



## ANT 3241 Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism

Section: RVM

Internet/Fully Online

Fall Term 2024

### Professor Information

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Jean Muteba Rahier

**Contact:** [jrahier@fiu.edu](mailto:jrahier@fiu.edu)

**Office Hours:**

By Appointment

**Additional Notes:**

Through Zoom only.

### Course Description and Purpose

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This University Core Curriculum (UCC) and Global Learning (GL) 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 Goals

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### University Core Curriculum

This course satisfies the following University Core Curriculum requirement for Social Science Group Two (FIU-required):

Students will demonstrate the ability to examine behavioral, social, and cultural issues from a variety of points of view. Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavioral, social, and cultural issues, past and present, local and global.

This requirement is supported by the following learning outcomes for the course. 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

In this course, the Final Essay fulfills the GL requirement. It 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 here—in problem-solving activities related to religions and religiously informed worldviews. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE and GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT)

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.

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 <https://goglobal.fiu.edu/>

## **UCC Category Description**

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This course satisfies the University Core Curriculum (Social Science + Group 2) requirement.

According to this category:

Students will demonstrate the ability to examine behavioral, social, and cultural issues from a variety of points of view. Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavioral, social, and cultural issues, past and present, local, and global.

## **Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives**

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Student learning outcomes allow faculty to assess the level of proficiency in content knowledge and skills that their students acquire in a course.

If the objective meets a special designation, you will see the code after the objective:

University Core Curriculum: UCC

Gordon Rule Writing: GRW

Global Learning: GL

Civic Literacy: CL

- 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.

## **Expectations of the Course**

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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. When writing to the professor: do not copy the entire class; you should not assume that your issue is of interest to everyone.

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.

### 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.
8. All students must regularly read the contents of all announcements. Announcement contents are considered known by all enrolled students.

## Assignments

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### Discussion Forums

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

100 points of the final grade (100/1,000) 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 Course Calendar). 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. Previous participation in chapter discussions helps 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. The more you post, the better it is for your participation grade. 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 a 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.

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

## Final Essay

The prompt will become available two weeks before the due date. That essay will deal with the content of chapter 12 (and by extension with the contents of all chapters).

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

## Assessments

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### 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 questions and cover both the contents of the required readings and films. There are 20 questions per quiz. The questions come from a question bank. No two quizzes for the same module will have the exact same questions.

- 12 Quizzes (check Course Calendar or the Assignments link for due dates)

Each quiz will cover the chapter covered during its corresponding module. The quizzes will remain open for the duration used to cover the corresponding module (see course calendar). Availability of quizzes will not be extended.

THERE IS ONE AND ONLY ONE TIMED ATTEMPT FOR EACH QUIZ. You must take a quiz in one sitting. You do not have the option to pause or stop a quiz. You should not expect to consult the textbook or any other note while taking the quiz. In fact, the time you have to take the quiz has been limited so that you do not have the time to do that. You should plan to take the quiz the exact same way you would take a quiz in a face-to-face environment.

## Grading

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Your final grade will be calculated out of 1,000 points.

12 quizzes at 30 points each = 360

1 final essay for 200 points = 500

Participation in discussions = 140

Course Grading Table

| Course Requirements          | Number of Items | Points for Each | Total Points Available |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 12 Quizzes                   | 12              | 30              | 360                    |
| 1 Final Essay                | 1               | 500             | 500                    |
| Participation in Discussions |                 |                 | 140                    |
| <b>Total</b>                 |                 | N/A             | 1000                   |

| Letter | Range %   | Letter | Range % | Letter | Range %   |
|--------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|
| A      | Above 920 | B      | 830-869 | C      | 700-769   |
| A-     | 900-919   | B-     | 800-829 | D      | 620-699   |
| B+     | 870-899   | C+     | 770-799 | F      | Below 620 |

## Textbook and Course Materials

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### Introducing Anthropology of Religion

**Subtitle:** Culture to the Ultimate

**Required/Recommended:** Required

**Authors:** Jack David Eller

**Publisher:** Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

**Publication Date:** 2021

**Copyright Date:** 2022 (third edition)

**ISBN 10:** 9781032023045

**ISBN 13:** N/A

**Notes:** You must purchase this third edition only. You may purchase your textbook online at the FIU Bookstore. Readings from this course consist of one textbook. There are also several required films, which will be available on the course's Canvas website. Required readings must be done PRIOR to participating in the required e-discussions. This will allow for informed e-participation.

### Panther Book Pack

FIU has implemented the Panther Book Pack rental program, which provides your required print and digital course materials at a flat rate of \$20 per undergraduate credit hour. When you registered for your classes this session, you were notified via email of the required course materials that are included in the Panther Book Pack. The Panther Book Pack program applies to all undergraduate credit hours per academic session. I

recommend that you review the pricing for all materials across your classes this session compared to the Panther Book Pack flat rate. If the Panther Book Pack is not your best option, you may opt-out up to three days after the add/drop deadline. You may opt back into the Panther Book Pack up to three days after the add/drop deadline. If you do not opt out of the Panther Book Pack rental program, you will be charged \$20 per credit hour and the course materials will be reserved for you for the undergraduate courses for which you are registered. For more details, visit [onestop.fiu.edu/bookpack](https://onestop.fiu.edu/bookpack).

