

Carleton

Department of Religion

507-222-4232

Dear Future Carl,

Congratulations on being accepted to Carleton! I am thrilled to hear about your interest in the Department of Religion. [The study of religion](#) draws upon multiple disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences. We offer [a wide range of courses](#) dealing with various historic traditions (including Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Native American religions, Chinese and Japanese religions, Hinduism, and Buddhism). Some introduce a religious tradition and trace its development historically; others examine in a cross-cultural context the issues faced by various religious communities and individuals; and still others explore diverse theories and methods employed in the study of religions.

In the newspapers and television, one gets the impression that religious groups are always at odds. At Carleton we deal with this question by respecting the diversity, integrity, and richness of the traditions we study. Our aim is not to convert students to any religion but to cultivate critical empathy in order to understand religious traditions on their own terms. At the same time, we recognize that many students who take our courses have deep religious commitments or significant religious questions that have stimulated their interest in the study of religion. We honor the personal religious, and non-religious, beliefs and values of our students, which need not interfere with the academic study of religion. Indeed, for some students, this academic work deepens their personal engagement with religious life.

A popular course among first year students is our main introductory course *Understanding Religion*, which explores the role of religion in the world today through selected themes—from politics and pop culture, to religious philosophies, ecology and bioethics, to race, gender and class, and more. You may also enroll in our Argument and Inquiry seminars, or introductory courses that survey the history of a particular religious tradition or the presence of a theme in numerous religions, such as gender, race, power, or politics.

Despite predictions of its demise, religion remains a vital component of most human cultures in the world of the twenty-first century. Understanding of religious texts, persons, and practices is indispensable for appreciating not just the human quest for meaning in life, but the ways in which current social and political movements and institutions have developed and new ones continue to appear. Our students move on to [successful careers](#) in non-profit social justice organizations, law, medicine and public health, community service, politics, and even money management and tech companies. I'd be glad to be in touch with you about any of your interests. If you have questions about the study of religion at Carleton, please feel free to email me (asango@carleton.edu).

Sincerely yours,



Asuka Sango
John W. Nason Professor of Asian Studies and Religion
Chair, Department of Religion
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