Myth, ritual and mysticism are traditional topics in cultural anthropology and their study has played an important role in the development of anthropological theory. They are important elements found in all societies, and constitute a part of their ethnographic articulation. This course will focus on a variety of belief systems, experiences and practices associated with religion and the supernatural including the religious use of drugs, divination, magic, and what the western world calls ‘witchcraft’, and sorcery. We will also assess secular myths. We will examine a wide range of cultures, small-scale societies and complex societies. Through readings, films, lectures and discussions, we will explore some of the theoretical frameworks anthropologist have used to account for religious behavior, as well as the modes of research and analysis that attempt to document such behavior. Students will conduct ethnographic or archival research on myth, ritual, and mysticism.

Students are urged to suspend their own cultural judgments about “true” versus “false” knowledge while recognizing at the same time, that anthropological research and writing are inherently political activities. Students are reminded that cross-cultural study not only provides us with a broader, more global perspective on the human condition, but also allows us to deepen our understanding of our own culture(s). The knowledge gained is a part of human development, and should deepen your perspective on life, your own social order, and how you live.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Research paper:

Students may work in groups. The group will select a topic in the area of ritual, myth, witchcraft, religion or mysticism and develop a presentation for the class. The presentation will cover work done in the area, the various approaches to the study, a theory on why it exist today, perhaps the function it provides, and a critical analysis of the event or behavior. What are its psychological functions? How does the ritual reflect, support or oppose the values of the broader culture in which it is embedded? This research paper is an ethnographic writing, that is, it is descriptive. It will cover data collection experience in carrying out the research, or if archival, the research agenda, theoretical basis, a bibliography of cited works, encounters and informant references should be included. In Anthropology we usually use APA citation style. Students may research secular behaviors as well as religious behaviors. Popular culture rituals continuously emerge in society, and are worthy of analysis. Students are expected to talk with the professor about the topic selected and their planned method of collecting data. Papers may be field oriented (collecting your own data) or archival, (library researched). The research cannot contain all internet references. It requires scholarly academic references in the areas of Sociology and Anthropology from those journals. Secondary references may be included. That is students are expected to use the anthropological scholarly literature in their work. Papers should be no more than 5 - 7 pages, double space, and at least three primary references.
Two Events:

Each term FIU Programs in Africa and African Diaspora Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and student clubs bring scholars to campus, films, cultural events which lend to our studies. From time to time events are scheduled in Miami which complement the course criteria. These may be used as events for the course. The event descriptive assessments should be 2 to 3 pages, and written in an ethnographic format using the first person. Attendance at two events is required.

Evaluation:

There will be at least three multiple-choice exams. They are not cumulative. The exams are based on class readings and films. Films are a valued source of information for this course. They are not shown for entertainment, but rather the scholarly content they present and lend to our text. Most films shown are documentaries or in some way ethnographic representations of culture. The films are a part of our curriculum and have meaning for the assigned work we cover. It is for you to understand how the films extend on the theory, meaning, and discourse we engage in as we move around the world observing cultures.

Students are encouraged to ask questions and contribute comments to the class discussion. Students should use the Center for Excellence to review their research papers for grammar and appropriate sentence structure if you know this will benefit your writing. It is critical that students listen to one another respectfully and avoid interruption and overly digressive comments. Credit is given for participation, and it is one of the only ways I get to know you. It is expected in a third year course that you come having read the work, and prepared to comment on it, and respond to it in class. The structure of the class allows a space for lecture, for film and for commentary and discussion from students. If you have a concern during the academic year about the course, please contact me, your instructor, and not the Department Head. It may be somewhat difficult to contact me because adjunct faculties do not have telephones in the offices provided. Email has proved difficult in that they are sometimes lost in the heavy load of incoming e-mails. I do check them daily. I have put the department phone number above. They will leave me a message in my box, which you can also do.

Course Objectives:

1. To gain an understanding of the nature of mythology and the importance of rituals in human societies.
2. To gain a deeper insight into one's own worldview and perspectives.
3. To evaluate the causes and effects of mysticism; upon individuals, religious traditions and cultures.
4. To integrate understandings of mysticism with analysis of human experience.
5. To assess the role of mystical experiences in various cultures.
6. To become a contemplative and critical thinker.

