



REL 3380

Native American Religions

Section: U01

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

Class Meeting Days and Times: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 12:00 PM-12:50 PM

Room: to be announced

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Office: DM 210 (MMC)

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

REL 3380: Native American Religions introduces the spiritual and religious traditions of Indigenous Peoples across the Americas, with particular attention to North America, the Caribbean, the Andes, and Florida. The course examines how Indigenous communities understand the sacred through relationships to land, territory, and water; ancestors; ritual, storytelling, and everyday practices; and how these understandings have been shaped by histories of colonization, displacement, and resilience. Students will analyze primary sources, peer-reviewed scholarship, and multimedia materials, and engage with key concepts such as tribal sovereignty, kinship, oral tradition, language, sacred place, and environmental stewardship. A central purpose of the course is to develop critical, decolonial approaches to Indigenous religions that challenge stereotypes, foreground Indigenous voices and self-representation, and illuminate contemporary issues, including religious revitalization, cultural survival, and struggles over sacred lands and Indigenous rights in Florida and beyond.

Textbook and Course Materials

No Textbook Required

Subtitle: N/A

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: N/A

Publisher: N/A

Publication Date: N/A

Copyright Date: N/A

ISBN 10: N/A

ISBN 13: N/A

Chapters/Pages: N/A

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for \$22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the [Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop](#).

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

By completing this course, students will be able to: Examine Indigenous religious beliefs, rituals, and practices across the Americas, emphasizing both similarities and differences among communities and Nations.

Apply interdisciplinary perspectives (history, religious studies, decolonial studies, the social sciences, art, law, and ecology) to the study of Indigenous religions.

Explain key Indigenous concepts, including tribal sovereignty, kinship, oral tradition, spirituality, language, the arts, and the sacred bonds to land and water.

Develop well-supported arguments regarding the impacts of colonization, modernization, and globalization on Indigenous religions, cultures, and communities.

Produce reflective and analytical written work that incorporates Indigenous perspectives and addresses issues like loss and revitalization of sacred lands, languages, and cultures, using appropriate sources and academic conventions.

Identify key Indigenous Peoples and Nations in Florida and South Florida, and explain the historical and contemporary significance of their religious and cultural practices.

Expectations of the Course

EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS COURSE

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Student Expectations

- Students are expected to engage respectfully and consistently with course materials and each other, whether in class meetings, online discussions, group activities, or peer feedback, in ways that support a focused academic learning environment.
- Participation includes completing assigned readings and coursework on schedule, bringing materials to class, contributing

thoughtfully to discussions, and adhering to guidelines for respectful and civil dialogue.

- Disagreements with ideas or interpretations are encouraged when expressed respectfully and supported by evidence. Personal attacks, discriminatory remarks, or behavior that interferes with others' ability to learn are not allowed and may be subject to university conduct policies. Students are judged on the quality of their preparation, reasoning, and use of evidence, not on whether they agree with a particular viewpoint.

RESPECTFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- This course features materials and viewpoints from various Indigenous Peoples and Nations across the Americas. Students should engage with these materials respectfully and analytically.
- Classroom interactions must demonstrate respect for differences in culture, religion, sexuality, political views, and background, in accordance with university and state policies.
- Disagreement is welcome when expressed in a civil and evidence-based manner; personal attacks or discriminatory remarks are not permitted.
- The goal is to encourage critical thinking and informed discussion about complex histories and current issues, not to endorse any specific religious or political position.

Instructor Commitments

- The instructor will interact with students during class sessions and via the learning management system, providing timely reminders and updates about readings, assignments, and assessments.
- The instructor generally replies to student emails or messages within two business days when classes are in session.
- The instructor will post grades for major assignments within about two weeks of the due date (or sooner when possible) to provide clear, timely updates on students' progress.
- The instructor will provide feedback on course performance and, when requested, offer guidance on how students can improve their performance on future assignments and assessments.

COURSE POLICIES

Please review the [FIU's Policies and Netiquette](#) webpage. The policies webpage contains essential guidelines relevant to all FIU courses, as well as additional information on acceptable netiquette for online courses.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- All students must follow the university's Academic Integrity policy. Plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and other forms of academic misconduct are prohibited.
- Work submitted in this course must be the student's own and must properly acknowledge all sources.
- Suspected violations will be reported and handled in accordance with university procedures.

