

Course Syllabus
INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD
REL3938/ANT3930

Gen Ed: H (Humanities), N (International), and Writing (4000 words)

Tuesday 11:45-1:40; Thursday 12:50-1:40

(100% Online)

Professor Robin M. Wright (Department of Religion, UF, Anderson 107C). For a brief biography, see: <https://religion.ufl.edu/faculty/core/robin-m-wright/>

Course description: This course seeks to understand comparatively the religious traditions of indigenous peoples from selected areas of the globe: (1) the Pacific, including Polynesia, Melanesia and Australia; (2) the Americas (South, Central and North, and the Caribbean); and (3) Outer Asia (Siberia, Mongolia, Russia). This course discusses the ways in which native peoples understand the origins and structure of the cosmos, their place in it, and the moral responsibilities humans have in relation to each other and to all other living entities.

Course objectives: The central objectives of our studies of these religious traditions are:

- (1) to comprehend the principles upon which cosmogonies (the creation) are believed to be founded, cosmologies (worldviews) constructed, the variety of beings that populate the cosmos inter-related, and eschatologies (views on the end-of-times) envisaged.
- (2) to study an array of ceremonial life, through film, in order to discover the language and material record of the spirit-worlds present in each case.
- (3) to comprehend the importance of religious and spiritual traditions in indigenous histories – deep histories, colonial histories, and contemporary circumstances.
- (4) to comprehend the works of the indigenous spiritual specialists in the several regions of the globe studied – their engagement in cosmopolitics, their transformations into prophetic visionaries.
- (5) to underscore the theme of nature spirituality to the ongoing discussions of indigeneity in the regions studied.

Role in Curriculum

This course serves as an elective for Religion and Anthropology majors and minors, and for the American Indian and Indigenous Studies minor and IDS Major.

Gen Ed Requirements

This course satisfies the Gen Ed Requirements for both Humanities and International designations: **Humanities** courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. **International (N)** courses promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.

Assignments and Grading Rubric:

Assignments

- Attendance (tracked in class)
- Weekly one-page summaries
- Two papers: a 5-page midterm essay and a 7-page final academic research paper

Assignment Description:

1. **Attendance and course participation** (10% of grade). Attendance will be taken every class and discussion session. 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/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

To receive full credit for participation, students must do the **Readings** on time and come prepared for class discussion; any changes in the readings will be announced in advance on the course Canvas e-learning website; weekly summaries will determine whether students are keeping up with the Readings.

2. **A mid-term take-home 5-page essay** (30% of grade). Based on the material covered until mid-semester, students should elaborate an essay integrating the discussions from Part I and the ethnography. For instance, the significance of sacred spaces in indigenous religious traditions, as this is demonstrated in the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) veneration of Mauna Loa.

3. **Weekly Summaries of readings and videos** (30% of grade). Summaries should be 250-300 words, single-spaced, in doc./ docx. format. Students should highlight main points in succinct paragraphs. Summaries should be turned in no later than two class periods following the week summarized.
4. **A final research paper, 5-7 pp.** double-spaced, in doc./ docx. format (30% of grade). Final paper topics to be announced shortly after the mid-terms have been returned. Students may also choose another topic of particular interest to them following discussion with the Professor. Besides utilizing course material (lectures, films, readings), students are encouraged to use 1-2 relevant outside sources, cited according to the guidelines listed below. Comments on all written material will be returned to students by the end of Exam week.

Writing:

The writing for this course is evaluated on content and critical thinking, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar and punctuation. Assignments will be returned to students with a grade and comments that address the students' writing skills.

The writing assessment rubric adopted for this course can be found at:
https://assessment.aa.ufl.edu/media/assessmentaaufledu/value-rubrics/critical_thinking-value_rubric.pdf Links to an external site.

Recommended Writing Guide and Information About Citations:

Strunk, William, and Elwyn B. White. 2014. *The Elements of Style*. Pearson, Boston MA.

Citation Management Guide from UF Libraries:
<http://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/citationsoftware>

Grades, grading distribution, and grade points:

Your final grade will be based on the average of all of the Assignments listed above. *Incompletes* are strongly discouraged and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.

The course follows the standard UF grading scheme.

