ANT 3241-B51
MYTH, RITUAL, AND MYSTICISM
FALL 2018

Meeting Location: Academic Center One # 135
Meeting Time: T&TR, 9:30-10:45am

Instructor: Alfonso Matas, Adjunct Lecturer
Teaching Assistant: N/A
http://gss.fiu.edu/people/graduate-students/alfonso-matas/
Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies
Office: Biscayne Bay Campus – to be determined
Office Hours: TR, 11:00am-12:00 noon
Email: CANVAS mail
Phone Number: (305) 951-3638

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the anthropological study of religion and will focus upon phenomena that may be categorized broadly as “religion” and the closely related concept “supernatural”. It is not a theology course, but examines and analyzes the way religion is practiced and performed in diverse societies through reviewing central aspects of religion, such as mythology, symbolism, ritual, religious specialists, gods and spirits, witchcraft, and magic. This course will approach these topics from the perspective of anthropology. The course begins with an overview of anthropological approaches and theoretical contributions to the study of religion. We will look at the role religion plays in everyday life via reviewing topics such as sickness, death, and uncertainty. The course ends with an examination of religion and violence.

Student Learning Objectives and 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)

**TEXTBOOK (REQUIRED)**


**CHECK CANVAS FOR ADDITIONAL READINGS AND REQUIRED WORK FOR EACH WEEK!**

YOU ARE REQUIRED TO READ ASSIGNED READINGS AND COMPLETE REQUIRED WORK PRIOR TO CLASS. THE SUCCESS IN CLASS WILL DEPEND ON YOUR COMPLETION OF THESE ASSIGNED WORKS.

**CANVAS:** Additional Readings, Requirements, Course Slides, Project Guidelines, Citation Guidelines will be on CANVAS.

Login via [http://canvas.fiu.edu/login/](http://canvas.fiu.edu/login/) and check that you can access the course website. If you encounter any technical problems, then call UTS at 305.348.2284 or go to Green Library Rm. 150.

**CLASS STRUCTURE**

This is a lecture course. However, we will devote sometime class time to in-class group activities, thus enhancing knowledge through group participation. You are expected to get exposure to the course content prior to class, will be quizzed on your understanding of this content prior to class and in class. You will be assessed for both your individual and teamwork – see grading below.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

This course will use mixed teaching and learning methods to better accommodate particularities of students. We will have individual, group, and team-based projects and evaluations.

**GRADING**

1. CANVAS Quizzes 15% (taken prior to class on CANVAS)
2. In-Class Team Presentation/Participation 15% (in-class)
3. Individual Assignments 20% (completed prior to class, CANVAS)
4. Beyond My Cultural Comfort Project 25% (outside class assignment, CANVAS)
5. Final Exam 25% (outside class assignment, CANVAS)
TOTAL 100%

1. INDIVIDUAL (ONLINE) CANVAS QUIZZES (15% OF FINAL GRADE)
CANVAS Quizzes are short multiple choice, True/false, and/or short answer quizzes on the week’s content that you will be taken individually, online before class. Quiz dates will be indicated on Syllabus and on CANVAS. No make-ups are allowed for these quizzes. Even if you are not planning to attend the lecture, you are required to take the quiz online before class time.

2. IN-CLASS TEAM PRESENTATION and PARTICIPATION GRADE (15% OF FINAL GRADE)
Each week teams will make a short presentation based on class questions pertaining to the weekly lessons being taught. Be ready to present your in-class team activity/discussions to class. I will ask different teams to present each week. In addition, you will be required to participate in class discussions. Some team members would volunteer to share their team’s perspective/votes on certain issues. You have to choose a different volunteer each time. You will earn 15 % by only presenting your work to others in addition to participating in in-class discussions. Your attendance is another factor that would affect your team presentation, participation, and attendance grade. Arriving late might affect your team grade in addition to presentation and participation grade. (Global Awareness, Global Perspective)

3. INDIVIDUAL WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS (20% OF FINAL GRADE)
After you complete the required work for each week, you will be asked to complete a short assignment on the weekly topic. You will submit it via CANVAS by class time. If you don’t have access to your work online you will print and bring your report to class with you. (Global Awareness, Global Perspective)

