ANT3241: Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism

Fall D 2020 (December 14, 2020 – January 6, 2021)
Professor: Dr. Juliet Erazo
jerazo@fiu.edu

Course Description and Purpose

This course is concerned with analyzing how different cultures understand the supernatural world, the world of spirits and gods, magical powers, religions, and mystical dangers. 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 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.

Our goal will not be to promote or debunk belief and practice, but rather to understand culturally diverse ideas 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. This will bring us to explore, among other things: snake handling and trance in Appalachia; vampire sightings; and how Haitian Vodou practitioners serve the spirits.

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 cumulative final exam. Instead, there will be a quiz (with multiple choice questions) at the end of each module. You are also expected to write five short essay assignments, one at the end of each unit. The first two assignments will ask you to analyze an ethnography which will be read over the first few modules of the class (Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn). The third, fourth, fifth will ask you to use concepts from the class to analyze other ethnographic case studies or films. The essay questions, rubrics, and readings needed to complete these essays will be provided at least one week before the due date, and you are free to work ahead if you wish. Finally, you are expected to make at least five substantive posts to the class Facebook page during the semester. You can post links to news stories or short videos that document religious practices in a respectful way, or write thoughtful responses to classmates’ posts (not just “like,” but actually writing at least 50 words engaging with the material in the post.)

Course Objectives

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, with examples from nearly every major region of the world.
- 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 with which they are unfamiliar.
- 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.

Global Learning Assessments

Every student must post five times to the class Facebook page. For this assignment, students must find news stories that connect to the readings and analyze (in the comments
section) how it connects to class materials in a post of at least 50 words. These posts must be respectful (not insulting to people of different religious faiths). (GLOBAL AWARENESS)

Every enrolled student is expected to complete five essay exams during the semester, one after every 2-3 modules. Each exam will consist of 2 short answer questions (250-300 words each, for a total of 500-600 words per exam.) 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. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT)

Global Learning 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, and sorcery. (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)

For more information about the Global Learning Student Learning Outcomes, please consult the FIU Global Learning for Global Citizenship.

Global Learning Graduation Honors

FIU's Excellence in Global Learning Graduation Medallion is awarded to students who complete at least four global learning courses, participate in a variety of global co-curricular activities, and complete a capstone consisting of one of the following: a substantial original research project and presentation on a global topic; extensive foreign language study; long-term study abroad; or, a globally-focused internship. The Peace Corps Prep certification is conferred upon students who complete at least three global learning courses, language study, and a global problem-solving project. For more information, visit goglobal.fiu.edu (Links to an external site.).

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- Policies
- Technical Requirements and Skills
Textbook and Course Materials

**REQUIRED:**
The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft
Rebecca L. Stein, Phillip L. Stein
ISBN: 9781138692527
E-text is available

**RECOMMENDED** (you can purchase a copy or access a free electronic copy through the FIU Library site)
Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn
Karen McCarthy Brown
Published by PERSEUS D or University of California Press
ISBN: 9780520268104

NOTE: This book is available in three different editions. ANY EDITION IS FINE. You can usually save a lot of money by buying older editions.

Expectations of this Course

This is a fully online course. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course, and online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- Review how to get started information located in the course content
- Take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with Canvas
- Interact online with instructor/s and peers
- Review and follow the course calendar, including all quizzes and written assignments
• Provide original answers to the essay questions. If it appears that a student has copied from another person’s work without citing it (plagiarism), FIU’s policies for Academic Misconduct will be followed.

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, the essay exams will have to be uploaded on a turnitin.com site associated with this course.
2. Forming a What’s App (or similar) group to work together on the quizzes is cheating, and those who share quiz questions or answers will be reported to Academic Affairs.
3. 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.

You may purchase your textbooks online at the FIU Bookstore (Links to an external site.)

Readings from this course consist of one textbook, one ethnography (Mama Lola), and a series of articles. There are also several required films. All readings (with the exception of the textbook and ethnography indicated above) and films will be available on the course’s Canvas website.