Academic Integrity and Turnitin

To support Academic Integrity at Florida International University, Turnitin will be used to review the papers you submit for this course. The instructor will thoroughly review the Turnitin reports to assess the authenticity and originality of your work. Turnitin does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred. It will not be used as a punitive tool or measure.

Academic Misconduct includes

Cheating includes the unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources, or assistance from others during exams, course assignments, field service reports, or class recitations. It also covers the unauthorized possession of exam papers or course materials, whether or not they were originally authorized.

Plagiarism involves using and claiming another person's work without proper attribution and presenting it as one's own. Any student who fails to credit ideas, expressions, or materials taken from another source, including the internet, is responsible for plagiarism.

Learn more about the [academic integrity policies and procedures](#) as well as [student resources](#) that can help you prepare for a successful semester.

Assignments & Assessments

ASSIGNMENTS

A brief biography, eight weekly written assignments, a research paper, and two exams will meet the requirements for the course content.

- 1. BIO AND INTRODUCTION (20 POINTS / 20%)** Students will submit a short written or multimedia introduction that identifies their academic interests, prior experiences (if any) with Indigenous topics, and learning goals for the course. This assignment helps build community and sets expectations for respectful engagement. Assessed on completion, clarity, and adherence to guidelines.

Assignment	Date Posted	Deadline	Points	Weight
Biography	08-26-26	09-02-26	20P	20%

2. WEEKLY WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (WWAS) – 10 × 2 POINTS (20 POINTS / 20%)

Students will complete brief weekly written responses based on the assigned readings, lectures, and/or media. Each WWA will ask students to summarize key ideas, identify essential concepts, and apply course materials to a guiding question. WWAs are assessed on accuracy, use of course materials, and clarity of explanation. Late submissions are subject to the course lateness policy.

Assignment	Date Posted	Deadline	Points	Weight
WWA 1	09-02-26	09-09-26	2P	2%
WWA 2	09-09-26	09-16-26	2P	2%
WWA 3	09-16-26	09-23-26	2P	2%
WWA 4	09-23-26	09-30-26	2P	2%
WWA 5	09-30-26	10-14-26	2P	2%
WWA 6	10-14-26	10-21-26	2P	2%
WWA 7	10-21-26	10-28-26	2P	2%
WWA 8	10-28-26	11-04-26	2P	2%
WWA 9	11-04-26	11-11-26	2P	2%
WWA 10	11-11-26	11-18-26	2P	2%
TOTAL			20P	20%

3. RESEARCH PAPER (20 POINTS / 20%)

Students will complete a research paper on an Indigenous religion topic approved by the instructor. The paper must:

- Use peer-reviewed and/or reputable community-based sources.
- Present a clear thesis.
- Integrate course concepts (e.g., sovereignty, sacred land, ritual, colonial impact).
- Follow academic citation guidelines as provided.

The paper is assessed on research quality, critical analysis, organization, and adherence to ethical research standards.

Assignment	Date Posted	Deadline	Points	Weight
Research Paper	08-26-26	11-04-26	20P	20%

4. MIDTERM EXAM (EXAM 1) (20 POINTS / 20%)

The midterm exam will assess students' understanding of key terms, concepts, communities, and case studies from the first half of the course. The exam will include a combination of objective items (e.g., identification, short-answer) and analytical prompts that ask students to apply course concepts to specific examples.

Assignment	Date	Points	Weight
EXAM 1	10-07-26	20	20%

5. FINAL PROJECT (EXAM 2) (20 POINTS / 20%)

For the final project, students will select a region (e.g., North America, Caribbean, Andes, or Florida) and create a case study, reflection, or critical analysis focused on Indigenous religion, sovereignty, or a current issue. The project must:

- Integrate at least one course learning outcome.
- Draw on course materials and peer-reviewed or community-based sources.
- Be presented as a written paper, multimedia project (e.g., video, podcast, website), or slide presentation, following the instructor's guidelines.

The project serves as the Final Exam and is assessed on depth of analysis, use of sources, organization, and clarity of communication.

