



ANT 3241

Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism

Section: RVAA

Internet/Fully Online

Fall Term 2025

Course Time Zone | Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates are according to this time zone.

Professor Information

Robin Steiner

Roles: Primary Instructor

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Office Hours: Virtual Office Hours available by appointment

Office Location: N/A

Department or Academic Unit: Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

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.

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. (GL: 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.(GL: 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. (GL: GLOBAL AWARENESS)

Expectations of this Course

As an FIU student, you are expected to abide by the university's policies particularly those governing academic honesty and plagiarism as they appear in the FIU Student Handbook.

If you submit work for this course that is not your own (including using AI programs to write projects or posts, using the work of other authors without properly giving them credit, or giving/receiving help to other students during quizzes, you will be reported to Academic Affairs and will receive a '0' on the assignment). Please note that in this course forming a What's App (or similar) group to work together on take home quizzes is not permitted and will be considered cheating.

Grading

Projects (7 x 60 points each): 420 points

Quizzes (7 required x 60 points each): 420 points

Discussion Board Posts (6 required, 20 points each): 120 points

Discussion Board Post Responses (6 required x 7 points each) 42 points

Total: 1002 points

Grading Scheme: A (930-1000), A- (900-929), B+ (870-899), B (830-869), B- (800-829), C+ (770-799), C (700-769), D (600-699), and F (599 and below).

Textbook and Course Materials

The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Rebecca L. Stein, Phillip L. Stein

Publisher: Pearson

Publication Date: 5rd Edition

Copyright Date: 2025

ISBN 10: 103257299X

ISBN 13: 978-1032572994

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