E-Participation (Facebook Posts)

Please join the class Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/mrmfalld2020/

At the end of each unit (one unit consists of 2-3 Modules), you will need to find some article or short video that relates to one of the topics discussed in that unit. You should post a link to that article or video on the Class Facebook page AND include a 50+ word analysis, linking the content to class content. If you prefer, you can also respond to a post by one of your classmates – follow the link she or he posts, read the article or watch the video, and post a 50+ word analysis of it. Then copy what you have posted and submit it to Canvas (a screenshot is fine, or you can copy the link and the text of your comments.) You will be graded on the relevance of the post to class materials and the thoughtfulness of your analysis. This assignment counts towards your grade as an “extra credit” assignment, so it will show up as being worth 0 points, but it will actually raise your grade if you complete it.

Feel free to create a Facebook account that is not linked to the Facebook account you normally use (if you wish to use a fake name, please make sure to email me in Canvas so that I know what it is). If you are very opposed to using Facebook, you can simply post a link to something and your comments in the Canvas assignment. I strongly encourage you, however, to use Facebook as it will give you the chance to interact with and learn from your classmates.
Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the Practice Quiz from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. For quiz duration, grading criteria and feedback response time, please review the important information about quizzes page.

There are twelve quizzes based on assigned readings, lectures, and films. These quizzes have multiple choice questions. For modules that have films that last more than 15 minutes, study guides will be provided.

Essay Assignments

Five Essay Assignments (check schedule below for due dates) At the end of each unit, every enrolled student will have to write a relatively short essay assignment (2 pages total, double-spaced). These five assignments will consist of 2-4 short essay questions, each of which should be answered with ½ or one double-spaced page (see each question for word minimums). These short 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.

Extra Credit

There are 54 extra credit points built into the class, so the final score will be calculated as if there were only 1000 points in the class (even though there are actually 1054).

Grading

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<th>Range%</th>
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<td>830 - 869</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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## Assignment Calendar

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<td>Wednesday, December 16</td>
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<td>1054</td>
<td><strong>(includes 54 points of extra credit)</strong></td>
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Module 1

Required Readings:

- Chapter 1 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft: (The Anthropological Study of Religion)
- Introduction of Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn- (pp. 1-20. Note – we will read other chapters of the book over the next several weeks – obtain your own copy from an online site or use the FIU Library’s digital version).
- Short article on prions: https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/09/06/482952588/when-people-ate-people-a-strange-disease-emerged. (Links to an external site.)
- Lecture slides from the Module 1 video lecture, parts 1 & 2 and “Ethnographic Fieldwork and Methods.”

Watch

- Module 1 video lecture, part 1
- Module 1 video lecture, part 2
- Supplemental lecture, “Ethnographic Fieldwork and Methods.”

Assignment: Quiz 1 (see chart for due date). Worth 42 points.

Module 2

Required Readings:

- Chapter 2 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.( Mythology)
- Chapter 1 of Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn (pp. 21 – 33)
- Raven trickster myth (this myth is in the third edition of the textbook, but was removed in the fourth edition. So if you are using the fourth edition, please download this short pdf and read it).
- Lecture slides from Module 2 video lecture

Watch Module 2 lecture on Mythology

Assignments (see chart for due dates)

1) Quiz 2. Worth 42 points.
2) Facebook post 1 (10 extra credit points). If you have not done so already, please join the class Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/mrmfalld2020/
3) Essay Exam 1 (100 points)
Module 3

Required Readings:

• Chapter 3 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. (Religious Symbols)
• First portion of Chapter 2 of Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn (pp. 36 – 49).
• Lecture slides from Module 3 video lecture

Watch Module 3 lecture on Religious Symbols

Assignment: Quiz 3 (see chart for due date). Worth 42 points.

Module 4

Required Readings:

• Chapter 4 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. (Ritual)
• Second portion of Chapter 2 of Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn (pp. 49 – 70).
• Lecture slides from Module 4 video lecture

Watch

• Module 4 video lecture
• Short YouTube video: “Girl’s Rite of Passage (Links to an external site.)”
• Short YouTube video: "Inside an Apache Rite of Passage. (Links to an external site.)"

Assignment: Quiz 4 (see chart for due date). Worth 42 points.

