

ANT3241: Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism



Syllabus

Aug 26, 2024-
Oct 12, 2024

Professor Dr. John White

Virtual Office Hours: Mondays, 10-11am and by appointment

Personal Zoom meeting room: [Zoom Link](#); Password: 59qMa



General Information



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 in particular. 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. 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 ethnographic case studies. The essay questions, rubrics, and readings needed to complete these essays will be provided at least one week before the due date, and you are free to work ahead if you wish. Finally, you are expected to make at least five substantive posts to the class canvas page during the semester (one is due after each unit). 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

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 around the world
- Better understand the linkages and differences among distinct human beliefs 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 with which 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

Every student must answer multiple choice questions which will ask them to show the familiarity they have gained about different religious faiths. (GLOBAL AWARENESS)

Every enrolled student is expected to complete essay exams during the semester. 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, and sorcery. (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.



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.

Important Information

Important Information

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Policies](#)
- [Technical Requirements and Skills](#)
- [Accessibility and Accommodation](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](#)
- [Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)



Expectations of this Course

This is a fully online course. Online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- Review how to get started information located in the course content
- 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.

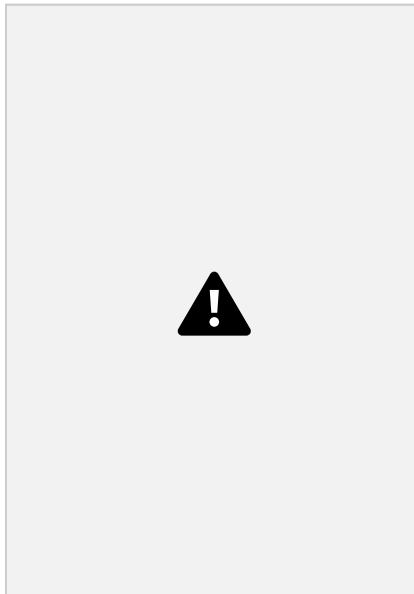


Ground Rules

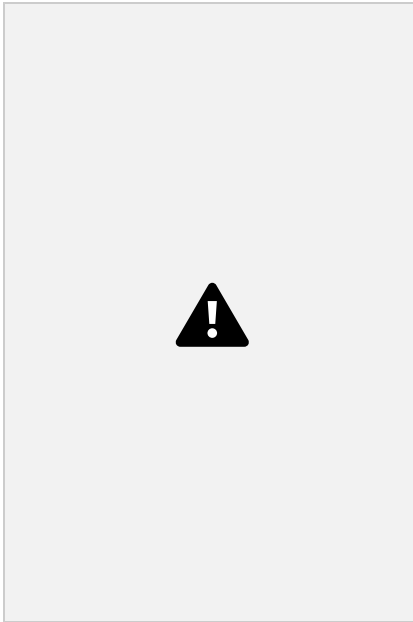
1. Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you use the work of other authors without giving them credit, you will receive a '0' for the assignment and you will be reported to Academic Affairs. To avoid plagiarism, the essay exams will have to be uploaded on a turnitin.com site associated with this course.
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.



Textbook and Course Materials



The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft
Rebecca L. Stein, Phillip L. Stein
Pearson, 4th edition (2017) or 3rd Edition (2011)
ISBN: 9781138692527
E-text is available



Mama Lola

Karen McCarthy Brown

Published by PERSEUS D or University of California Press

ISBN- 9780520268104

NOTE: This book is available in three different editions. ANY EDITION IS FINE. You can usually save a lot of money by buying older editions. This book is also available to read online for free through the FIU Library website.

You may purchase your textbooks online at the [FIU Bookstore](#).

Readings from this course consist of one textbook, one ethnography (Mama Lola), and a series of articles. There are also several required films. All readings (at the exception of the textbook and ethnography indicated above) and films will be available on the course's Canvas website or shown in class. Required readings for the course are located within the Canvas module for which they are assigned.

Course Detail



E-Participation

At the end of each unit (one unit consists of 2-3 Modules), you will need to find some article or short video that relates to one of the topics discussed in that unit. You should post a link to that article or video on the Class canvas page AND include a 50+word analysis, linking the content to class content. If you prefer, you can also respond to a post by one of your classmates – follow the link she or he posts, read the article or watch the video, and post a 50+ word analysis of it. You will be graded on the relevance of the post to class materials and the thoughtfulness of your analysis.



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 twelve quizzes based on assigned readings, lectures, and films. These quizzes have multiple choice questions and include one extra credit question per quiz. For modules that have films that last more than 15 minutes, study guides will be provided.



Essay Assignments

At the end of each unit, every enrolled student will have to write a relatively short essay assignment. These five assignments will consist of 2-4 short essay questions, each of which should be answered with one-half to one double-spaced page (500 words total per exam). 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 54 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 1054).



Grading

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available
Module Quizzes	12	42	504
Essay Assignments	5	100	500

Class E-Participation	5	10	50
Total	22	N/A	1000 (plus 54 extra credit)

Assignment Calendar

Unit	Lesson	Assignment	Points		Strive to submit all of the chapter work by 11:59pm each Sunday. All assignments due no later than last course day.
Unit 1	Lesson 1	Quiz 1	42		
	Lesson 2	Quiz 2	42		
		Essay Exam 1	100		
		Canvas Post 1	10		
Unit 2	Lesson 3	Quiz 3	42		
	Lesson 4	Quiz 4	42		

	Lesson 4B	Quiz 4B	42		
		Essay Exam 2	100		
		Canvas Post 2	10		
Unit 3	Lesson 5	Quiz 5	42		
	Lesson 6	Quiz 6	42		
	Lesson 7	Quiz 7	42		
		Essay Exam 3	100		
		Canvas Post 3	10		
Unit 4	Lesson 8	Quiz 8	42		
	Lesson 9	Quiz 9	42		

		Essay Exam 4	100		
		Canvas Post 4	10		
Unit 5	Lesson 10/11	Quiz 10/11	42		
	Lesson 12	Quiz 12	42		
		Essay Exam 5	100		
		Canvas Post 5	10		
TOTAL			1054		

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



[Course Calendar](#) (click for a detailed lesson-by-lesson breakdown)