4. BEYOND MY CULTURAL COMFORTS PROJECT (25% OF FINAL GRADE)
For this individual project students are required to write a term paper (7-8 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 students don’t belong. Further guidelines for this project can be found on CANVAS. (Global Awareness, Global Perspective, and Global Engagement)

5. FINAL EXAM – ONLINE (25% OF FINAL GRADE)
Final Exam is a multiple-choice exam. You will take it online during finals week. It is a timed test. It will test your overall understanding/learning in the course. It will not be based on memorization. It will be based on your individual assignments, team activities/discussions, and key learning points in the course. You can find the detailed guidelines and exam review on CANVAS.

GENERAL CLASS POLICIES

Attendance: Since every student is entitled to full participation in class without interruption, all students are expected to be in class and prepared to begin on time. Students are expected to treat the instructor, as well as other students with dignity and respect, especially in cases where a diversity of opinion arises. Students who engage in disruptive behavior are subject to disciplinary action, including removal from the course.

You are expected to come well prepared to every class, arrive on time and be prepared to participate in class discussions and team discussions. Prior to each weekly lecture, you are expected to have read
the assigned chapter and have taken as well the CANVAS quiz. These activities plus your attendance are worth 15% of your final grade.

Everyone has the responsibility of making the classroom a “safe” environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing his or her thoughts. In this class environment opinions are respected, even when all members of the class may not share them. Class discussions and activities will help you to understand the connection between what is being taught in class and how it relates to the everyday life.

You should not miss more than 1 class and you are required to fully participate in class either individually or with your team. Missing more than 1 class will lower your grade (2% per absence). If you need to miss a class due to illness (medical doctor's note), religious observances or team participation (official paper work) you must notify me prior to the class.

**Teams:** You can either create your own team or ask me to assign you to a team at the beginning of the semester. Each team will have 5 team members.

**CANVAS - My Grades:** Check your grades periodically. It is your responsibility to check your grades on CANVAS and to inform me on missing grades/assignments before the semester ends. **DO NOT CONTACT ME ABOUT MISSING GRADES AFTER FINAL GRADES ARE POSTED!!!**

**Academic Conduct:** Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

**Plagiarism/Academic Honesty:** As an FIU student, you are always expected to abide by the university’s policies particularly those governing academic honesty and plagiarism as they appear in the FIU Student Handbook. If you are not familiar with how to avoid plagiarism, you will receive some instruction and additional guidelines in this course. In sum, should anything you/your team produces cite any data, research or information that you have not generated and which is not general knowledge then you must cite it appropriately following one of the disciplinary conventions of the academic disciplines represented by the faculty teaching this course. More information about citation formatting will be given to you via CANVAS. Please become completely familiar with bibliographic styles and citation conventions. If you do not cite others’ work adequately you can be accused of plagiarism and FIU takes these accusations very seriously. Several of your written assignments will be submitted using Turnitin.com to check your work for plagiarism. Finally, I reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed. You will be notified of any changes.

**Tardiness:** Assignments received after the deadline will lose 1/2 or 1 grade; one week and over 1 full grade or more.

**Use of Electronic Devices (Cell Phones, Computers, etc.):**
*Electronic device and cell phone policies will be debated and announced in class early in the term.*
**Special Needs Students:** Please notify the faculty prior to or immediately upon commencement of this course about your accommodation needs as in accordance with FIU policy. You will be accommodated accordingly.

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the faculty. Students will be notified of such changes ahead of time via email.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

| T: Textbook | C: CANVAS | T: Tuesday | TR: Thursday |

**WEEK 1**
August, T 21; TR 23  
Introduction, Syllabus Review, Brief Introduction to Anthropology, Getting to Know Each Other  
*** Read Chapter 1 and take the Practice Test on Syllabus prior to the R 23 class!!! See CANVAS for the link!  

