgement of Territory

We pay respect to the Algonquin people, who are the traditional guardians of this land. We acknowledge their long-standing relationship with this territory, which remains unceded. We pay respect to all Indigenous peoples in this region, from all nations across Canada, who call Ottawa home. We acknowledge the traditional knowledge keepers, both young and old. And we honour their courageous leaders: past, present, and future.

Carleton University acknowledges the location of its campus on the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin nation. In doing so, Carleton acknowledges it has a responsibility to the Algonquin people and a responsibility to adhere to Algonquin cultural protocols.

REQUIRED READINGS:

There is no required textbook for this class. All required readings will be made available through links found in this course outline hence there is no cost associated with the readings.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & METHODS OF EVALUATION:

Student assessment will be based on the following components:

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| 1. Online Discussion Forum (10%) | Weekly |
| 2. Short Reflections 20% | Weekly |

3. Two Quizzes (30%)
4. Group Presentation (10%)
5. Essay (30%)

October 7 & November 25
December 2 & 9
December 11

Online Discussion Forum: There will be an on-going general discussion forum on Brightspace for the duration of the semester. Since there is so much to talk about concerning drugs and addiction, **you are expected to contribute at least 10 posts** throughout the semester at your own leisure. You are free to start your own discussion threads or add to existing discussion threads that others have posted. Online discussion forum participation is worth an overall total of 10% so for every post you make you will receive 1%. The discussion forum will close at the end of the day on **December 11**.

Short Reflections: During the semester you will write **10 short reflection pieces** (at least 300 words) based on the required readings for the class. Reflections are due by the end of the day every Wednesday we have class. This element requires you **to engage the readings and articulate your thoughts** on the main issues brought up in the readings. You will submit your short reading reflection pieces through Brightspace. The short reflections are worth a total of 20% of the final grade (2% per reflection).

Quizzes: There will be 2 quizzes totaling 30% of the overall grade (**Quiz 1 is worth 10% and Quiz 2 is worth 20%**). The quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions based on the main material covered in class and readings. Quizzes will be made available through Brightspace. **Quiz 1 is scheduled for October 7, and Quiz 2 is scheduled for November 25.**

Group Presentation: There is one group presentation worth 10% of the overall grade. Length of the presentation is 15 minutes maximum. **Your attendance is mandatory on November 4.** We will dedicate this class to organizing the groups and outlining the specific details for the group presentation (guidelines and rubrics will be posted on Brightspace). During our meeting you will have time to form groups of 4-5 people, brainstorm for a topic, and allocate different sections of the project to each member of the group who will in turn be responsible for that specific section of the presentation. **If you cannot be present for our meeting, then you should arrange beforehand to be part of a group.** If you do not contact me in advance of your absence, then you will carry out the presentation on your own. **Group presentations will take place in class on December 2 & 9.**

Essay: The final assignment is a research paper (10-12 double-spaced pages, excluding title page and bibliography) worth 30% of the overall grade based on a topic of your choosing related to addictions or drug studies. Detailed guidelines for the paper will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace. **Papers are due on December 11, at 11:59 p.m. You should submit papers as a Word document through the drop box on Brightspace.** It is expected that your essay will be readable at a second-year level and hence **you will be penalized 1% for each spelling and grammar mistake** (up to a maximum of 10%). To be fair to those students who submit papers on time, **late papers will be penalized at a rate of 3% per day.** If you encounter extenuating circumstances that temporarily hinder your capacity to submit the final assignment by this date you may request academic consideration. See the following: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-consideration-coursework/>