MYTH, RITUAL, AND MYSTICISM
ANT 3241**

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Office: LC 308

Course Hours: MWF 11-11:50 AM
Office Hours: W 3-5 PM or by appt.

This course meets the University Core Curriculum (UCC) and the Global Learning (GL) Requirements.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is concerned with the boundaries between everyday life and another order of reality: the supernatural world, the world of spirits and gods, magical powers, religions, and mystical dangers, and with what happens when those barriers ease or break apart. Examples are drawn from Europe and North America, Africa, Asia, Australia, South America and the Caribbean.

A fundamental premise of the course is that human beings are symbol-making as well as tool-making animals. We understand our world and shape our lives in large part by assigning meanings to objects, beings, events, and persons; by connecting things together in symbolic patterns; and by creating elaborate forms of symbolic action and narrative. The course considers how symbols related to the supernatural world are created and structured; how they draw on and give meaning to different domains of the human world; how they are woven into politics, family life, and the life cycle; and how we can interpret them.

The course is particularly aimed at countering the assumption that belief in witchcraft and spirits is particularly associated with the non-western world. Throughout, our goal will be not to promote or debunk belief and practice, but rather to understand them using approaches from anthropology, sociology, social psychology and history, seeing belief and practice in cultural, social and political context and considering their place in people's lives.

We will focus on a variety of subject matters including spirit possession and visitation, trance, divination, and altered states of consciousness, in particular to, among other things: snake handling and trance in Appalachia; spiritualism and mediumship in 19th century America; visitations by the Virgin Mary; claims of abduction by space aliens in late 20th century America, etc.

We will also pay careful attention to the fears that other people are causing harm through hidden or mystical means, and the consequences of such fears, especially moral panics. The primary examples will be the great European witch hunt of the 15th-17th centuries; the Salem Village witchcraft trials of 1692; the fears of satanic abuse; the practice of magic and witchcraft in sub-Saharan Africa; the links between anger and illness in South America; the religious use of drugs, etc.

Historical and anthropological research on these topics has grown rapidly in recent decades, changing understandings of witchcraft and spirit possession, and of Western or global north’s relationship to the supernatural world in general.
In this course, we will be concerned not so much with coming to absolute conclusions as with
learning how to analyze belief and practice; appreciating the complexity and ambiguity of the
historical and anthropological record; and with weighing alternative interpretations.

There is no final exam. Students will present a quiz (multiple choice and short answer questions)
at the end of each chapter, and will write two essays and a small research assignment over the
course of the semester. We will see a number of films as they will provide a major source of
ethnographic information. Each film’s content will be directly related to a specific chapter. The
quizzes will include questions (multiple choice and/or short answer) about the content of every
chapter (and their related required readings) and the content of all the films.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this course students will be able to:

• Understand the culturally informed and quite diverse imaginations about the supernatural
  world and supernatural forces in different societal contexts, from the post-industrial
  global north (Western Europe and North America), to the BRIC countries, and so-called
  traditional societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Australia.
• Better understand the linkages and non-hierarchically determining differences among
  distinct human beliefs, from more or less complex religious systems, about magic and
  witchcraft, superstition, sorcery and mysticism.
• Understand the links that exist, differently in different societies, between spirituality,
  religious beliefs, and conviction of the existence of supernatural forces on one side and
  other aspects of societies including health care.
• Be able to contextualize their own religious beliefs, spirituality, and/or lack thereof
  thanks to a better understanding of beliefs they are unfamiliar with.
• Be a better world citizen by understanding the existence of different ways of being
  human, of being spiritual and religious or atheist.
• Describe the nature of anthropological fieldwork and contrast its methodology with that
  of other disciplines.
• Explain how terms such as “culture” and “religion” are defined in anthropology.
• Explain and differentiate between different theoretical approaches to the study of
  religion.
• Explain the concept of ritual and categorize different types of ritual.
• Compare and contrast different types of religious specialists.
• Explain altered states of consciousness and describe the role they play in religious
  experiences.
• Differentiate between various types of supernatural entities including gods, spirits, souls,
  ghosts, and ancestors.

GL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

• Demonstrate an understanding of the historical and contemporary inter-relatedness of key
  local, regional and global religious and spiritual issues and events, including beliefs in
  magic, witchcraft, sorcery and various kinds of superstitions. (GLOBAL AWARENESS)
• Demonstrate the ability to compose an analysis of various perspectives associated with different culturally-based conceptualizations of the supernatural world and their attendant practices and rituals, which can also be linked to different geographic locations on the global stage. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE)

• Willingly better engage in a number of problem solving activities in a variety of sociocultural contexts around the globe. (GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT)

These three GL student learning outcomes will be assessed as follows:

**Global Learning (GL) Assessments**

• Every enrolled student will have to write two relatively short essays during the semester, one during each half of the semester. These essays will be of 5-8 pages and focus on one specific theme/question, which will be revealed to students two weeks prior to the due date. These essays will ask students to demonstrate mastery of the material covered as well as an ability to apply the acquired knowledge to an improved understanding of the global world. As such, each one of these essays’ focus will make direct reference to a relevant recent news event. (GLOBAL AWARENESS)

• Students are required to write a term paper (10-12 pages) that will be based on both library research and brief fieldwork conducted in at least one South Florida religious or spiritual community to which the student doesn’t belong. The paper will be focused on one or two closely related and comparable local/global religious performance(s) or ritual(s). One and only one of these two religious/spiritual communities may be well known by the student author of the paper. This GL requirement asks students to demonstrate comprehension of the existence of various perspectives associated with different religious/spiritual subjectivities and diverse cultural backgrounds. It also asks students to demonstrate their willingness to engage—thanks to what they have learned in this class—in a number of problem solving activities in a variety of sociocultural contexts around the globe. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE and GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT)

• Students are required to make a short final presentation to the class based on their independent research project.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

• Students are required to attend class and participate in discussions.

• There are eleven quizzes based on assigned readings and films. These quizzes will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions and will cover both the contents of the required readings and the films,

**FINAL GRADE CALCULATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation and Facilitation:</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Quizzes (60 POINTS EACH)</td>
<td>660 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 essays (5-8 pages) (50 POINTS EACH)</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (10-12 pages) and Presentation</td>
<td>140 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,000 pts</td>
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EXTRA CREDIT

The total number of points that you can earn in this course is 1,000. However, throughout the semester, you may have opportunities (probably only one) to earn extra credit through attending event(s) relevant to the course and writing a reaction paper or report. More information about extra credit opportunities will be placed in due time on the Moodle website associated with this course.

GROUND RULES

1) Turn your cell phones **OFF**. If you have an emergency and have to use it, leave the room so that I do not have to request that you do so.
2) Use laptops **ONLY** for course related activity (ie: taking notes). No e-mail, text, or other messaging allowed.
3) Arrive to class **ON TIME**. Persistent lateness will result in a lower grade.
4) Papers are to be submitted electronically on the Moodle website (turnitin.com upload) associated with this course. NO late papers will be accepted for full credit without a medical excuse. Each day late will result in the loss of 10% of the total possible points.
5) Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you use the work of other authors without giving them credit, you will receive a ‘0’ for the assignment and you will be reported to Academic Affairs. To avoid plagiarism, all assignments will have to be uploaded on a turnitin.com site associated with this course (see the Moodle site associated with this course).
6) Papers must include a title, your name, the course name and number, and **page numbers**.
7) All email correspondence must begin with a salutation (Professor _______, Dear Dr. _______, Hi Professor _______, etc.) and end with your name. I will not read your email if you fail to include this.
8) In this course, we will be discussing topics some might consider sensitive, provocative, or taboo such as race, sexuality, and religious beliefs. It is imperative that you express your opinions in a respectful manner.

COURSE MATERIALS

Readings from this course consist of one text book and a series of articles. There are also several required films. All readings (at the exception of the text book indicated below) and films will be available on the course’s Moodle website. Required readings for the course are located below in the weekly section for which they are assigned. Required readings must be done PRIOR each day of class. This will allow for informed in-class participation.

Book available at the FIU bookstore:
Stein, Rebecca L. and Philip L. Stein

eText
COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEKS ONE & TWO
-Presentation and explanation of the course's objectives, student learning outcomes, assignments, and other details
-Introduction to the discipline of anthropology and the study of religions
•Watch the video "Anthropologists at Work"
-Chapter I: The Anthropological Study of Religion
THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
  The Holistic Approach
  The Study of Human Societies
  The Fore of New Guinea: An Ethnographic Example
  Two Ways of Viewing Culture
  Cultural Relativism
  Postmodernism
  Universal Human Rights
  The Concept of Culture
  Viewing the World
THE STUDY OF RELIGION
  Attempts at Defining Religion
  The Domain of Religion
  Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion
  The Evolutionary Approach
  The Marxist Approach
  The Functional Approach
  The Interpretive Approach
  The Psychosocial Approach
  The Biological Basis of Religious Behavior
  Belief in Spirit Beings
  The Evolution of Religion

-Required Readings:
•Pages 1-28 of *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*.
-Watch the short Films “The Discipline of Anthropology” AND “Doing Anthropology.”
-Quiz # 1

WEEKS THREE & FOUR
-Discussion of Global Learning common reading “The Case for Contamination”
-Chapter II Mythology
THE NATURE OF MYTHS
Worldview
Stories of the Supernatural
  Myths
The Nature of Oral Texts
  Genesis
UNDERSTANDING MYTHS
Approaches to Analysis of Myths
  Searching for Myth Origins in the Nineteenth Century
  Fieldwork and Functional Analysis
  Structural Analysis
  Psychoanalytic Symbols in Myth
Common Themes in Myths
  Origin Myths
  Apocalyptic Myths
  Trickster Myths
  Hero Myths
CONCLUSION