**WEEK 1- READINGS:**  
-Chapter 1: The Anthropological Study of Religion (TR 23)

**WEEK 2**
August, T 28; TR 30  
Take CANVAS Quiz-1 prior to class time- Syllabus Test if you have not yet  
Complete the Worksheet on "Anthropology-Religion" prior to class  
Choose a Team by August 30.

**WEEK 2- READINGS:**  
-Chapter 1: The Anthropological Study of Religion (T), continued.  
- Article-1: Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (C)  
- Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (C)  
- Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

**Optional Readings:**  
-Edward B. Taylor, Animism (C)  
-Clifford Geertz, Religion as a Cultural System (C)  
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**FILM:**  
-“Off the Veranda: Malinowski”-Excerpts from the documentary

**WEEK 3**

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Sep. T 4; TR6  Myths and Symbols, The Nature of Myths, Understanding Myths, Approaches to Analysis of Myths, In-class Activities
- Take CANVAS quiz: Myth prior to class
- Complete the Individual Assignment on “Myth”

WEEK-3 READINGS:
Chapter-2: Mythology (T)
Bronislaw Malinowski, The Role of Myth in Life (C)
- Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
- Edmund Leach, Genesis as Myth (C)
- Bronislaw Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology (C)
- Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen, The Dogon (C)

WEEK 4
Sep. T 11; TR 13  Religious Symbols, Sacred Art, Sacred Space and Time, The Symbolism of Music and Dance, In-class Activities
- Take CANVAS quiz: Symbols prior to class
- Complete “Symbols” worksheet prior to class

WEEK-4 READINGS:
Chapter-3: Religious Symbols (T)
Eric Wolf, “The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol” (C)
- Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
- E.E. Evans-Pritchard, The Problem of Symbols (C)
- Sherry Ortner, On Key Symbols (C)
- Medusa’s Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience (C)

WEEK 5
Sep. T 18; TR 20  Ritual and Myth, The Basics of Ritual Performances, Rights of Passage, Classification of Rituals, Religious Obligations, In-class Activities
- Take CANVAS quiz: Ritual prior to class
- Complete “Ritual” Worksheet prior to class

WEEK-5 READINGS:
Chapter-4: Ritual
V. W. Turner, Ritual Symbolism, Morality,& Social Structure among the Ndembu (C)
- Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
- Edmund Leach, Ritual Symbolism (C)
- Paul Radin, The Winnebago Trickster Figure (C)

WEEK 6
Sep. T 25; TR 27  Altered States of Consciousness (ASC), Entering an ASC, Ritual setting in ASC, Ethnographic Examples of ASC, In-class Activities
- Take CANVAS quiz: Altered States of Consciousness prior to class
- Complete ASC worksheet prior to class

Optional Readings:
WEEK-6 READINGS:
Chapter-5: Altered States of Consciousness
Napoleon A. Changon, My Adventure with Ebene: A “Religious Experience” (C)
- Santo Daime, a Brazilian ayahuasca religion (C)
-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
- Douglass Price-Williams and Dureen Hughes, Shamanism and Altered States of Consciousness (C)
- Michael Harner, “The Sound of Rushing Water” (C)
- I.M. Lewis, “Trance, Possession, Shamanism, and Sex,” pp. 188-195 (C)

WEEK 7
Oct. T 2; TR 4
Religious Specialists, Shamans, Priests, Other Specialists, In-class Activities
- Take CANVAS Quiz: Religious Specialists prior to class
- Complete “Religious Specialists” Worksheet prior to class

WEEK-7 READINGS:
Chapter-6: Religious Specialists (T)
Margery Wolf, The Woman Who Didn’t Become a Shaman (C)
-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
- Victor W. Turner, Religious Specialists (C)

WEEK 8
Oct. T 9; TR 11
Magic and Divinations, Magic and Religion, The Function of Magic, Magic in Society, Divination, Forms of Divination, In-class Activities
- Take CANVAS Quiz: Magic and Divination prior to class
- Complete “Magic” worksheet prior to class

WEEK-8 READINGS:
Chapter-7: Magic and Divination (T)
George Gmelch, Baseball Magic (C)
-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
- E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande (C)
- Stanley J. Tambiah, Form and Meaning of Magical Acts (C)

