**Instructor:** Alessandra Rosa, Ph.D.

**Office:** TBA

**Office Hours:** By appointment. To schedule a meeting, you may arrange an appointment by email or after class.

**Email:** aless12@gmail.com

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**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 around the world. 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.

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**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Identify the diverse human imaginations of the supernatural world and supernatural forces in different societal contexts; from more or less complex religious systems, about magic and witchcraft, superstition, sorcery and mysticism.

- Discuss the linkages that exist between and among different societies regarding spirituality, religious beliefs, and conviction of the existence
of supernatural forces on one side and other aspects of societies including health care.

- Contextualize their own religious beliefs, spirituality, and/or lack thereof.
- Describe the nature of anthropological fieldwork and contrast its methodology with other disciplines.
- Describe how terms such as “culture” and “religion” are defined in anthropology.
- Discuss different theoretical approaches to the study of religion.
- Discuss the concept of ritual and categorize different types of rituals.
- Compare and contrast different types of religious specialists.
- Describe altered states of consciousness and the role they play in religious experiences.
- Differentiate between various types of supernatural entities including gods, spirits, souls, ghosts, and ancestors.

**Teaching Methodology:**

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.

In précis, we will look at anthropological approaches to the study of myth, ritual, and mysticism, as religious and symbolic systems. As such, the social and psychological functions of myth and ritual in small-scale and complex societies will be compared.

Global Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

• Discuss the historical and contemporary interrelatedness 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)

• Analyze 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)

• 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:

• Every enrolled student will have to develop their own blog page focused on a specific ritual, belief, and/or religion. This blog page will make the students demonstrate a 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 page’s focus will make direct reference to a relevant recent news event. (Global Awareness)

• Students are required to write a term paper (10 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 could be focused on one or two closely related and comparable local/global religious performance(s), belief(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)

**Course Assessment:**

- Attendance and active participation – 10%
- Weekly online quizzes – 15%
- Blog page (Topic must be approved by the professor) – 25%
- Term paper (Topic must be approved by the professor) – 50%

**Expectations of this Course:**

Students are expected to:

- **Arrive to class on time.**
- **Turn off cell phones** and other electronics that can disturb the class discussion.
- **Come prepared to discuss** and/or raise questions about the readings assigned for each class by having read the materials beforehand. (Keep in mind that you will be assessed for your participation in class.)
- **Be respectful.** The topic of this class is inherently personal. Thus, there will be diversity of opinions within this classroom, yet this does not mean that you have to agree with everything being said or read.
- **Remember** that studying a religion, ritual, or belief is not necessarily an endorsement of the religion, or its beliefs. This point is imperative and should guide your topic selection for your blog page and final term paper.
- **Submit original work.** Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you use the work of other authors without giving them credit you will receive a ‘0’ and be reported to Academic Affairs.
- **All work turned in** must have a title, your name, course name and number, and include page numbers. It must also follow the AAA style guide.
- **Review** and follow the course calendar.
- **Login to the course’s Blackboard website** more than once per week to do the online quizzes, check for updates, new announcements, and/or communicate with the professor or your classmates.
- **Use a “buddy system”** to keep up with the class assignments when absent.
- **Expect emails from the professor** regarding assignments and/or schedule changes. (The professor reserves the right to modify the syllabus.)

**Policies:**
Please review the Student Handbook page as it contains essential information regarding guidelines and standards related to your education:
http://online.fiu.edu/app/webroot/html/blackboardlearn/policies/

Disability Services:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office of Disability Resource Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the professor as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Resource Services at BBC is located in WUC, Room 131. If you need to schedule an appointment, you can do so in person or by calling 305-919-5211.
(http://online.fiu.edu/app/webroot/html/blackboardlearn/mastertemplate/accessibility/)

Course Readings:

Readings for this course consist of the textbook: “The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft (3rd Ed)” and/or articles according to each week’s theme. There are also some required videos. All readings (with the exception of the textbook) and videos will be available on the course’s Blackboard website. Required readings for the class are located below in the weekly section for which they are assigned.

Required readings must be done PRIOR each week of class!!!

Course Requirements:

- **Attendance and active participation:** Attendance is required and any unexcused absence will affect your grade. Once in class, you will be evaluated on your contributions to class discussion.