- o A 94 to 100
- o A- <94 to 90

- o B+ <90 to 87
- o B <87 to 84
- o B- <84 to 80
- o C+ <80 to 77
- o C <77 to 74
- o C- <74 to 70
- o D+ <70 to 67
- o D <67 to 64
- o D- <64 to 61
- o E <61 to 0

The course instructor reserves the right to lower or raise course grades based on classroom contributions or upon absences. There is no A+ grade. Grades are not rounded up; for example, a 93.85% is an A- and not an A; grades are consistent with UF policy: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Late or Missing Assignments

Late assignments will be penalized and may not receive credit.

Course Policies

Communication with Instructor

Communication and grading will take place online through Canvas. Please enable Canvas to forward all course announcements and instructor communications to your email so that you stay informed. You may email me directly but communication through Canvas is preferred.

Use of Technology and AI apps

During class, electronic devices may be used **only for notetaking or participation in the course, such as accessing readings or completing online polls**. Headphones may not be worn in class.

Use of AI tools and apps to write papers is **not allowed** in this course. For further information on UF policy, see: [ChatGPT - Center for Instructional Technology and Training - University of Florida \(ufl.edu\)](https://chatgpt-center-for-instructional-technology-and-training-university-of-florida.ufl.edu)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations (including those involving the use of technology) is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. The Disability Resource Center may be contacted here: 352-392-8565; <https://disability.ufl.edu/Links> to an external site.

Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is required. Please make the classes on time and let me know about any planned absences (for religious holidays, athletic events, or other reasons) as soon as possible, and at least 24 hours in advance. For unplanned absences (due to illness or emergency), please let me know as soon as possible and provide paper or electronic documentation (e.g., doctor's note) if possible. While some absences are unavoidable, if you expect to be unable to make classes on a regular basis, you must receive permission in advance. More than three unjustified absences will result in points taken off final grade. All absences should be justified with appropriate documentation. Consistent, late arrivals to class or consistent, early departures from class will also mean points deducted from the final grade. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog.

Academic Honesty and the Honor Code

Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and may fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according to him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting it as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action.

See the policy website (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/> Links to an external site.) for more information.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations during the available interval. Summary results of these assessments will be available to students.

Reading Assignments and Course Schedule:

Reading List

Books are available as online e-books through Smathers Library. They are also available for purchase as e-books. Other Readings are posted as PDFs on the Canvas course website. The films are available directly through the UF Library EZ Proxy server, links can be found on the course website.

Introductions

Day 1 (08/24): Course Syllabus, Lecture Schedule, Requirements, etc.

Week 1 (08/29 – 08/31): Introduction to Indigenous Cultures and Religions

Linda Hogan, “We Call it Tradition”, in Harvey, ed. 2014. *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*. (Pdf in Modules tab.)

UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), 2008, 18 pp. (Pdf in Modules tab)

Suggested:

Wright, Robin. 2010. Indigenous Religious Traditions. In *Religions of the World*, edited by L. E. Sullivan, pp. 31-60. Fortress Press, Minneapolis. (Pdf in Modules tab.)

Week 2 (09/05 – 09/07): Indigenous Spiritual and Religious Traditions of the Pacific: Polynesia – Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian)

Garry Trompf, “Pacific Islands” 2006 (pp. 1229-31) in: *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*; _____, “Polynesian Traditional Religions” (pp. 1287-8); _____, “Polynesia – New Religious Movements” 2006 (pp. 1288-90). (all pdfs on website)

M. Alohalani Brown, 2022. *Ka Po’e Mo’o Akua. Hawaiian Reptilian Water Deities*. “Introduction”, pp. 1-41 (pdf in Modules)

Film: "Mauna Kea – Temple Under Siege" <http://oiwi.tv/oiwivt/mauna-kea-temple-under-siege/>

Recommended:

Alohalani Brown, 2016. "Mauna Kea: Ho'omana Hawai'i and Protecting the Sacred", *JSSRNC*, special issue on "Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Spiritualities, and the Future of Humans in Nature" (pdf on website);

Week 3 (09/12 – 09/14): Melanesia – Papua New Guinea

G. Trompf, 2006. Melanesian Traditional Religions, Ch. 1-2 *Melanesian Religion*. Greenwood. [pdf on website]

Recommended Reading: Chapter 3, *Melanesian Religion*. [pdf on website]

