ANT3241: Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism; Section RVBB

Professor Dr. Jean Rahier

(305) 348 - 2246

Office Hours: Adobe Connect Only

Course Description and Purpose

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 Europe and North America, Africa, Asia, Australia, South America and the Caribbean. 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.

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.

**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, 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 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 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.

**Student Learning 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, 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 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 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.

Global Learning Assessments

Students are required to write a film report that will consist in answering a number of questions about the film "The Revisionaries" (see the Films folder on the Modules page, under "Optional Content". 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 problem solving activities related to religions and religiously informed worldviews. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE and GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT)

Global Learning Student Learning Objectives

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)

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:

- http://goglobal.fiu.edu/About/Pages/default.aspx (Broken)
- http://goglobal.fiu.edu/About/Pages/Learning-Outcomes.aspx (Broken)

**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](http://goglobal.fiu.edu).

**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**

**The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft**

Rebecca L. Stein, Phillip L. Stein


ISBN: 0-205-71809-4

E-text is available

You may purchase your textbook online at the [FIU Bookstore](http://www.fiu.edu/bookstore).

Readings from this course consist of one text book and a series of articles. There are also several required films. All readings (at the exception of the text book indicated below) 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. Required readings must be done PRIOR each week of class. This will allow for informed e-participation.

**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, all assignments will have to be uploaded on a turnitin.com site associated with this course.

2. Papers must include a title, your name, the course name and number, and page numbers.

3. All email correspondence must begin with a salutation ("Professor Rahier," "Dear Dr. Rahier," "Hi Professor," etc.) and end with your name. I will not read your email if you fail to include this.

4. 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.

5. In your essays and term papers you must avoid quoting at all cost. You must, instead, paraphrase (use your own words). Paraphrasing should be limited as well. Again, beware of plagiarism.

6. You may not quote or make reference to Wikipedia. If you do so, points will be taken away from your assignment. You may use only and only scholarly sources, that is to say texts published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals or presses. Not everything you find on the internet has the same quality.

7. When writing your papers, you must make use of the Chicago manual of Style available on the Course Content page of this course's website. Failure to do so will result in points being taken away from your assignment

**Expectations of This Course**

Communication between students and the professor in this course will take place via Canvas messages ONLY. Do not use the professor’s FIU e-mail address to communicate with him.

The message feature is a private, internal Canvas only communication system. Users must log on to the system to send/receive/read messages. There are no notifications in Canvas to inform users when a new message has been received; therefore, it is recommended that students check their messages routinely to ensure up-to-date communication.

Remember that all communication with the professor must begin with a salutation like Dear Dr. Rahier or Hello Professor and must end with your full name. Any messages without these two pieces of information will not be read.

Check out the Canvas Conversations Tutorial to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.

**Discussion Forums**

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

30 points of the final grade will be reflective of your level of participation in the chapter discussions that the professor will initiate. There will be more than one discussion open per chapter. The chapter discussions will be open for a limited time period, which will correspond to
the chapter we are covering in each specific week (see syllabus). When the discussions of a specific chapter will close, the discussions of the following chapters will automatically be available. What is looked for here with this system is your enthusiastic participation IN DUE TIME. It is highly recommended that you keep up with the program set up in the syllabus and calendar. Participation in chapter discussions help students to score better in quizzes. At the end of the semester, the professor will review the level of participation of each student in the course's e-archives and assign a participation grade accordingly. The objective of these discussions is to provide the students with the opportunity to discuss material that might be novel and surprising. Discussions help the comprehension of new concepts. However, in order to facilitate the actual discussions, and make sure that they stay on focus, students should enter relatively brief (3 paragraphs maximum) interventions at a time. It is expected that students will participate in at least 2 to 3 discussions per chapter. Feel free to respond—in a courteous manner—directly to another student’s posting. Twice a week, the professor will take a look at the evolving discussions and intervene as he sees it necessary. The e-space of the discussions may NOT be used for the transmission of personal message from a student to another, or from a student to the professor. For the latter, the course's e-mail and message posting systems must be used.

