

Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft

Anthropology 121 – Los Angeles Mission College

Day and Time:	Wednesday 6:50pm -10:00pm
Location:	CMS 004
Advisory Prerequisite:	English 28 or ESL 8
Course Number:	3028
Instructor:	Dr. Ariane Dalla Déa
Office hours:	5:30 pm – 6:30 pm
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Introduction to Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft

This course focuses on religious beliefs and practices around the world. It offers an overview of forms of religious beliefs; variety of gods and supernatural forces; use of myth, ritual, religious ceremony; shamans, priests, and religious specialists. We will look at topics such as: symbolism, ritual, magic, divination, witchcraft, religious syncretism, death and the afterlife; ghosts, souls, and reincarnation. As such, this course is designed to help you gain understanding and experiential learning in an anthropological approach to the study of the supernatural. Anthropology is the study of the human experience through time and across geographical space. Anthropologists use many different approaches to understand why and how belief systems differ, how they are similar, and how they change over time. This course is a survey course of the key concepts, terms, and ideas in the anthropology of religion, magic, and witchcraft, a specialization within the field of cultural anthropology. We will be using the case-study method to understand “culture” from a *holistic, comparative, and global* perspective. We aim not to learn *facts* about belief systems, but to cultivate a *particular way of thinking* about the world, the supernatural, and our assumptions about it. A requirement for this course with an open and questioning mind; students come to class with their own beliefs and practices in regards to religion and the supernatural. To successfully achieve an anthropological perspective you will need to adopt an open-mindedness and curiosity about other’s beliefs and practices.

Active Learning

In this course, you are required to work in groups and/or pair up with a classmate. I adopted Active Learning Methodology to teaching, which requires your active participation in classroom activities. Lecturing is only but one portion of the learning process; it serves to guide you and to explain theories, ideas, and concepts. In-class activities, in groups or pairs, enhance comprehension, allow you to question and apply theories and concepts introduced in lectures and text. This means that your active participation and attendance are crucial portions of your success in this course. We will regularly start class with short writing assignments – I termed them “in-coming think-write-pair-share,” and they will review what you have learned

from the reading assignment. We will end the class with another short writing reviewing what you have learned in class that day – I termed them “out-going think-write-pair-share.” You turn in these assignments and they count as participation points. These writing activities are geared toward three important things: (1) eliminating students’ fear of writing by making it routine; (2) enabling students who are less vocal in class to share their ideas; and (3) making sure that we’re all staying on top of the reading each week. In-class writing assignments will not be announced in advance. They will form a large portion of your “active attendance” grade.

Required participation and preparation

Active Learning Methodology requires attendance. For that you must attend and come to class ready to work with your classmates, that you read the assigned text, have an open mind, and above all, have fun learning and relating with classmates. I take roll at the beginning of the class, but sometimes I will not. In order to find out that you have attended my lecture, I will look at the work you have done and turned in during class. Your work performed and turned in during the class is your evidence of attendance.

Course Objectives

1. Define religion & belief systems within the concept of culture.
2. Discuss the role of myth & ritual in cultures.
3. Distinguish between the concepts of mana, animism, and animatism.
4. Describe the role of religious specialists, such as shamans and priests.
5. Identify cultism & cultish organization.
6. Explain the role of witchcraft & paganism in human history.
7. Discuss belief in demons & the role of exorcism in culture.
8. Identify various beliefs in death & the afterlife.
9. Describe revitalization movements & religious syncretism.
10. Discuss psychic phenomena within the context of science and religion.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand religion & belief systems within the context of culture.
2. Appreciate the role of witchcraft & paganism in human history.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the scope of anthropology, of ethnographic methods, and of the particular perspectives anthropologists use to understand the diversity of human life.
4. Identify and deconstruct ethnocentric views toward alternative ways of life and propose culturally relativistic perspectives.
5. Assess the strengths, weaknesses, and contributions of various theoretical approaches to the study of religion.
6. Identify and discuss ways in which the study of religion has been affected by prevailing moral climates.
7. Identify and analyze symbols in religious art, sacred space, and myths from diverse societies.
8. Identify ways in which mythology both reflects and helps enforce the social order.

9. Describe the meanings and functions of ritual practice in human life.
10. Conduct participant observation research and construct a written ethnographic analysis of a religious ritual.
11. Using specific examples from diverse cultures, compare and contrast the social roles and functions of priests and shamans.
12. Compare and contrast the purposes and effects of consciousness-altering drug use in religious and recreational settings.
13. Describe and discuss supernatural explanations for and treatment of disease in diverse cultures.
14. Compare and contrast the meanings of and practices associated with death in a variety of cultures.
15. Examine the ways in which magical practices allow humans to exert a sense of control over the uncontrollable.
16. Describe and discuss the different approaches to witchcraft in Euro-American and sub-Saharan African societies.
17. Use specific examples from more than one culture to analyze the role of witchcraft accusations in social control.
18. Describe and discuss the relationship between religion and political movements.
19. Explain how cultural contact can lead to the development of new religious systems.
20. Use specific examples to critically evaluate the use of the term "cult."
21. Describe the use of violent symbols, rituals, and myths in multiple religious systems.
22. Demonstrate an understanding of the factors affecting contemporary religious violence and propose strategies for peaceful reconciliation.
23. Think critically about systems of magic, witchcraft, and religion from the past and the present and from societies around the world.
24. Recognize and identify supernatural beliefs and practices in cultural settings with respect to the role of the material world and social systems.
25. Apply critical thinking skills in regards to the study of supernatural beliefs and practices in the United States and in cultures around the world.
26. Develop a more thorough understanding of how the belief in supernatural forces affects daily life, change, and conflict on local and global scales.
27. Develop reading, writing, and collaborative study skills- life skills!