- **Online weekly quizzes:** The online weekly quizzes are based on the assigned readings and videos for that week. These quizzes will consist of a combination of multiple choice questions and short answer questions.

- **Blog page:** The students will develop their own blog page based on a specific ritual, belief, and/or religion, and previously approved by the professor. Keep in mind that you don’t necessarily have to agree with the ritual, belief, or religion you select. The topic should be selected by the second week of class. At the end of the class, you will give a brief presentation about your blog page.
Term paper: The final term paper (10 double-spaced pages) 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 could be focused on one or two closely related and comparable local/global religious performance(s), belief(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.

Grading:

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[Note: Readings and videos may be slightly added or modified.]

Course Calendar:

Week 1: August 25 & 27 – Introduction
  - Getting to know ourselves - students’ self-presentations
  - Discussion of syllabus
  - Introduction to the discipline of anthropology and the study of religions
    - Video: “Anthropologists at Work”

Required Readings:
  - “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” by Horace Miner
  - Watch film: “Doing Anthropology”

Week 2: September 1 & 3 – The Anthropological Study of Religion

Chapter 1: 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
  o Postmodernism
  o Universal Human Rights
• The Concept of Culture
• Viewing the World

The Study of Religion
• Attempts at Defining Religion
• The Domain of Religion
• The Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion
  o The Evolutionary Approach
  o The Marxist Approach
  o The Functional Approach
  o The Interpretive Approach
  o The Psychosocial Approach
• The Biological Basis of Religious Behavior
  o The Belief in Spirit Beings
  o The Evolution of Religion

Required Readings:
• Pages 1-28 of the textbook
• “Why We Became Religious and the Evolution of the Spirit World” by Marvin Harris
• Watch film: “Off the Verandah”

Quiz 1: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday September 3 at 2:00pm through Saturday September 5 at midnight.

Week 3: September 8 & 10 – The Nature of Myths

Chapter 2: Mythology
The Nature of Myths
• Worldview
• Stories of the Supernatural
  o Myths
• The Nature of Oral Texts
  o Genesis

Understanding Myths
• Approaches to Analysis of Myths
Searching for Myth Origins in the 19th Century
Fieldwork and Functional Analysis
Structural Analysis
Psychoanalytic Symbols in Myths

Common Themes in Myths
Origin Myths
Apocalyptic Myths
Trickster Myths
Hero Myths

Required Readings:
• Pages 29-55 of the textbook
• “Taboo” by Mary Douglas
• “Serpent-Handling as Sacrament” by Mary Lee Daugherty
• Watch film: “Power of Myths”

Topic for Blog page is due on September 8, to get approval of the professor.
Quiz 2: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday September 10 at 2:00pm through Saturday September 12 at midnight.

Week 4: September 15 & 17 – What is a Symbol?

Chapter 3: Religious Symbols
What is a Symbol?
• Religious Symbols
  o The Swastika
  o The Pentagram
  o Christian Symbols

Sacred Art
• The Sarcophagus of Lord Pakal
• The Meaning of Color
  o Yoruba Color Terminology

Sacred Space and Sacred Time
• The Meaning of Time
  o The Mayan View of Time
  o Rituals and Calendars in Modern World Religions
• Sacred Time and Space in Australia
  o Totenism and the Dream Time in Australia
  o Murngin Totenism
The Symbolism of Music and Dance
- The Symbolism of Music
  - Music in Ritual
- The Symbolism of Dance

Required Readings:
- Pages 56-76 of the textbook
- “The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol” by Eric Wolf

Quiz 3: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday September 17 at 2:00pm through Saturday September 19 at midnight.

Week 5: September 22 & 24 – Ritual

Chapter 4: 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 Sacrifices
- 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

Required Readings:
  - Pages 77-102 of the textbook
  - “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage” by Victor Turner
  - Watch film: “Guardians of the Flutes”

Quiz 4: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday September 24 at 2:00pm through Saturday September 26 at midnight.

Week 6: September 29 & October 1 – Altered State of Consciousness

Chapter 5: 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

Required Readings:
  - Pages 103-118 of the textbook
  - “Trance, Possession, Shamanism, and Sex” by LM Lewis
• “On the Peyote Road” by Mike Klyaani and Thomas Csordas
• “Ritual Enemies” by Peter Furst and Michael Coe
• Watch film: “The Peyote Road”

Quiz 5: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 1 at 2:00pm through Saturday October 3 at midnight.