- **11 Sets of Questions** (check schedule below for due dates)

**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 have multiple choice and short answer questions and will cover both the contents of the required readings and the films.

- **11 Quizzes** (check schedule below for due dates)

**Assignments**

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

**End-of-Term Film Report** (check schedule below for due date)
Information on this report can be found in Canvas.

**Grading**

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**Course Calendar**

**Discussion Forums:**

- Discussions 1 - 7 will be available from 06/18 to 07/08
- Discussions 8 - 11 will be available from 07/09 to 07/27

**Course Calendar:**

Module 1
Students’ self-presentations
-Presentation and explanation of the course's objectives, student learning outcomes, assignments, and other details
-Introduction to the discipline of anthropology and the study of religions
•Watch the video "Anthropologists at Work"

Chapter I: 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
Postmodernism
Universal Human Rights The Concept of Culture Viewing the World
THE STUDY OF RELIGION
Attempts at Defining Religion
The Domain of Religion
Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion
The Evolutionary Approach
The Marxist Approach The Functional Approach The Interpretive Approach The Psychosocial Approach
The Biological Basis of Religious Behavior
Belief in Spirit Beings
The Evolution of Religion

-Required Readings:
•Pages 1-28 of *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.*
-Watch the short Films “The Discipline of Anthropology” AND “Doing Anthropology.”

• Quiz 1 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 06/18 at 12:01am through 07/08 at midnight.
Chapter II: Mythology THE NATURE OF MYTHS Worldview

Stories of the Supernatural
Myths
The Nature of Oral Texts
Genesis
UNDERSTANDING MYTHS Approaches to Analysis of Myths
Searching for Myth Origins in the Nineteenth Century
Fieldwork and Functional Analysis
Structural Analysis
Psychoanalytic Symbols in Myth
Common Themes in Myths Origin Myths Apocalyptic Myths Trickster Myths Hero Myths

CONCLUSION

- Required Readings:
  • Pages 29-55 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.
    Pages 77-82.
- Watch Film “Off the Verandah”:
  • Quiz 2 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 06/18 at 12:01am through 07/08 at midnight.

Module 3
Chapter III Religious Symbols
WHAT IS A SYMBOL?
Religious Symbols
The Swastika
The Pentagram
Christian Symbols
SACRED ART
The Sarcophagus of Lord Pakal
The Meaning of Color
Yoruba Color Terminology
SACRED SPACE AND SACRED TIME The Meaning of Time
The Mayan View of Time
Rituals and Calendars in Modern World Religions
Sacred Time and Space in Australia
Totemism and the Dream Time in Australia
Murngin Totemism
THE SYMBOLISM OF MUSIC AND DANCE
The Symbolism of Music
Music in Ritual
The Symbolism of Dance
CONCLUSION
SUMMARY
BOX 3.1 RELIGIOUS TOYS AND GAMES
BOX 3.2 THE END OF TIME

-Required Readings:
• Pages 56-76 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.

• Quiz 3 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 06/18 at 12:01am through 07/08 at midnight.
Chapter IV Ritual
THE BASICS OF RITUAL PERFORMANCE Prescriptive and Situational Rituals
Periodic and Occasional Rituals
A Classification of Rituals
A SURVEY OF RITUALS Technical Rituals
Hunting and Gathering Rituals of Intensification
Protective Rituals
Social Rituals of Intensification Offerings and Sacrifices Human Sacrifice
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 Rituals 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
CONCLUSION SUMMARY
BOX 4.1 THE HAJJ
BOX 4.2 MENSTRUAL TABUS

- Required Readings:
  • Pages 77-102 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.

- Watch Film: “Guardians of the Flutes”

  • Quiz 4 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 06/18 at 12:01am through 07/08 at midnight.
Module 5

Chapter V 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
CONCLUSION
SUMMARY
BOX 5.1 ALTERED STATES IN UPPER PALEOLITHIC ART
BOX 5.2 THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH

-Required Readings:
•Pages 103-118 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.
-Watch Film: “The Peyote Road”

• Quiz 5 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 06/18 at 12:01am through 07/08 at midnight.

