



ANT 3241 Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism

Section: U01

In Person

Fall Term 2024

Course Meeting Information

This class meets Mon - Wed - Fri from 3:00 to 3:50 PM in Viertes Haus (VH) 131.

Professor Information

Steven Mizrach

Contact: mizrachs@fiu.edu

Office: SIPA 340

Office Hours:

By appointment

Course Description and Purpose

This course provides an introduction to the anthropological study of religion. Rather than focusing on the traditions of larger, established religions, most of the examples we will explore in this course will be taken from smaller communities, many of whom do not view the traditions they practice as religious or limited to a private sphere of personal beliefs. Instead, we will examine how such traditions locate practitioners in a supernatural cosmos of spirits, gods, and the dead; sorcery and witchcraft; magical powers and

mystical dangers. Following anthropology's commitment to holism and the study of context, we will approach such traditions as structured, rule-bound systems of knowledge capable of generating realities and lifeworlds as whole and compelling as those with which most of us are more familiar. Along the way, this course will explore the history of religion as a category of human experience, in the process challenging conventional assumptions about what religion is and how it 'should' work. We will examine patterns in how people make sense of and act upon their worlds by assigning meaning to objects, beings, events, and persons; connecting things together into symbolic patterns and narratives, and creating elaborate forms of symbolic action. Finally, this course will introduce you to the concepts, frameworks, and theoretical approaches used by anthropologists to study the practices and traditions of the communities with whom they work.

Our goal in this course is not to promote or debunk any of the beliefs, practices, or traditions we examine. Instead, we will be concerned with learning how to analyze and study beliefs and practices from the perspective of anthropology, weigh alternative interpolations, and appreciate the complexity and ambiguity of the historical and anthropological record.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Define anthropology and explain what ethnographic research entails.
- Describe how an anthropological approach to the study of religion differs from that of other disciplines.
- Understand the difference between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism and to describe when each perspective may or may not be useful.
- Describe the history of religion (as a category of human experience) and explain why many of the communities we study do not understand their own practices as

'religious'.

- Explain and differentiate between different theoretical approaches to the study of religion in anthropology.
- Explain the concept of ritual and categorize different types of rituals.
- Differentiate between the various types of supernatural entities recognized by anthropologists including gods, spirits, souls, ghosts, and ancestors.
- Outline the difference between sorcery and witchcraft and provide examples of each.
- Apply anthropological concepts to analyze beliefs, rituals, practices, and superstitions present in their own lives.

Be a better world citizen by understanding the existence of different ways of being human, of being spiritual and religious, or atheist.

UCC Category Description

This course satisfies the University Core Curriculum (Social Sciences) requirement.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

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

- Demonstrate a comprehension 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)
- Students will be able to—willingly—better engage in a number of problem solving activities in a variety of sociocultural contexts around the globe.(GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT)
- 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)

Expectations of the Course

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

While we will use laptops and smartphones for in-class activities, class time is not the time for social media browsing, social networking or working on outside assignments. Doing so is not only detrimental to your learning but also creates a distraction for others and disrupts our class' learning environment. Please refrain from using laptops and smartphones during class time for non-class activities.

Course readings and assignments will be posted on our class's Canvas webpage.

OUR CLASS ENVIRONMENT

Our objective in this course should be to create a positive learning community in which you and other students are able to learn from each other as well as from the professor. To do so, we need to make sure that we maintain a respectful in-class environment in which everyone feels valued and listened to, is comfortable asking questions and is able to explore their curiosity. Students who are not respectful of others or create a distraction will be asked to leave.

Assignments

This course involves four graded components: 1) a midterm and final exam 2) two written assignments: a myth analysis project and a term paper.

Assessments

see assignments and quizzes.

Grading

As percentages of total points:

Grading Scheme: 91-100 A 81+ B 71+ C 61+ D ... 60 or below, F.

Textbook and Course Materials

Introducing Anthropology

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Pountney, Laura; and Maric, Tomislav

Publisher: Polity Press

Publication Date: 2015

Copyright Date: 2015

ISBN 10: 9780745699

ISBN 13: 9780745699783

Purchase/Rent at FIU Bookstore: Available for purchase at FIU Bookstore

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.

Course Communication

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.

Policies

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](#).

In addition, the [FIU Policies and Procedures Library website](#) serves as the official repository for university-wide policies and procedures.

Core Principles of this Course

This course will serve to embrace the diversity and inclusivity found within Florida International University. We appreciate and respect diversity, equality, equity, cooperativeness, community, and sustainability within our online courses. We are committed to the ongoing education of our students and their participation within the course regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, geographical location, religion, and disability. We strive in encouraging collaboration by preparing our students to value the differences in others. At the core of our intentions is the encouragement of acceptance and appreciation of differences within our student population and community.