

# MYTH, RITUAL, & MYSTICISM

ANT 3241-U07

Spring 2023

Instructor: *Dr. Tekla Nicholas*

Office Hours: after class or email me to schedule a meeting (I'm happy to meet by zoom)

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Class Meets: Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30am - 1:45pm

Room:

## Texts Required:



The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft  
4th edition  
Rebecca L. Stein and Philip L. Stein

**You must have the book. If you are participating in FIU Panther Book Pack, your book for this class will be included.** You may pick it up at the bookstore or have it sent to your home. (<https://onestop.fiu.edu/bookpack/>) Used copies are widely available through online vendors or former students, as well as the FIU Bookstore. You can also rent or buy digital versions that include additional study resources. Additional required readings are posted on Canvas.

**Course Description:** This course will be an anthropological study of religion, encompassing supernatural beliefs and ritual practices across varied sociocultural contexts. We will explore religious practices across the globe through readings and film, applying anthropological and other social theories. Students are encouraged to think critically about the role of religion in human social life and the variations in its practice.

We'll also explore the ways that myth, symbols, and rituals are used for secular purposes, such as in government or social movements. In a final project, students will use course concepts to conduct their own study of an unfamiliar religion. You may do these observations virtually (via video) or by visiting a religious site in person (with permission. Project proposals must be approved before beginning your research.

Readings, film, lecture, and class discussion will contribute to the student's understanding of the role of religion in human society. To benefit from this, it is important to complete the assigned readings prior to each class. Students are encouraged to participate fully in sharing relevant ideas, experiences, opinions, and questions. All class discussion – in class or online - must be conducted in a manner that is respectful toward others.

## **University Core Curriculum:**

This course satisfies the following University Core Curriculum requirement for Social Science Group Two (university-required):

Students will demonstrate the ability to examine behavioral, social, and cultural issues from a variety of points of view. Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavioral, social, and cultural issues, past and present, local and global.

In addition, this is a global learning (GL) course that counts towards your global learning graduation requirement. It is supported by the following learning outcomes for the course:

## Global Learning Course Outcomes:

**Global Awareness:** Students will 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 supernatural beliefs.

**Global Perspective:** Students will demonstrate a comprehension of various perspectives associated with different culturally-based conceptualizations of the supernatural world and their associated practices and rituals.

**Global Engagement:** Students will be able to better engage in problem-solving activities in a variety of sociocultural contexts around the globe.

**Organizing your time:** This term, we will meet in person, twice a week, **Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30-1:45**. Class attendance is expected. You will earn points for in-class activities, which cannot be made up. However, accommodations will be made for extended absences due to illness or quarantine.

I recommend that you make a weekly plan for all your courses and commit to it. The term will get more challenging as the weeks go by and you have exams and projects due.

The weekly workflow will include readings and a pre-class quiz due before we meet on Tuesdays. We watch quite a bit of video content, sometimes in class and sometimes as homework. Each week, there will be an end-of-week quiz. Pre-class assignments will be due by noon each Tuesday (open from the prior Wed). End of week work is due by midnight on Sundays (open from Thur after class).

**Canvas will be used to provide support for this course and is a required component of this course.** Email me immediately if you can't access assigned content in Canvas.

**Grading:** Grades will be based on a total of 1000 points.

Quizzes*/Assignments	varied pts.	400 total
Exams (3)	125-150 pts. each	400 total
Project (1)	150 pts.	150 total
Attendance & Participation	50 pts.	50 total
Total Points		= 1000

A = 930 +

A- = 900 – 929

B+ = 870 - 899

B = 830 – 869

B- = 800 – 829

C+ = 770 – 799

C = 700 – 769

D = 600 - 699

F = below 600

\*Some quizzes and assignments will be given in class. No make-ups will be given.

**Academic Integrity is expected and required in all coursework, including exams, quizzes, assignments, projects and attendance records.** Turn-It-In and other resources will be used to ensure this standard is met. For more info about standards for academic integrity at FIU: <http://academic.fiu.edu/academicbudget/misconductweb/1acmisconductproc>.

**Assignments** – As in all classes, weekly readings and other learning activities will be assigned in addition to the class meetings. Setting aside regular times in your weekly schedule to complete your readings before class and to work on your project and other assignments will help you to be successful in this course. You will earn points each week by completing assignments and quizzes that help you achieve the learning goals for this class.

Reading and assignments must be completed prior to the class session noted on the syllabus. Each weekly topic is generally based on a textbook chapter, which provides terms and concepts, as well as specific cultural examples. Additional assigned readings and film or video assignments provide opportunities to apply the content of the textbook chapter. Films viewed for class are an important component of the course and will be treated as such in exams.

Due each Tuesday by noon: Each week a quiz or activity will be assigned as homework to be submitted through Canvas on the material assigned for class. No make-ups will be given for any reason. Instead, the 2 “life happens” exemptions will be allowed – the 2 lowest (or missing) assignment scores will be dropped from assignments/quizzes (homework, classwork). **Email me immediately if you can’t access assigned content in Canvas.**

Due each Sunday by midnight: A short end-of-week quiz in Canvas to assess your mastery of the weekly topic and content. Post discussions if you did not earn participation points in class.

**Exams** – Three exams will be given as noted on the syllabus. They will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. Make-up exams will be given only by prior arrangement or for documented emergencies *and only if the instructor is contacted as soon as possible to discuss the problem.*

**Project** – Students will choose an unfamiliar religion to research for their project. In addition to doing background research, you will conduct fieldwork (in person or remotely, using online resources). You will work with a partner (or 2) to analyze your observations, applying terms and concepts discussed in the course.

**Attendance Policy:** We will meet twice each week in person. Students will earn points for in-class discussions and activities which cannot be made up (except for cases of extended illness or quarantine). Each student is expected to contribute to these discussions and to engage respectfully with the ideas presented by others.

Thoughtful postings on Canvas discussion topics also count toward participation. ***Each student should contribute to discussions in class or post comments online at least twice per week.*** Students are expected to be on time for class and to stay for the duration of the class. Falsifying attendance records will result in loss of ***all*** attendance and participation points.

**Communication:** Please see me about any problems or concerns you have with the course, requirements, assignments, etc. Problems do not get better when you ignore them. You are welcome to just chat about your interests or goals, as well.

I will be available after class, so you can stay to meet with me then. Or contact me by email anytime, and we can schedule a meeting or zoom that works with your schedule. Do not hesitate to see me about any questions, concerns, or problems you have regarding this class or your success at FIU.