MYTH, RITUAL, AND MYSTICISM
ANT 3241*

Professor: Dr. Jean Rahier, Associate Professor of Anthropology
Email: Through Blackboard ONLY (e-mail sent to my FIU e-mail addresses will not be acknowledged)
Throughout the semester, you’ll also need to be in touch, rather regularly, with the TA assigned to this course. His or her name will be communicated to you as soon as the course begins.
Virtual Office Hours: Every Monday morning, from 10:00AM to 12:00PM through Adobe Connect
Phone: 305 348-6860  Fax: 305 348-3270
Office: LC 308

*This course meets the University Core Curriculum (UCC). Hopefully, it will become a Global Learning (GL) course in the spring semester 2012.

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. This will bring us to explore, 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 illustration. Each film’s content will be directly related to one or more specific chapter(s). 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 human imaginations of 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 linkages 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)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Students are required to visit the course’s website several times per week and to actively, productively and enthusiastically participate in e-discussions. The professor has devised a number of questions for each chapter to begin discussions. It is expected that students will engage in at least 2-3 of these discussions for each one of the chapters for this course. (See “Participation in e-class discussions” below)
- 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.

Global Learning (GL)

- 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 5-10 double-spaced 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 be linked to a relevant recent news event.
- Students are required to write a term paper (10-12 double-spaced pages) that will be based on both library research and brief fieldwork conducted in at least one (preferably 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 (term paper) 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. For this assignment, it is highly recommended that students work in pair. If the pair is composed of student-participants in different religions, the conduct of the brief ethnographic fieldwork and therefore the actual writing of the paper will be made that much easier. **However, keep in mind that the paper turned in must be done individually.**

- Students are required to make a short final e-presentation to the class based on their independent research project. A brief Power Point of 10 to 15 slides will have to be uploaded on the course’s website between 11/30/2011 (12:01AM) and 12/04/2011 (midnight). (More information about the e-presentation on the site).

### FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

<table>
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<th>Class e-Participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>11 Quizzes (60 POINTS EACH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 essays (5-10 pages) (50 POINTS EACH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (10-15 pages) and Presentation</td>
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<th>890-870 B+</th>
<th>790-770 C+</th>
<th>690-670 D+</th>
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<td>860-840 B</td>
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<td>660-640 D</td>
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<tr>
<td>830-800 B-</td>
<td>730-700 C-</td>
<td>630-600 D-</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 Blackboard website associated with this course.

### GROUND RULES

1) 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.
2) Papers must include a title, your name, the course name and number, and **page numbers**.
3) 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.

4) 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 textbook and a series of articles. There are also several required films. All readings (at the exception of the textbook 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 week of class. This will allow for informed e-participation.

Book available at the FIU bookstore:

Stein, Rebecca L. and Philip L. Stein

eText
ISBN-10 0-205-71809-4
Print
ISBN-10 0-205-71811-6

PARTICIPATION IN E-CLASS DISCUSSIONS

10% (100 points) of the final grade will be reflective of your level of participation in the chapter discussions that the professor will initiate. There will be more than one discussion open per chapter. The chapter discussions will be open for a limited time period, which will correspond to the chapter we are covering in each specific week (see syllabus). When the discussions of a specific chapter will close, the discussions of the following chapters will automatically be available. What is looked for here with this system is your enthusiastic participation IN DUE TIME. It is highly recommended that you keep up with the program set up in the syllabus and calendar. Participation in chapter discussions help students to score better in quizzes. At the end of the semester, the professor will review the level of participation of each student in the course's e-archives and assign a participation grade accordingly. The objective of these discussions is to provide the students with the opportunity to discuss material that might be novel and surprising. Discussions help the comprehension of new concepts. However, in order to facilitate the actual discussions, and make sure that they stay on focus, students should enter relatively brief (3 paragraphs maximum) interventions at a time. It is expected that students will participate in at least 2 to 3 discussions per chapter. Feel free to respond—in a courteous manner—directly to another student’s posting. Twice a week, the professor will take a look at the evolving discussions and intervene as he sees it necessary. The e-space of the discussions may NOT be used for the transmission of personal message from a student to another, or from a student
to the professor. For the latter, the course's e-mail and message posting systems must be used.

CHAPTER RESOURCES

Resources that each student should consult regularly and use as study tools have been regrouped per chapter.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEKS ONE & TWO
08/22/2011 & 08/29/2011

- Students’ self-presentations
- 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 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday September 1, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday September 4 at midnight.
WEEKS THREE & FOUR  
09/05/2011 & 09/12/2011

-Discussion of Global Learning common reading “The Case for Contamination”
Participate in specific e-discussions initiated by the Professor on this article.

-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 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday September 15, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday September 18 at midnight.

WEEK FIVE  
09/19/2011

-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
Murngin 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 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday September 23, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday September 25 at midnight.

WEEK SIX
09/26/2011

-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
  The Huichol Pilgrimage

RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS
  Tabu
  Mana and Tabu in Polynesia
Jewish Food Laws
CONCLUSION
SUMMARY
BOX 4.1   THE HAJJ
BOX 4.2   MENSTRUAL TABUS

-Required Readings:
  •Pages 77-102 of *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*.
-Watch Film: “Guardians of the Flutes”
-Quiz 4 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday September 29, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday October 2 at midnight.

WEEK SEVEN
10/03/2011

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*.

-Watch Film: “The Peyote Road”
-Quiz 5 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 6, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday October 9 at midnight.

WEEK EIGHT
10/10/2011

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*.

-Quiz 6 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 13, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday October 16 at midnight.

**WEEK NINE**
10/17/2011

**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 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 20, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday October 23 at midnight.

WEEK TEN
10/24/2011

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
    Yanomamö 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.

-FIRST SHORT ESSAY (5-10 DOUBLE-SPACED PAGES) DUE ON 10/26/2011 BY MIDNIGHT
-Quiz 8 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 27, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday October 30 at midnight.

WEEK ELEVEN
10/31/2011

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
Christian Angels and Demons

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.*
-Quiz 9 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday November 3, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday November 6 at midnight.

WEEK TWELVE
11/07/2011

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 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday November 10, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday November 13 at midnight.

WEEK THIRTEEN & FORTEEN
11/14/2011 & 11/21/2011
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.

- Watch Film: “Orientalism”
- Quiz 11 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday November 24, 2011 at 4:00PM through Sunday November 27 at midnight.

WEEK FIFTEEN
11/28/2011

- SECOND SHORT ESSAY (5-10 DOUBLE-SPACED PAGES) DUE ON 11/30/2011 BY MIDNIGHT

- Students’ Presentations of Term Papers on the Blackboard website associated with this course must be uploaded on Adobe connect between 11/28/2011 and 12/04/2011 by midnight.

WEEK SIXTEEN
12/05/2011

TERM PAPER DUE ON 12/05/2011 BY MIDNIGHT