Assignment	Date	Points	Weight
FINAL PROJECT (EXAM 2)	11-18-26	20P	20%

LATE WORK POLICY

- All assignments are due on the date and time specified in the course schedule or LMS.
- Late work will only be accepted in documented cases of extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical emergency, jury duty, military service) and must be communicated to the instructor as soon as reasonably possible.
- Approved late work may be subject to a revised deadline; unapproved late work will receive a zero.

EXTRA CREDIT

If deemed beneficial to the class, the instructor may assign an additional opportunity for extra credit.

Assignment	Date Posted	Points	Weight
Extra Credit	12-09	5P	5%

DISCUSSIONS

Students will demonstrate their ability to critically engage with the course concepts and assigned readings during class discussions with peers.

Grading

The instructor reserves the right to make any necessary changes to the course regarding assignments, assessments, or course information.

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Bio and Introduction	1	20	20	20%
Weekly Written Assignments (WWA)	10	2	20	20%
Research Paper	1	1	20	20%
Midterm EXAM 1	1	20	20	20%
Final Project (EXAM 2)	1	20	20	20%
Total			100	100%

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Range (%)
A	Above 93
A-	90- 92
B +	87- 89
B	83- 86
B-	80- 82
C +	77- 79
C	70- 76
D	60- 69
F	59 or less

EVALUATION CRITERIA	
A (90-100)	Excellent work that is engaged, insightful, and demonstrates that you are able to apply the concepts from class for critical reflection and evaluation of new content.
B (80-89)	Above-average work that demonstrates your understanding of class concepts by using course material to support your argument. Work develops meaningful ideas.
C (70-79)	Average, Passable work that considers the themes of the class, but lacks focus and does not develop class material effectively or in a sustained fashion.
D (60-69)	Below average work that fails to consider the class themes in any substantial way.
F (0-59)	Work fails to meet minimum assignment requirements.

Schedule of Topics

COURSE CALENDAR

Weekly Schedule

This schedule may change at the instructor's discretion. Any updates will be communicated promptly via email. Students are responsible for making any necessary adjustments to prepare for class. All other assignments are due as specified in the schedule below.

COURSE CHANGES

This is an outline of the course. The instructor reserves the right to modify it and will promptly notify students of any changes. Students are responsible for adjusting accordingly to prepare for class. Additionally, the instructor may use class documents (quizzes, papers, presentations, and communications) for academic purposes.

Date		Readings	Deadlines
		UNIT 1 NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIONS IN THE AMERICAS	
1	M08-24	1. INTRODUCTION. COURSE OVERVIEW	
	W08-26	1. Silverman, David J. (2012). Native American Religions. <i>obo</i> in Atlantic History. doi: 10.1093/obo/9780199730414-0156. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199730414/obo-9780199730414-0156.xml?print Post: Short Bio Post: Essay Rubrics “Earth as a Sacred Place”	
	F 08-28	1. Keegan, B. (2022). Contemporary Native American and Indigenous Religions: State of the field. <i>Religion Compass</i> , 16(9), e12448. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12448	
2	M08-31	1. Ryan, J., Barry. (2021). Native American religions. In S. P. Holland (Ed.), <i>Encyclopedia of American Studies</i> (1st ed.). Johns Hopkins University Press. https://search.credoreference.com/articles/Qm9va0FydGJjbGU6NjczMTM=?aid=107350	Short Bio Deadline
	W09-02	1. King, Sarah J. (2013). Context Matters: Studying Indigenous Religions in North America. <i>Religion Compass</i> 7/11. 498-507, 10.1111/rec3.12066 Post: W. W. Assignment 1 (WWA1)	
	F09-04	Discussion	
3	M09-07	NO CLASSES- LABOR DAY	
	W09-09	1. Gill, S. (2024). What is Mother Earth? A Name, A Meme, A Conspiracy. <i>Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture</i> , 18(2), 162-188. https://doi.org/10.1558/jsrnc.19924	WWA1

