

## Course Syllabus

# ANT3241: Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism; Section RVC

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### 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.

The course is also aimed at countering the assumption that belief in witchcraft and spirits is solely associated with the non-western world. Furthermore, 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, each of which will consist of two questions. The first two assignments will ask you to analyze an ethnography which will be read over the first few weeks 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 ethonographic case studies. The essay questions, rubrics, and readings needed to complete these essays will be provided at least two weeks before the due date, and you are free to work ahead if you wish. Finally, you are expected to make at least six substantive posts to the class Facebook page during the semester (one is due after each even-numbered quiz). 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**

Upon completing 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 so-called traditional societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Australia.
- Better understand the linkages and differences among distinct human beliefs, about magic and witchcraft, spirits and gods, sorcery and mysticism.
- Understand the linkages that exist 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 of other people.
- 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 at least six substantive posts to the class Facebook page on religious practices in South Florida and beyond. These posts must be respectful (not insulting to people of different religious faiths. (GLOBAL AWARENESS)

Every enrolled student is expected to complete five short essay assignments during the semester. Each writing assignment will consist of 2 short answer questions (200-250 words each, for a total of 400-500 words per assignment.) 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, sorcery and spirits. (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.

You should also watch the videos at:

- Go Global FIU About Page
- Go Global FIU Learning Outcomes

## **Global Learning Graduation Honors**

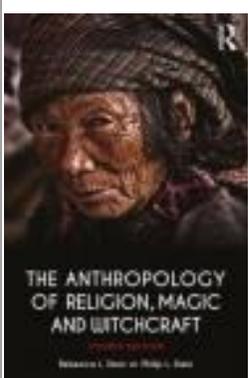
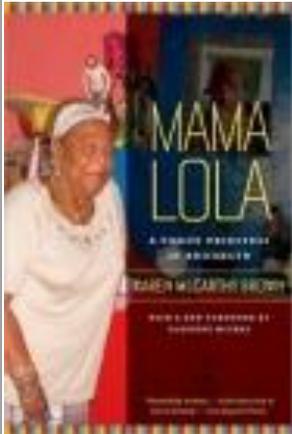
FIU's Excellence in Global Learning Graduation Medallion is awarded to students who complete at least four global learning courses, participate in a variety of global co-curricular activities, and complete a capstone consisting of one of the following: a substantial original research project and presentation 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 [Go Global FIU \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#).

## **Important Information**

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Policies](#)
- [Technical Requirements and Skills](#)
- [Accessibility and Accommodation](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](#)

## Textbook and Course Materials

	<p>The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft</p> <p>Rebecca L. Stein, Phillip L. Stein</p> <p>Pearson, 4th Edition, 2017</p> <p>ISBN: 9781138692527</p> <p>E-text is available.</p>
	<p>Mama Lola</p> <p>Karen McCarthy Brown</p> <p>Published by PERSEUS D or University of California Press</p> <p>ISBN- 9780520268104</p> <p>It is also available as an e-book through the FIU Library (Warning: if too many people try to access it at once, you may experience difficulties.)</p> <p>NOTE: Mama Lola is available in three different editions. ANY EDITION IS FINE. You can usually save a lot of money by buying older editions.</p>

Readings from this course consist of one text book, one ethnography, and a series of articles. There are also several required films. All readings (with the exception of the text book and ethnography indicated above) and films will be available on the course's Canvas website. Required readings for the course are located below in the weekly section for which they are assigned.

You may purchase your textbook online at the [FIU Bookstore \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

### REQUIRED VIDEO:

The Light in Her Eyes: This video is available for rental on Amazon.com, YouTube, iTunes, and Google Play Movies & TV. It costs \$3.99 in each of these venues.

## **Expectations of this Course**

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

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Students are expected to:

- Review the how to get started information located in the course content
- Introduce yourself to the class during the first week by posting a self introduction in the appropriate discussion forum
- 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 assignments 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.

## **Course Communication**

Communication in this course will take place via Canvas Messages.

Messages is a private and secure text-based communication system which occurs within a course among its Course members. Users must log on to Canvas to send, receive, or read messages. It is recommended that students check their messages routinely to ensure up-to-date communication.