-Required Readings:
  • GL reading
  • Pages 29-55 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.
  • Daugherty, Mary Lee 1976 “Serpent-Handling as Sacrament.” Theology Today 33:3. October. Pages 77-82.
-Watch Film “Off the Verandah”
-Quiz # 2

WEEK FIVE
-Chapter III Religious Symbols
WHAT IS A SYMBOL?
  Religious Symbols
    The Swastika
    The Pentagram
    Christian Symbols
SACRED ART
    The Sarcophagus of Lord Pakal
    The Meaning of Color
    Yoruba Color Terminology
SACRED SPACE AND SACRED TIME
    The Meaning of Time
    The Mayan View of Time
    Rituals and Calendars in Modern World Religions
Sacred Time and Space in Australia
   Totemism and the Dream Time in Australia
   Murungin Totemism

THE SYMBOLISM OF MUSIC AND DANCE
   The Symbolism of Music
   Music in Ritual
   The Symbolism of Dance

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

BOX 3.1   RELIGIOUS TOYS AND GAMES
BOX 3.2   THE END OF TIME

-Required Readings:
• Pages 56-76 of *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*.

-Quiz # 3

WEEK SIX

-Chapter IV Ritual

THE BASICS OF RITUAL PERFORMANCE
   Prescriptive and Situational Rituals
   Periodic and Occasional Rituals
   A Classification of Rituals

A SURVEY OF RITUALS
   Technological Rituals
      Hunting and Gathering Rites of Intensification
      Protective Rituals
   Social Rites of Intensification
      Offerings and Sacrifices
      Human Sacrifice
   Therapy Rituals and Healing
      The Navaho
      Anti-Therapy Rituals
   Salvation Rituals
   Revitalization Rituals
   Rites of Passage
      The Structure of a Rite of Passage
      Coming-of-Age Rituals
      Transition and Liminality
      Apache Rite of Passage
      U.S. Secular Rites of Passage
   Alterations of the Human Body
      Tattooing and Other Permanent Alterations
      Genital Cutting
   Pilgrimages
WEEK SEVEN
Chapter V Altered State of Consciousness
THE NATURE OF ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS
Entering an Altered State of Consciousness
  Fasting
  Sacred Pain
The Biological Basis of Altered States of Consciousness
Drug Induced Altered States
  The Importance of a Ritual Setting
The Role of Altered States in Religious Practice
ETHNOGRAPHIC EXAMPLES OF ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS
  The Holiness Churches
  San Healing Rituals
  The Sun Dance of the Cheyenne
Religious Use of Drugs in South America
Rastafarians
CONCLUSION
SUMMARY
BOX 5.1  ALTERED STATES IN UPPER PALEOLITHIC ART
BOX 5.2  THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH

-Required Readings:
• Pages 103-118 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.
WEEK EIGHT

Chapter VI Religious Specialists

SHAMANS
- Defining Shamanism
- Becoming a Shaman
- The Shamanic Role and Rituals
- Siberian Shamanism
- Yakut Shamanism
- Shamanism among the Akimel O’odham
- Korean Shamanism
- Pentecostal Healers as Shamans
- Neoshamanism

PRIESTS
- Zuni Priests
- Okinawan Priestesses
- Eastern Orthodox Priests

OTHER SPECIALISTS
- Healers and Diviners
- Prophets

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

BOX 6.1 CLOWN DOCTORS AS SHAMANS

BOX 6.2 AFRICAN HEALERS MEET WESTERN MEDICINE

-Required Readings:
  • Pages 119-135 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.

WEEK NINE

Chapter VII Magic and Divination

THE WORLD OF MAGIC
- Magic and Religion
- Magic and Science
- Rules of Magic
- Homeopathic Magic
- Contagious Magic
- The Function of Magic
- Why Magic Works
MAGIC IN SOCIETY
  Magic in the Trobriand Islands
  Learning Magic
  Magical Ritual
  Magic among the Azande
  Sorcery among the Fore
  Wiccan Magic

DIVINATION
  Forms of Divination
  Divination Techniques
  Inspirational Forms
  Ordeals
  Fore Divination
  Oracles of the Azande
  Divination in Ancient Greece: The Oracle at Delphi
  Astrology

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

BOX 7.1  TROBRIAND ISLAND MAGIC

BOX 7.2  I-CHING: THE BOOK OF CHANGES

-Required Readings:
  • Pages 136-160 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.