At the end of this course, you will be able to...

1. Apply anthropological research methods and theoretical approaches to the analysis of religious beliefs and practices.
2. Assess and analyze the relationship between religious beliefs and practices and other areas of social life.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of and respect for alternative religious beliefs and practices.

Required Readings:

Stein, Rebecca L. and Philip L Stein. The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. Third Edition. Boston MA, Pearson Education. 2011.

Required materials:

You need to bring a paper notebook or paper pad in order to take notes, write assignments, and exercises, and a pen and or pencil, in addition to bringing your textbook to every lecture.

Assignments, Quizzes and Exams:

Participation feedback/attendance	15
Quizzes	15
Exercise #1 September	5
Exercise #2 October	5
Exercise #3 November	5
Belief System Research Project Proposal	5
And its Research Essay	15
Midterm #1 September	10
Midterm #2 October	10
Final December 11	15
Total	100 points.

Attendance:

Success in this course requires that you come to every lecture, be ready to work with your classmates, and be prepared to discuss the text. This clearly involves more than showing up for class each day. Students are expected to participate productively and thoughtfully in classroom discussions and group work. In addition, we will regularly start class with short writing assignments. These writing activities focus on three important things:

- a) Eliminating students' fear of writing by making it routine;
- b) Enabling students who are less vocal in class to share their ideas; and
- c) Making sure that we're all staying on top of the reading each week.

In-class writing assignments will not be announced in advance. They will form a large portion of your "active attendance" grade.

Quizzes:

Weekly quizzes will test your understanding of the readings and help you memorize concepts. There are 15 quizzes at one point each, so in some weeks we will have two quizzes. These quizzes comprise of one question taken from the textbook, and it reviews the chapter previously discussed. The quizzes serve as chapter review questions.

In-class exercises: These exercises are mini papers, which will evaluate your understanding of concepts introduced in the course. These graded exercises will involve observation of a religious or supernatural practice discussed in the textbook. You will need to observe such practices outside class time, and come to

lecture ready to write and discuss your observations. The themes for these exercises are based on textbook chapters, and they are posted below next to their scheduled dates. In addition, I'll be giving a lot of mini papers during classes, however only three of them will be graded, as they will take a much larger scope than the regular in-class mini papers.

Three in-class exercises schedule:

September 25 – it covers chapters 1-3 in the textbook

October 23 – it covers chapters 4-7 in the textbook

November 20 – it covers chapters 8-11 in the textbook

Midterm Exams and Final:

Three exams will be given during the semester. Exams are not cumulative, but only cover material (readings, lectures, discussions, and films) between the exam dates. However, you will need to understand the main concepts from the first half of the course in order to succeed on the final exam. Prior to the exam, a review sheet will be distributed. Exams are multiple choice and short essay.

Exams schedule:

Midterm 1 – October 9

Midterm 2 – November 13

Final exam – Wednesday, December 11, 2013 @ 5:30pm – 7:30 pm

BELIEF SYSTEM FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Your final research project will focus on some aspect of the supernatural. You will research and write about one of the belief systems we have examined in class that intrigues you, or one you are familiar with, or one that you want to learn more about.

In this research, you need to identify a particular issue and give the definitions pertaining to the supernatural aspect of your research, the challenges and/or changes that the belief system is experiencing, and how it fits with the themes discussed in this course.

Part 1: A one-page proposal, double spaced that explains what belief system you will research, why you are using this specific belief system, what sources you will use, what issues the belief system faces, and how it fits into this class.

Sources: You need to provide at least five sources, three of which **must be academic**, that is, research on belief systems written in books or in journal articles.

This is library work.

And it is due on October 30th.

Part 2: This is the research essay that elaborates on your proposal, and describes the belief system that you have researched in detail, that is, you will answer the questions posed above, what you have identified in this belief system, and they way that these issues relate to the topics discussed in this course. You must incorporate

the concepts and theories that we cover in this course, and you will locate your discussion in a particular social and historical context.

Length: 4-5 pages

Style: Typed, double-spaced, standard margins, 12-point font

Due date: December 4th

You must follow the above guidelines.

The neglect of any of the above points will lower your grade.