Module 4B

Required Readings:

• Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn. (pp. 70- 91 and 133 -184)

Assignments (see chart for due dates)

1) Quiz 4B. Worth 42 points.

2) Facebook post 2 (10 points). If you have not done so already, please join the class Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/mrmfalld2020/

3) Essay Exam 2 (100 points)
Module 5

Required Readings:

- Chapter 5 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. (Altered States of Consciousness)
- Peyote Road Study Guide (answer the questions as you are watching the film and you will get a higher score on the quiz.)
- Lecture slides from Module 5 video lecture

Watch

- Module 5 video lecture
- YouTube video: “The Peyote Road” available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9K7oNclG04](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9K7oNclG04) (note – the first five minutes of the recording are previews for other Native American films.) I highly recommend filling out the study guide as you watch the film so that you can succeed on the quiz.

Assignment: Quiz 5 (see chart for due date)

Module 6

Required Readings:

- Chapter 6 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. (Religious Specialists)
- Davidov study guide (answer the questions as you read to prepare for the quiz).
- Lecture slides from Module 6 video lecture

Watch

- Module 6 video lecture
- First 15 minutes of the documentary, “Metamorphosis.” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz0XLVUq3WI&t=181s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz0XLVUq3WI&t=181s)

Assignment: Quiz 6
Module 7

Required Readings:

- Chapter 7 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. (Magic and Divination)
- Swanson, Tod. 2009. Singing to Estranged Relatives: Quichua Relations to Plants in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Journal of Religion and Culture. Vol 3(1): 36-65. The first 13 pages, which cover songs sung to plants, are required. The rest of the article, which discusses origin stories of plants, is OPTIONAL.
- Lecture slides from Module 7 video lecture
- Lecture slides from supplemental lecture on shamanism and magic in the Amazon

Watch

- Module 7 video lecture
- Supplemental lecture on shamanism and magic in the Amazon
- Short YouTube video: "We are to talk to him nicely." Amazonian Quichua women harvest bark from a medicinal tree. (Links to an external site.)

Assignments (see chart for due dates)

1) Quiz 7. Worth 42 points.

2) Facebook post 3 (10 points). If you have not done so already, please join the class Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/mrmfalld2020/

3) Essay Exam 3 (100 points)

Module 8

Required Readings:

- Chapter 8 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. (Souls, Ghosts, and Death)

Watch Module 8 video lecture

Assignment: Quiz 8
Module 9

Required Readings:
- Chapter 9 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. (Gods and Spirits).

Watch Module 9 video lecture

Assignments (see chart for due dates)
1) Quiz 9. Worth 42 points.
2) Facebook post 4 (10 points). If you have not done so already, please join the class Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/mrmfalld2020/
3) Essay Exam 4 (100 points)

Module 10/11

Required Readings:
- Chapter 10 (second half of chapter ONLY – start with the section “Euro-American Witchcraft Beliefs” and read through to the end).
- Chapter 11 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft. (The Search for New Meaning). Note: if you are using the 3rd edition of the textbook, you do not need to read the pages on Fundamentalism (pp. 251-255 – these will be covered in Module 12).
- Study guide to “The Virgin Daughters”

Watch
- Module 11 video lecture (first 6 minutes = 3 slides) ONLY
- You Tube film: “The Virgin Daughters”: The Virgin Daughters (Celibacy Documentary) - Real Stories (Links to an external site.)

Assignment: Quiz 10/11

Module 12

Required Readings:
- Slides that accompany the Module 11/12 lecture (final 10 slides of the lecture).
- POV The Light in Her Eyes Discussion Guide
• Interview with Saba Mahmood: http://thelightinhereyesmovie.com/resources/interview-saba-mahmood/ (Links to an external site.) Links to an external site. (Links to an external site.)

Watch

• Module 12 lecture (the last 17 minutes of the Module 11 lecture = 10 slides)
• Film: “The Light in Her Eyes” (available as a digital resource through the FIU library)

Assignments (see chart for due dates)

1) Quiz 12. Worth 42 points.
2) Facebook post 5 (10 points).
3) Essay Exam 5 (100 points)

NO CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM – once you complete the assignments listed above, you are done!