-Quiz 7

WEEK TEN

Chapter VIII Souls, Ghosts, and Death

SOULS AND ANCESTORS
  Variation in the Concept of the Soul
  Souls, Death and the Afterlife
  Examples of Concepts of the Soul
  Yup’ik Souls
  Yanomamó Spirits and Souls
  Hmong Souls
  The Soul in Roman Catholicism
  The Soul in Hinduism and Buddhism
  Ancestors
  Yoruba Ancestors
  Beng Ancestors and Reincarnation
  Tana Toraja Ancestors
  Ancestors and the Departed in Japan

BODIES AND SOULS
  Ghosts
Dani Ghosts
Bunyoro Ghosts
Japanese Ghosts
The Living Dead: Vampires and Zombies
Vampires
The Viking *Draugr*
Haitian Zombies
Zombies in Modern American Culture

DEATH RITUALS
Funeral Rituals
Disposal of the Body
Burial
The African Burial Ground
Secondary Burials
Cremation
Mummification
Exposure
U.S. Death Rituals in the Nineteenth Century
U.S. Funeral Rituals Today

DAYS OF DEATH
Halloween
Day of the Dead (*Dia de los Muertos)*

CONCLUSION
SUMMARY
BOX 8.1 HOW DO YOU GET TO HEAVEN?
BOX 8.2 DETERMINING DEATH
BOX 8.3 ROADSIDE MEMORIALS

-Required Readings:
  - Pages 161-188 of *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*.
  - Barber, Paul 1988 “The Real Vampire.” From *Vampires, Burial, and Death* by Paul Barber. Pages 332-337.

-Watch Film:
-Quiz 8

WEEK ELEVEN
Chapter IX Gods and Spirits
SPIRITS
  - The Dani View of the Supernatural
  - Guardian Spirits and the Native American Vision Quest
  - Jinn
  - Spirit Possession in the Sudan

GODS
Types of Gods
Gods and Society
The Gods of the Yoruba
Gods of the Ifugao
Godesses
   Ishtar (Ancient Near East)
   Isis (Ancient Egypt)
   Kali (Hinduism)
   Mary (Roman Catholic)
Monotheism: Conceptions of God in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
   Judaism
   Christianity
   Islam
Atheism
CONCLUSION
SUMMARY
BOX 9.1 CHRISTIAN DEMONIC EXORCISM IN THE UNITED STATES
BOX 9.2 GAMES AND GODS

-Required Readings:
• Pages 189-212 of *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.*

-Watch Film:
-Quiz 9

WEEK TWELVE
Chapter X Witchcraft
THE CONCEPT OF WITCHCRAFT IN SMALL-SCALE SOCIETIES
   Witchcraft among the Azande
   The Zande Belief in Witchcraft
   A Case of Witchcraft
   An Analysis of Zande Witchcraft Beliefs
   Witchcraft among the Navaho
   Witchcraft Reflects Human Culture
   Sorcery, Witchcraft, and AIDS
EURO-AMERICAN WITCHCRAFT BELIEFS
   The Connection with Pagan Religions
   The Witchcraze in Europe
   The Witchcraze in England and the United States
   Functions of Euro-American Witchcraft Beliefs
   Witches as Women
   Modern-Day Witch Hunts
BOX 10.1 THE EVIL EYE
BOX 10.2 SATANISM

-Required Readings:
• Pages 213-229 of *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.*
- Watch Film: “Strange Beliefs”
- Quiz 10

WEEK THIRTEEN & FOURTEEN
Chapter XI The Search for New Meaning
ADAPTATION AND CHANGE
- Mechanisms of Culture Change
  - Acculturation
  - Syncretism
Haitian Vodou
History of Vodou
Vodou Beliefs
Santeria

REVITALIZATION MOVEMENTS
- The Origins of Revitalization Movements
- Types of Revitalization Movements
  - Cargo Cults
  - The Ghost Dance of 1890
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormonism)

NEO-PAGANISM AND REVIVAL
- The Wiccan Movement
  - Wiccan Beliefs and Rituals
  - The Growing Popularity—and Persecution—of Wicca

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS
- The “Cult” Question
- Characteristics of High Demand Religious Groups
- Mind Control?
  - Genuinely Dangerous Religious Groups
- Examples of New Religious Movements
  - Branch Davidians (Students of the Seven Seals)
Unification Church (Moonies)
- UFO Religions
Heaven’s Gate
Raelians

FUNDAMENTALISM
- Characteristics of Fundamentalist Groups
  - Mormon Fundamentalism
  - Islamic Fundamentalism

CONCLUSION
SUMMARY
BOX 11.1 THE JOHN FRUM CULT
BOX 11.2 RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM

-Required Readings:
• Pages 230-258 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.

-Students’ Presentations of Term Papers on the Moodle website associated with this course
-Watch Film: “Orientalism”
-Quiz 11
-Term papers due on Tuesday of last week of class at midnight on the Moodle website associated with this course.