Week 7: October 6 & 8 – Religious Specialists

Chapter 6: Religious Specialists

Shamans
• Defining Shamanism
  o Becoming a Shaman
  o The Shamanic Role and Rituals
• Siberian Shamanism
  o 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

Required Readings:
• Pages 119-135 of the textbook
• “Religious Specialists” by Victor Turner
• “Dark Side of the Shaman” by Michael Fobes Brown
• Watch film: Kumare (Extra credit)

Quiz 6: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 8 at 2:00pm through Saturday October 10 at midnight.

Week 8: October 13 & 15 – Magic and Divination
Chapter 7: 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

Required Readings:
- Pages 136-160 of the textbook
- “Rational Mastery by Man of His Surroundings” by Bronislaw Malinowski
- “Baseball Magic” by George Gmelch

Quiz 7: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 15 at 2:00pm through Saturday October 17 at midnight.

Week 9: October 20 & 22 – Souls, Ghosts, and Death

Chapter 8: Souls, Ghosts, and Death
Souls and Ancestors
• Variation in the Concept of the Soul
• Souls, Death and Afterlife
• Examples of Concepts of the Soul
  o Yup’ik Souls
  o Yanomamo Spirits and Souls
  o Hmong Souls
  o The Soul in Roman Catholicism
  o The Soul in Hinduism and Buddhism
• Ancestors
  o Yoruba Ancestors
  o Beng Ancestors and Reincarnation
  o Tana Toraja Ancestors
  o Ancestors and the Departed in Japan

Bodies and Souls
• Ghosts
  o Dani Ghosts
  o Bunyoro Ghosts
  o Japanese Ghosts
• The Living Dead: Vampires and Zombies
  o Vampires
  o The Viking Draugr
  o Haitian Zombies
  o Zombies in Modern “American” Culture

Death Rituals
• Funeral Rituals
• Disposal of the Body
  o Burial
  o The African Burial Ground
  o Secondary Burials
  o Cremation
  o Mummification
  o Exposure
• U.S. Death Rituals in the 19th Century
• U.S. Funeral Rituals Today

Days of Death
• Halloween
• Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*)

**Required Readings:**
• Pages 161-188 of the textbook
• “The Real Vampire” by Paul Barber
• “The Cremated Catholic: The End of a Deceased Guatemalan” by Stanley Brandes

**Topic for Term paper is due on October 20, to get approval of the professor.**

**Quiz 8: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 22 at 2:00pm through Saturday October 24 at midnight.**

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**Week 10: October 27 & 29 – Gods and Spirits**

**Chapter 9: 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
• Goddesses
  • 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

**Required Readings:**
• Pages 189-212 of the textbook
- Watch film: “Atheism documentary”

**Quiz 9:** Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday October 29 at 2:00pm through Saturday October 31 at midnight.

**Week 11: November 3 & 5 – Witchcraft**

Chapter 10: 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

**Required Readings:**
- Pages 213-229 of the textbook
- “Consulting the Poison Oracle among the Azande” by E.E. Evans-Pritchard
- “An Anthropological Perspective on the Witchcraze” by James Brain
- Watch film: “Strange Beliefs”

**Quiz 10:** Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday November 5 at 2:00pm through Saturday November 7 at midnight.

**Week 12: November 10 & 12 – The Search for New Meaning**

Chapter 11: 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

Required Readings:
- Pages 230-258 of the textbook
- “Vodou” by Karen McCarthy Brown
- “Revitalization Movements” by Anthony Wallace
- Watch film: “Orientalism”

Week 13: November 17 & 19 – Cont. The Search for New Meaning

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

Required Readings:

- “Reflections After Waco: Millenialists and the State” by Michael Barkun
- “Religious Terror and Global War” by Mark Juergensmeyer
- Watch film: “Scientology”

Quiz 11: Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from Thursday November 19 at 2:00pm through Saturday November 21 at midnight. Submission of Term papers due on November 22 by midnight on the Blackboard website.

Week 14: November 24 – Student Presentations (Time slots will be assigned)

No class on November 26... Happy Thanksgiving Weekend!!!

Week 15: December 1 & 3 – Student Presentations (Time slots will be assigned)

GOOD LUCK ON YOUR FINAL EXAMS!!!