## Course Communication

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Communication in this course will take place via the Canvas Inbox. Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial](#) or [Canvas Guide](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox. I will respond to all correspondences within 24 hours.

## Discussion Forums

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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.

## Zoom Video Conference

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Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities. We will be utilizing this tool to conduct course discussions.

Zoom meetings can be accessed via the Zoom link in the course navigation menu. Once you click on the Zoom link, it will route you to join the meeting for the respective class session. You will also be able to view upcoming meetings, previous meetings that you have already joined, and meeting recordings. Before joining an actual class session:

- Reference the [Zoom Student Tutorials](#) to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.

- Access the [Zoom Test Meeting Room](#) to test out the software before joining an actual session.

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact the [FIU Canvas Help Team](#). Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring.

## Policies

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Please review the [FIU's Policies webpage](#). The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses. For additional information, please visit [FIU's Policy and Procedure Library](#).

As a member of the FIU community, you are expected to be knowledgeable about the behavioral expectations set forth in the [FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code](#).

## Technical Requirements and Skills

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One of the greatest barriers to student success is a lack of basic computer literacy. By computer literacy, we mean being able to manage and organize computer files efficiently and learning to use your computer's operating system and software quickly and easily. Keep in mind that this is not a computer literacy course, but students enrolled in online courses are expected to have moderate proficiency in using a computer. Please go to the [What's Required webpage](#) to find out more information on this subject

Privacy Policy Statements for Partners and Vendors

- [Canvas](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
- [Adobe](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

- [ProctorU](#)
- [HonorLock](#)
- [Turnitin](#)
- [OpenStax](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [Respondus LockDown Browser](#)

Please visit our [Technical Requirements webpage](#) for additional information.

## **Accessibility and Accommodation**

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The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305-348-3532 or visit them at the Graham Center GC 190.

For additional assistance please contact [FIU's Disability Resource Center](#).

Web Accessibility Statements for Partners and Vendors

- [Canvas](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
- [Adobe](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [ProctorU](#)
- [HonorLock](#)

- [Turnitin](#)
- [OpenStax](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [Respondus LockDown Browser](#)

Please visit [accessibility.fiu.edu](https://accessibility.fiu.edu) for additional information about accessibility at FIU.

## Academic Integrity

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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 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 Conduct and Honor Code.

*Academic Misconduct includes:*

### **Cheating**

- The unauthorized use of any materials, information, study aids or assistance from another person on any academic assignment or exercise, unless explicitly authorized by the course Instructor;
- Assisting another student in the unauthorized use of any materials, information, study aids, unless explicitly authorized by the Instructor; and
- Having a substitute complete any academic assignment or completing an academic assignment for someone else, either paid or unpaid;

### **Plagiarism**

- The deliberate use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the Student's own.
- Assisting another student in the deliberate use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own.

Learn more about the [academic integrity policies and procedures](#) as well as [student resources](#) that can help you prepare for a successful semester.

## **Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

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If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate's well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with [FIU's Panthers Care website](#).

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don't wait to call (305) 348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.

## **Core Principles of this Course**

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This course will serve all students, encouraging collaboration by preparing students to value the differences in others. We appreciate the multiplicity of the lived experiences and perspectives of all students. We are committed to the ongoing education of our students and their open participation within the course.

## **Copyright**

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The following conduct is prohibited by the Student Conduct and Honor Code. Lack of familiarity with University policy is not a defense to a violation of this Code. Unless specifically noted, the intent is not a required element to establish a policy violation. The



following conduct violation or any attempt to violate the Code will be used in charging all Students or Student Organizations;

## **Section 5 | Conduct Violations - g. Computer Misuse**

- vii. Unauthorized distribution or downloading of copyrighted materials, including but not limited to, unauthorized peer-to-peer file sharing. This is a violation whether the user is using their own personal computer or the University's information technology system for unauthorized distributions.

**Copyright Statement:** The materials and content in this online course are provided solely for student use during the course. Course materials may not be shared outside of the course or with any third party without the explicit permission of the instructor or content publisher. [Visit FIU Library's Copyright Lib Guide](#) to learn more about copyright law and restrictions.

Additional Resources:

- [Student Conduct and Honor Code](#)
- [Digital Millennium Copyright Act Policy](#)
- [FIU - Copyright Guidance for Students](#)
- [FIU Library's Copyright Lib Guide](#)

## **Proctored Exams**

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**Please note that the information contained in this section applies only if your course requires a proctored exam.**

Through a careful examination of this syllabus, it is the student's responsibility to determine whether this online course requires proctored exams. Please visit our [Student Proctored Exam Instructions webpage](#) for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.