## Facebook Posts

Please join the class Facebook page: [ANT3241 Facebook Page \(Links to an external site.\)](#) If your Facebook posts will not be made from an account that is easily recognizable as your own (i.e. you use a nickname as your Facebook identity,) please send a message to the professor with that information so that this grade can be assigned appropriately. Keep in mind that your Facebook postings will be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

10% (100 points) of the final grade will be reflective of your level of participation on the class Facebook page. After the first five odd-numbered quizzes (Quiz 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9), students should post to the Facebook page. Then, they should copy and paste their post into the appropriate assignment in Canvas (screen shots are fine as long as the entire post fits on one screen). The objective of these discussions is to provide the students with the opportunity to add their own interests to class materials and to discuss material that might be novel and surprising. Discussions also help with the comprehension of new concepts. It is expected that students will participate at least five times during the course with substantive posts (at least 50 words). Feel free to respond directly to another student's posting.

The Facebook page should NOT be used for the transmission of personal message from a student to another, or from a student to the professor. For the latter, Canvas's email should be used.

## 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 eleven quizzes based on assigned readings and films. These quizzes consist of multiple choice questions and will cover both the contents of the required readings, lectures, and the films.

- 11 Quizzes (check schedule below for due dates)

If you experience difficulties opening or completing the quizzes or need further assistance please contact [FIU Online Support Services \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

## Assignments

For assignment availability, detailed instructions, grading criteria and feedback response time, please review the [important information about assignments](#) page.

## SHORT ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

Five Essay Assignments (check schedule below for due dates) Every enrolled student will have to write five relatively short essay assignments during the semester. These assignments will consist of 2 short essay questions, each of which should be answered with one double-spaced page (250 words per question) and the questions will be revealed to students at least two weeks prior to the due date. 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 62 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 1062).

### Grading

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available
11 Quizzes	11	42	462
5 Essay assignments	5	100	500
Class E-Participation	5	20	100
Total (includes 62 extra credit points)	21	N/A	1062

Letter	Range	Letter	Range	Letter	Range
A	930 or above	B	830 - 869	C	700 - 769
A-	900 - 929	B-	800 - 829	D	620 - 699
B+	870 - 899	C+	770 - 799	F	620 or less

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[Course Calendar](#)

## Course Summary:

Date		Details
Fri May 11, 2018	<a href="#">Facebook Post # 1</a>	due by 11:59pm
	<a href="#">Quiz 1</a>	due by 11:59pm
Mon May 14, 2018	<a href="#">Quiz 2</a>	due by 11:59pm
Tue May 15, 2018	<a href="#">Essay Assignment 1</a>	due by 11:59pm
Fri May 18, 2018	<a href="#">Facebook Post # 2</a>	due by 11:59pm
	<a href="#">Quiz 3</a>	due by 11:59pm
Mon May 21, 2018	<a href="#">Quiz 4</a>	due by 11:59pm
Tue May 22, 2018	<a href="#">Essay Assignment 2</a>	due by 11:59pm
Fri May 25, 2018	<a href="#">Facebook Post # 3</a>	due by 11:59pm
	<a href="#">Quiz 5</a>	due by 11:59pm
Tue May 29, 2018	<a href="#">Essay Assignment 3</a>	due by 11:59pm
	<a href="#">Quiz 6</a>	due by 11:59pm
Fri Jun 1, 2018	<a href="#">Facebook Post # 4</a>	due by 11:59pm
	<a href="#">Quiz 7</a>	due by 11:59pm
Mon Jun 4, 2018	<a href="#">Quiz 8</a>	due by 11:59pm
Tue Jun 5, 2018	<a href="#">Essay Assignment 4</a>	due by 11:59pm
Fri Jun 8, 2018	<a href="#">Facebook Post # 5</a>	due by 11:59pm
	<a href="#">Quiz 9</a>	due by 11:59pm
Mon Jun 11, 2018	<a href="#">Quiz 10</a>	due by 11:59pm
Fri Jun 15, 2018	<a href="#">Quiz 11</a>	due by 11:59pm
Sat Jun 16, 2018	<a href="#">Essay Assignment 5</a>	due by 11:59pm

**Course assignments are not weighted.**