	F09-11	1. Fishel, S., Winter, C. J., & Burke, A. (2021). Between Ecology and Indigeneity: Intersections of Earth, Country and Power. <i>Borderlands Journal</i>, 20(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.21307/borderlands-2021-001 Post: W. W. Assignment 2 (WWA2)	
4	M09-14	1. American Academy of Arts & Sciences. (2001). Indigenous Americans: Spirituality and ecosystems. <i>Daedalus</i>, 130(4), 267–281. https://www.amacad.org/publication/indigenous-americans-spirituality-and-ecos[amacad]	WWA2
	W09-16	1. Sandra Littletree, Miranda Belarde-Lewis, Marisa Duarte. Centering Relationality: A Conceptual Model to Advance Indigenous Knowledge Organization Practices. <i>Knowl. Organ.</i> 2020, 47(5), 410-426. https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2020-5-410 Post: W. W. Assignment 3 (WWA3)	
	F09-18	1. Garrouette, E. M., Beals, J., Keane, E. M., Kaufman, C., Spicer, P., Henderson, J., Henderson, P. N., Mitchell, C. M., Manson, S. M., & AI-SUPERPPF Team (2009). Religiosity and Spiritual Engagement in Two American Indian Populations. <i>Journal for the scientific study of religion</i>, 48(3), 480–500. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2009.01461.x	
		UNIT 2 CARIBBEAN INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS	
5	M09-21	1. Morejon, Jorge Luis Morejón- From the Areíto to the Cordon: indigenous healing dances Rev. Bras. Estud. Presença, Porto Alegre, v. 8, n. 3, p. 563-591, July/Sept. 2018. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/2237-266069826	WWA3
	W09-23	1. Udo, E. M. (2020). The Vitality of Yoruba Culture in the Americas. <i>Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies</i>, 41(2). http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/F7412046833 Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/17c6d1sb Post: W. W. Assignment 4 (WWA4)	
	F09-25	Discussion	
6	M09-28	1. Perdomo, Marcela Maria. (2022). "Somatizing the Past: Healing the Dead Through Spirit Possession in the Garifuna Dugu from Honduras." <i>Journal of Africana Religions</i>, 2022, Vol.10 N.1. DOI: 10.5325/jafireli.10.1.0047	WWA4
	W09-30	1. Gobin, E. (2022). New Age and Afro-Cuban Religion: Notes on Cultural Creation, between Indigenization and Exogenization. <i>Perspectivas Afro</i>, 2 (1), 81-98. https://doi.org/10.32997/PA-2022-4116 Post: W. W. Assignment 5 (WWA5)	
	F10-02	Discussion	
7	M10-05	REVIEW UNITS 1&2	WWA5
	W10-07	EXAM1	
	F10-09		
		UNIT 3 ANDEAN RELIGIONS, SPIRITUALITIES, & PHILOSOPHIES	

8	M10-12	1. Titizano, C. (2017). <i>Mama Pacha: Creator and Sustainer Spirit of God. Horizontes Decoloniales</i> <i>Decolonial Horizons</i>, 3, 127–159. https://doi.org/10.13169/decohor.3.0127 1. Inquilla-Mamani, Juan and Chambi-Apaza, Emilio. (2019). <i>Symbolic Communication and the Notion of Pachamama in the Quechua and Aimara Cultures. International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences. Vol-4-2, Mar-Apr, 2019. https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.4.2.47</i> Post: W. W. Assignment 6 (WWA6)	
	W10-14	1. Apaza Huanca, Y. K. (2019). Non-Western Epistemology and the Understanding of the Pachamama (Environment) Within the World(s) of the Aymara Identity. <i>International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy</i>, 8(3), 6-22. https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcsjd.v8i3.1241 2. Deines, Tina (2023). Pachamama. EBSCO Knowledge Advantage. EBSCO. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/pachamama	
	F10-16	Discussion- Research Paper	
9	M10-19	1. Janusek, J. W. (2006). The Changing “nature” of Tiwanaku Religion and the Rise of an Andean State. <i>World Archaeology</i>, 38(3), 469–492. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40026644 2. TREVER, L. (2011). Idols, mountains, and metaphysics in Guaman Poma’s pictures of huacas. <i>RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics</i>, 59/60, 39–59. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23647781	WWA6
	M10-21	1. López, G. E. J., Coloca, F. I., & Seguí, S. T. (2025). Andean sacred mountains during the expansion of the Inca Empire: an archaeological view from north-western Argentina. <i>Antiquity</i>, 99(406), 1114–1128. doi:10.15184/aqy.2025.50 2. Christie, J. J. (2006). Inca Copacabana. A Reconstruction from the Perspective of the Carved Rocks. <i>Anthropos</i>, 101(1), 179–201. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40466628 3. Sáenz, S. D.-S. (2017). Deities and Spirits in Andean Belief: Towards a Systematisation. <i>Anthropos</i>, 112(2), 443–453. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44791383 Post: W. W. Assignment 7 (WWA7)	
	F10-23	Discussion	
10	M10-26	1. Joslyn, Catherine (2013) "Representations of Nature in Andean Textiles," <i>Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective</i>: Vol.7 No. 2, Article 4. Available at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jigi/vol7/iss2/4 2. Conklin, W. J. (1997). <i>Structure as meaning in Andean textiles. Chungara: Revista de Antropología Chilena</i>, 29 (1), 109-131. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27802053	WWA7