The course will consist of lectures and group discussions, and most importantly, you are expected to keep-up with the readings and be an active participant.
Required Texts:


On Reserve: Readings from:

*To keep the cost of books down, I have put #3, #4 and #5 on reserve at the circulation desk. I have placed some articles electronically on the course reserve list for ANT 3241. You can go into Course Reserve and download these papers. Readings are assigned from these texts and are included on the test. They are also excellent references for project topics. Although my focus is Africa and the African Diaspora, students do not have to limit their work to these populations. Note these have been placed on reserve at BBC campus because this is where I usually teach.

Associated text which may be useful:

The Old and New Testaments
The Koran
The Torah
The I Ching: The Book of Changes

An additional reading list of suggested work will be handed out.

Check the reserve shelf to see what else has been added. These books are for your reference and to assist in guiding your work.

Grading Criteria:

Class Participation 10%
Test 1 20%
Test 2 20%
Test 3 20%
Student Presentation/ 10%
Research Summary paper and bibliography 20%

Attendance at two events achieves: extra credit. The events will be identified during the term.

No make-up exams!!!
No late research papers will be accepted!!!
Research papers must be submitted prior to the Spring Break.
Guidelines on academic integrity:

Students have an obligation to exhibit honesty in carrying out their academic assignments. Students may be found to have violated this obligation if they plagiarize or cheat. Plagiarism is presenting the work of others as one’s own and cheating is taking or accepting any illicit advantages for any course work inside or outside of the classroom. Refer to Florida International University’s catalog for further information.

Class Schedule:

**Week 1**

**January**

10  Course Introduction
12  The Anthropological Study of Religion

**Stein,** pp 1-27


**Week 2**

- Film: Strange Beliefs, Evan-Pritchard in Africa (Nuer and Azande)
19  **Stein,** pp ‘through to pp29-54

SUNDIATA: An Epic of Old Mali, D.T. Niane, pp. preface –pp. 5

**Week 3**

24  **Film:** Keita: The Story of a Groit

Assignment: Write a two page description of how you got your name. (pp. 1-59 complete)

**Week 4**

26  Religious Symbols

-**Stein,** pp 56-76


-Occupy symbols

**Week 5**

31  Rituals: pp 77-102

**Film:** Africa Unite/ Coping with Babylon

**Stein** pp 83-109

**February**

**Week 6**

2  **Film:** Guardians of the Flutes (50min) GN671, .N82  1994

Victor Turner,

7  “Betwixt and Between” 46-55. (on reserve). Lehmann and James E. Myers (2001) *In; Magic, Witchcraft and Religion:*

Optional Reading (on reserve). Some, Malidoma Patrice (1999), Chapter 15, “Initiation: a response to challenges of the west. (Hand out). In: The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding life purpose through nature, ritual, and community. (if you are interested in this reading check with the Professor)
9 **Exam: 1**

14 **Week 7**

Shaman Priest and Prophets, Stein: pp103-118

16 -Film: The Peyote Road (60 min) UNIV PARK AV

**Week 8**

21 -Health and Culture: Ethnomedical Systems and the modern medical system
Sicko (Michael Moore)

23 - The Religious and Indigenous Use of Substances
Chapter 6 from “Jamaican Folk Medicine” on reserve. (hand-out)
- The Holy Herb: Notes on the background of Cannabis in Jamaica. Caribbean

**Week 9**


March

**Week 10**

1 -Religious Specialists *Stein*, pp 119-135
6 Film Country Man

**Week 12**

27 -Souls, Ghosts, and Death
Stein, pp 161-188

29 - Gods and Spirits
-Stein pp 189-212

April **Exam 2**

**Week 13**

3 -Witchcraft, Stein pp 213-229
5 -Film: Devine Horsemen
Revitalization Movements, *Stein*, pp 230-258
Santeria, Vodou, Pocomania, Shango Baptist, etc/...

See: Internet link: Living Vodou, Transcript or Audio Program, Sunday July 1, 2007
NPR Speaking of Faith

12-24 Peer Reviews: Student Presentations
**Final Exam:** not cumulative