



ANT 3241

Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism

Section: RVBB

Internet/Fully Online

Fall Term 2025

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

Professor Information

Jean Muteba Rahier

Roles: Primary Instructor

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Phone: N/A

Office Hours: Through Zoom on Fridays, from 10am to 12pm: see the Zoom link.

Office Location: N/A

Department or Academic Unit: Global & Sociocultural Studies/SIPA

Additional Notes

Via Zoom only

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description and Purpose

This 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.

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

- 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 this Course

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 and/or Artificial Intelligence generation of essays are serious offenses. If you use the work of other authors without giving them credit, and/or if you use AI generated text to write an essay for you, you will be reported to Academic Affairs. To enforce the no-plagiarism and/or no-AI rule, all essays will be automatically screened by turnitin.com, the vendor FIU uses to detect and fight against plagiarism and AI-generation of text.
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.

Grading

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
Total		N/A	1000

Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %
A	Above 920	B	830-869	C	700-769

Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %
A-	900-919	B-	800-829	D	620-699
B+	870-899	C+	770-799	F	Below 620

Textbook and Course Materials

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

The Panther Book Pack rental program 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.

Make sure to review the pricing for all materials across your classes this semester and compare the cost 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. The deadline to opt back into the Panther Book Pack is also 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 undergraduate credit hour for which you are registered and the course materials will be reserved in your name. For more details and to learn how to access your course materials, 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.

Zoom Video Conference

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.

Canvas Schedule

Due Date	Assignment Name	Assignment Type	Points
	Academic Honesty Policy	Quiz	0
	ANT3241 Glossary of Terms (A - M)	Assignment	0
	ANT3241 Glossary of Terms (N - Z)	Assignment	0
	Class Participation	Assignment	240
	Extra Credit	Assignment	0
	Introduce Yourself	Discussion	0
	Mid-Semester Grade (UCC Requirement)	Assignment	100
	Open Forum	Discussion	0
	Practice Quiz	Quiz	0
11/9/25	Chapter 1 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
11/9/25	Chapter 2 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30

Due Date	Assignment Name	Assignment Type	Points
11/9/25	Chapter 3 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
11/9/25	Chapter 4 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
11/9/25	Chapter 5 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
11/9/25	Chapter 6 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
11/9/25	Module 1 Discussions	Discussion	0
11/9/25	Module 2 Discussions	Discussion	0
11/9/25	Module 3 Discussions	Discussion	0
11/9/25	Module 4 Discussions	Discussion	0
11/9/25	Module 5 Discussions	Discussion	0
11/9/25	Module 6 Discussions	Discussion	0
12/7/25	Chapter 10 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
12/7/25	Chapter 11 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30

Due Date	Assignment Name	Assignment Type	Points
12/7/25	Chapter 12 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
12/7/25	Chapter 7 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
12/7/25	Chapter 8 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
12/7/25	Chapter 9 Quiz- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	30
12/7/25	Module 10 Discussions	Discussion	0
12/7/25	Module 11 Discussions	Discussion	0
12/7/25	Module 12 Discussions	Discussion	0
12/7/25	Module 7 Discussions	Discussion	0
12/7/25	Module 8 Discussions	Discussion	0
12/7/25	Module 9 Discussions	Discussion	0
12/10/25	Final Essay- Requires Respondus LockDown Browser	Quiz	500

Schedule of Topics

TBA

Policies & Resources

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](#).

Assignments & Assessments

Discussion Forums

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.

Discussion Forum Expectations:

- Provide clear guidance on the expectations and requirements
- Available dates (unlimited or for a specific time)
- Criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of students' comments and grade credit expected
(Rubric is highly encouraged)
- The expected turn-around time for feedback or grades.

Assignments

- Provide clear guidance on the expectations and requirements
- Provide due dates and late assignment policies
- Define if it is an individual or group assignment (groups: Let the students know how the groups will be formed)
- Specify and describe how to submit assignments
- State the criteria for evaluation (Rubric or list of criteria)
- The expected turn-around time for feedback or grades

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. Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet.

- List all assessments (i.e. graded or practice)
- Provide the dates and times when assessments will become available (i.e. From Monday 10:00 am – Tuesday 11:59 pm)
- Provide assessment duration (i.e. 30 minutes, 1 hour)
- Provide details for results
- When will students be able to see the results (i.e. Immediately after the exam, after the availability period has ended, or not at all)
- What will they be able to see the results (i.e. Total score only, all of the questions and answers, etc.)
- The expected turn-around time for feedback or grades

Core Principles of this Course

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.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights Compliance and Accessibility (CRCA)** is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, gender, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the CRCA team through report.fiu.edu.

Proctored Exams

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.