WEEK 9
Oct. T 16; TR 18
Souls and Ancestors, Variation in the Concept of the Soul; Souls, Death, and the Afterlife, Bodies and Souls, Death Rituals, Funeral Rituals, In-class Activities; Halloween
- Take CANVAS Quiz: Souls, Ghosts, Death prior to class
- Complete “Halloween” worksheet prior to class

WEEK-9 READINGS:
Chapter-8: Souls, Ghosts and Death
Lyle B. Steadman et. al., The Universality of Ancestor Worship (T)
-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
- Walter W. Whiteaker III, The Contemporary American Funeral Ritual (C)
- J.H.M. Beatti, The Gohst Cult in Bunyoro (C)

**** OCTOBER 29 Monday: Last day to drop a course with a DR grade. ****
**Last day to withdraw from the University with a WI grade**

WEEK 10
Oct. T 23; TR 25
Gods and Spirits; Supernatural, Gods, Spirits and Society; Monotheism; Polytheism, In-class Activities
Take CANVAS Quiz: Gods and Spirits prior to class

***Beyond My Cultural Comforts Assignment ***
due on October 28, Sunday by Midnight-Submit it via CANVAS

WEEK-10 READINGS:
Chapter-9: Gods and Spirits (T)
Classical Mythology, p. 128-136 only (C)
-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
- M. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 20–65. (C)

WEEK 11
Oct. T 30; Nov. TR 1
Witchcraft and Sorcery; Witchcraft in Small-Scale Societies, Euro-American Witchcraft Beliefs, In-class Activities
Take CANVAS Quiz: Witchcrafts prior to class
Complete "Witchcraft" worksheet prior to class

WEEK-11 READINGS:
Chapter-10: Witchcraft
E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande (C)
-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Reading:
Paul Boyer et al., Witchcraft and Social Identity (C)

WEEK 12
Nov. T 6; TR 8
Adaptation and Change; Syncretism and Revitalization; Domains and Boundaries of Religion, Fundamentalism, Secularism, and New Religious Movements, In-class Activities
Take CANVAS Quiz: Syncretism, Adaptation prior to class
Complete "Adaptation and Change" worksheet prior to class

WEEK-12 READINGS:
Chapter-11: The Search for New Meaning (T)
Alice Beck Kehoe, “The Ghost Dance Religion” (C)
-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

Optional Readings:
Peter M. Worsley, “Cargo Cults” (C)

WEEK 13
**Individual Assignment: Final Reflections Essay due by class time

WEEK-13 READINGS:
Chapter-12: Religion, conflict, and Peace (T)
-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

WEEK 14
Nov. TR 20 Looking Back, Moving Forward Workshop-I and Workshop-II
**Individual Assignment: Final Reflections Essay due by class time

-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 22 - THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!!

WEEK 15
Nov. T 27; TR 29 Looking Back, Moving Forward Workshop-I and Workshop-II
**Individual Assignment: Final Reflections Essay due by class time

-Check CANVAS for additional required work for this week!

WEEK 16
***** FINALS WEEK *****

ONLINE FINAL EXAM
MONDAY, DECEMBER 3
CANVAS

This course syllabus is subject to change if the instructor deems it necessary in order to accomplish the course objectives. Students will be advised about any change made to the syllabus.

IMPORTANT DATES/CHECKLIST
Choosing a Team……………………………………August, Thursday 30
CANVAS Quizzes……………………………………Prior to each class (CANVAS)
Individual Assignments……………………………………Prior to class on Tuesdays (CANVAS)
Group in-class activities……………………………………Tuesdays and Thursdays in class
BEYOND MY CULTURAL COMFORTS PROJECT……………Oct. 28, Sunday (CANVAS)
ONLINE FINAL EXAM……………………………………Dec. 3, Monday (CANVAS)

TAKE PRACTICE TEST ON SYLLABUS & CANVAS QUIZ-1 PRIOR TO THE AUG. 23 CLASS ON CANVAS!