	W10-28	Museum Virtual Visit and Visuals 1. Arnold, D. Y., Espejo Ayca, E., & Maidana Rodríguez, F. L. (2015). <i>Weaving life: The textile collection of the Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore (La Paz, Bolivia) following the productive chain</i>. Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore (MUSEF). http://musef.gob.bo/pdf/catalogos/mayores/2013_Tejiendo_la_Vida_Ingles.pdf 1. Denise Y Arnold, D.Y. (2018). Making textiles into persons: Gestural sequences and relationality in communities of weaving practice of the South Central Andes. <i>Journal of Material Culture</i>. 1-22 https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183517750007 2. McHugh, Julia. "Andean Textiles." In <i>Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History</i>. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000. (June 2020) http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/antx/hd_antx.htm Post: W. W. Assignment 8 (WWA8)	
	F10-30	Discussion	
		UNIT 4 FLORIDA: SEMINOLE AND MICCOSUKEE Sovereignty, clan-based social structure, land and Everglades as sacred, ceremony and healing, adaptation and autonomy, environmental stewardship	
11	M11-02	1. The Eco Preservation Project. Auntie Betty Osceola's Closing Speech at the Climate Leadership Summit. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yal7dB7DyDU 2. GoGlobal FIU. TTR: Healing the Everglades: Indigenous Perspectives from PBS's Native America, with Betty Osceola. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gB3SdnZHyos	WWA8
	W11-04	1. Rodgers, Jr., William H. (2024). "The Miccosukee Indians and Environmental Law." University of Washington Faculty Articles (2024). digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/ 2. Reyes-García, V., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., McElwee, P., Molnár, Z., Öllerer, K., Wilson, S.J. and Brondizio, E.S. (2019), <i>The contributions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to ecological restoration</i>. <i>Restor Ecol</i>, 27: 3-8. https://doi.org/10.1111/rec.12894 Post: W. W. Assignment 9 (WWA9)	
	F11-06	Discussion	
12	M11-09	POW-WOW 1. https://folklife.si.edu/online-exhibitions/american-indian-powwows/smithsonian 2. https://seminoletribune.org/culture-tradition-honor-highlight-annual-tribal-fair-and-pow-wow/ 3. https://youtu.be/mrVD7WRJP80?si=tBrrZp6KSdwu3Vxa Post: W. W. Assignment 10 (WWA10)	WWA9
	W11-11	NO CLASSES: VETERANS DAY	
	F11-13	Discussion	
13	M11-16	Review Units 3&4	WWA10
	W11-18	EXAM 2	
		Critical Book Review- Research Paper or PPT presentation that serves as the FINAL EXAM	
	F11-20		
14	M11-23	PPT PRESENTATIONS-	
	W11-25	THANKSGIVING WEEK	
	F11-27	THANKSGIVING WEEK	
15	M11-30		
	W12-02	EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY	
	F12-04	EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY	

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Course Communication

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Communication in this course will take place via **the Canvas Inbox**. For inquiries regarding the course content or learning outcomes, please do not hesitate to email me to schedule a virtual appointment. Check out the [Canvas Guide](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using the Canvas Inbox.

I will respond to all correspondence within **two (2) business days**.

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies, such as:

- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights (OCR)** is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the OCR team through report.fiu.edu.