Week 4 (09/19 – 09/21): Australia – Aborigines

T. Swain & G. Trompf, 1995. *The Religions of Oceania* "Part 1: Australia - 1. Tradition; 2. Cults of Intrusion; and 3. Missions, Christianity and Modernity." [This text is available as online Reserve at Smathers. To access, make sure you are logged in to VPN and Library EZ Proxy]

Week 5 (09/26): Indigenous Spiritual and Religious Traditions of the Americas. A Hemispheric Overview

Historical and Contemporary Maps of Native Americas; discussion of hemispheric 'deep history', transformations across time, sacredness of contemporary spaces and territory (pdfs in Modules)

Week 5-6 (09/28 – 10/05): Indigenous South America: the Yanomami of Amazonia

Hutukara, "The Yanomami in Brazil" (pdf in Modules)

Kopenawa, Davi, and Bruce Albert. 2013. *The Falling Sky. Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Chapter 8: The Sky and the Forest & Ch. 23: The Spirit of the Forest) (pdfs in Modules).

Film "The Last Forest" on Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/title/81503933>

Week 7 (10/10 – 10/12): Indigenous Central America: the Maya

David Carrasco, 2013. Religions of Mesoamerica (second edition), Waveland Press. Introduction & Chapters 1, 3 [pdf in Modules].

Recommended Film: *Film of the Mayan Creation Narrative – the Popol Vuh*:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOEQNo5m4rg&t=918s&ab_channel=PhilHarris

By end of Week 7, Mid-term Essays Due

Week 8 (10/17 – 10/19): Indigenous North America: Osage, Potawatomi, Iroquois

“Religion”, (2001) George Tinker, *Encyclopedia of Native American Religion*. [pdf in modules]

Robin Wall Kimmerer, 2017. "Learning the Grammar of Animacy", pp. 128-34. [pdf in Modules]

John Mohawk, (2010) “All Children of Mother Earth”. [pdf in Modules]

Film: “In the Light of Reverence: Protecting America's Sacred Lands” (streaming feeds via Smathers. On Ufl.edu, go to: Library EZ Proxy. Using GatorLink, go to Smathers Library and enter title to search)

Week 9 (10/24 – 10/26): Indigenous traditions of the Caribbean: the Taino

J. Barreiro, “Beyond the Myth of Extinction” [pdf in Modules]

J. Barreiro, *Dreaming Mother Earth*, Introduction and parts 1 & 2 [pdf in Modules]

Week 10 (10/31 – 11/02): Asian Shamanism: Indigenous Spiritual and Religious Traditions in Outer Asia

York, “Shamanism – Traditional” & “Urban Shamanism”, in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, v.2, pp. 1532-37 [pdf in Modules]

Vitebsky, “Introduction” and “The Shamanic Worldview”, pp. 6-26. *Shamanism* [available as online Reserve ebook]

Week 11 (11/07 – 11/09): Spiritual specialists in traditional societies of Siberia and Mongolia – Buryat shamanism

“Introduction. The Return of the suppressed”, Manduhai Buyandelger. *Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Memory, and Gender in Contemporary Mongolia*. 2013. [online reserve ebook Smathers Library]
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UFL/detail.action?docID=1422569>].

Week 12 (11/14 – 11/16): Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender, and Agency – 1

Chapter 1, “Mobile Histories”, Manduhai Buyandelger. *Tragic Spirits*

Week 13 (11/21): Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender, and Agency – 2

Chapter 2, “Technologies of Forgetting”, Buyandelger. *Tragic Spirits*

Week 14 (11/28 – 11/30): Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender, and Agency – 3

Chapter 3, “Genealogies of Misfortune”, Buyandelger. *Tragic Spirits*

Week 15 (12/05): Discussion of Final Papers and course wrap-up.

Final Papers due by 12/13.

Campus Resources:

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit umatter.ufl.edu/ to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit counseling.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit shcc.ufl.edu/.

University Police Department: Visit police.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services career.ufl.edu/.

Library Support: cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. teachingcenter.ufl.edu/

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/

Student Complaints On-Campus: sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

On-Line Students Complaints: distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process/ /