Classroom Policy:

Course Requirements - Your continued enrollment in this course confirms that you have read this syllabus and that you have agreed to the course schedule and requirements that I have laid out here. All students are therefore expected to fulfill ALL of the requirements for the course that I have outlined. I do NOT grant extensions. If you hand in an assignment late, it will be worth 20% less than the total grade per each day your assignment is late. So, if your assignment is worth 15 points, one day late lowers its worth to 13.5 points; two days late lowers its worth to 12 points, and so on.

Classroom conduct:

At all times, the classroom environment must be one of respect for conflicting viewpoints and opinions. I encourage active debate and exploration of complex issues. In order to do this, we all must work to make our classroom community a supportive and inclusive one.

Cell phones and laptops

If you enter my classroom, you are in because you want to learn. In order for you to learn, you must be present, and your presence requires that you forgo distractions. If you wish to text, call, check your social network, please do it outside of the classroom. I require that you refrain from using cell phones (for both calls and text messages), iPad (and the like), and laptops during class. Cell phones should be set to "silent" before you come to class each week. If there is an emergency and you MUST use your cell phone, please excuse yourself and take the call outside. In addition, you will be moving around the classroom, participating in groups and pairs exercises, making it very difficult for you to use your electronic devices.

Communication policy:

I strive to answer student e-mails promptly. Please be aware, however, that I cannot respond immediately. Generally, you can expect a reply from me within 24 hours. You can always come to my office hours.

Grading Policy – Cheating and Plagiarism:

STUDENTS, BE AWARE:

I DO NOT TOLERATE PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING, and I will punish harshly those who engage in such practices

If you cheat on exams or plagiarize papers, you will receive an F as the final grade in this course and will be referred to campus administration for further disciplinary action. Exams and papers must be the student's own work! Proper citations must be incorporated in your papers whenever utilizing outside sources.

Policy on Request for Grade Changes:

Your grade reflects the amount of work you put on this course, on the guidelines provided in this syllabus, and on my level of satisfaction with your work for this class. Grade changes will only be made in the event that an actual error has occurred. A student's grade will not be changed simply because a student feels that "I deserved a higher grade" or "I worked very hard and should have received a better grade." Grades are the prerogative of the class professor and are not negotiable.

If you feel that your midterm essay or course paper grade is in error, then you need to submit a written statement clearly stating the reason why you believe your grade is in error. This statement needs to be submitted within one week of posting of the score to your professor.

Attendance and Absence Policies:

Attendance Policy:

Daily attendance is a requirement in this course. Please, refer to Required participation and preparation at the beginning of this syllabus.

Policy on Missed Classes:

You are allowed a **maximum of 3 absences** during the semester. Your absences do not need to be excused, but if you miss more than three classes you will be in danger of being dropped from the course. Students with medical emergencies are required to show a note from their physician.

It is the students' responsibility to get notes from a classmate if she or he misses a lecture. I do not send notes via emails or give notes to students who missed any lectures. You may want to make sure you have a "buddy" in the class to get notes from if you ever have to miss class.

Assignments:

Week	Date	Readings/Topics- See notes below for details	Assignments & Due Dates
1		Introduction to the Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft; Syllabus review; Intro, Key Terms and Concepts --Anth. Study of Religion, --Anth. of Religion, History and Context and	

		theory --What is religion --Theoretical approaches to religion	
2		Read Chapter 1 Chapter 2: Mythology --The Nature of Myths --Understanding Myths	Daily Quiz
3		Chapter 3: Religious Symbols --What is a symbol? --Sacred Art --Sacred space/time --Symbolism of music/dance	Daily Quiz
4		Chapter 3/Chapter 4: Ritual --Ritual and myth --Basics of ritual performance --Classification of rituals --Religious Obligations	Daily Quiz
5		Chapter 4: Ritual --Ritual and myth --Basics of ritual performance --Classification of rituals --Religious Obligations Review for part one	Daily Quiz Exercise #1
6		Chapter 5: Altered State of Consciousness --The nature of altered states of consciousness --Ethnographic examples of altered states of consciousness	Daily Quiz
7		Exam 1: Chapters 1-4	Midterm #1
8		Chapter 5/Chapter 6: Religious Specialists --Shamans --Priests --Other specialists	Daily Quiz
9		Chapter 6/Chapter 7: Magic and Divination --The world of magic --Magic and society --Divination	Daily Quiz Exercise #2
10		Chapter 7: Magic and Divination --The world of magic --Magic and society --Divination Review for part two	Daily Quiz Proposal for Research Essay due

11		Chapter 8: Souls, Ghosts, and Death --Souls and Ancestors --Bodies and souls	Daily Quiz
12		Exam 2: Chapters 5-8	Midterm #2
13		Chapter 9: Gods and Spirits --Spirits --Gods	Daily Quiz
14		Chapter 10: Witchcraft --The concept of witchcraft in small-scale societies --Euro-American witchcraft beliefs	Daily Quiz
15		Chapter 11: The Search for New Meaning --Adaptation to change --Revitalization Movements ---New religious movements Review for part three	Daily Quiz PAPER DUE
16		Final Exam	FINAL EXAM