Module 6
Chapter VI Religious Specialists
SHAMANS
Defining Shamanism
Becoming a Shaman
The Shamanic Role and Rituals
Siberian Shamanism
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
CONCLUSION
SUMMARY
BOX 6.1 CLOWN DOCTORS AS SHAMANS
BOX 6.2 AFRICAN HEALERS MEET WESTERN MEDICINE

-Required Readings:
• Pages 119-135 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.

• Quiz 6 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 06/18 at 12:01am through 07/08 at midnight.
Chapter VII Magic and Divination

THE WORLD OF MAGIC

Magic and Religion Magic and Science Rules of Magic Homeopathic 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 Ordeal
Fore Divination
Oracles of the Azande

Divination in Ancient Greece: The Oracle at Delphi

Astrology

CONCLUSION SUMMARY

BOX 7.1 TROBRIAND ISLAND MAGIC

BOX 7.2 I-CHING: THE BOOK OF CHANGES

- Required Readings:

- Quiz 7 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 07/09 at 12:01am through 07/27 at midnight

Module 8
Chapter VIII Souls, Ghosts, and Death

SOULS AND ANCESTORS
Variation in the Concept of the Soul Souls, Death and the Afterlife Examples of Concepts of the Soul
Yup’ik Souls
Yanomamö Spirits and Souls
Hmong Souls
The Soul in Roman Catholicism
The Soul in Hinduism and Buddhism
Ancestors
Yoruba Ancestors
Beng Ancestors and Reincarnation
Tana Toraja Ancestors
Ancestors and the Departed in Japan

BODIES AND SOULS
Ghosts
Dani Ghosts Bunyoro Ghosts Japanese Ghosts
The Living Dead: Vampires and Zombies
Vampires
The Viking Draugr
Haitian Zombies
Zombies in Modern American Culture

DEATH RITUALS
Funeral Rituals
Disposal of the Body
Burial
The African Burial Ground
Secondary Burials Cremation Mummification Exposure
U.S. Death Rituals in the Nineteenth Century
U.S. Funeral Rituals Today

DAYS OF DEATH Halloween
Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos) CONCLUSION

SUMMARY
BOX 8.1 HOW DO YOU GET TO HEAVEN?
BOX 8.2 DETERMINING DEATH 
BOX 8.3 ROADSIDE MEMORIALS

Required Readings:
• Pages 161-188 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.
• Barber, Paul 1988 “The Real Vampire.” From Vampires, Burial, and Death by Paul Barber. Pages 332-337.

• Quiz 8 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 07/09 at 12:01am through 07/27
at midnight
Module 9

Chapter IX 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

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY
BOX 9.1 CHRISTIAN DEMONIC EXORCISM IN THE UNITED STATES
BOX 9.2 GAMES AND GODS

-Required Readings:
• Pages 189-212 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.

• Quiz 9 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 07/09 at 12:01am through 07/27 at midnight
Chapter X Witchcraft

THE CONCEPT OF WITCHCRAFT IN SMALL-SCALE SOCIETIES Witchcraft 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

BOX 10.1 THE EVIL EYE
BOX 10.2 SATANISM

- Required Readings:
  • Pages 213-229 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.
- Watch Film: “Strange Beliefs”

• **Quiz 10 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 07/09 at 12:01am through 07/27 at midnight**
Chapter XI 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
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
CONCLUSION SUMMARY
BOX 11.1 THE JOHN FRUM CULT
BOX 11.2 RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM

Required Readings:
•Pages 230-258 of The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft.

-Watch Film: “Orientalism”
- Quiz 11 Available for 60 minutes, one attempt, from 07/09 at 12:01am through 07/27 at midnight
- End-of-term film report due by 07/27 at midnight.