

Syllabus

ANT3241: Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism; Section RVAA

Dr. Robin Steiner (rsteiner@fiu.edu)

Virtual Office Hours available by appointment

Personal Zoom meeting room: <https://fiu.zoom.us/j/9555055352> [Links to an external site.](#)

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 Objectives

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.

Global Learning Student Learning Outcomes

This is a Global Learning course. By the end of this course, you 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 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)

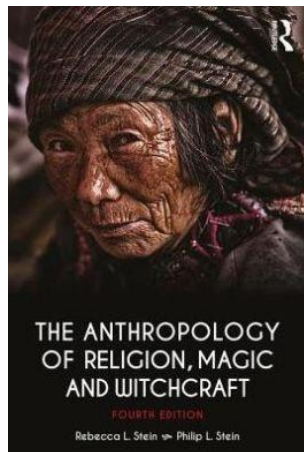
For more information about the Global Learning Student Learning Outcomes, please consult the FIU Global Learning for Global Citizenship (<https://goglobal.fiu.edu/Links to an external site.>).

Ground Rules

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 forming a What's App (or similar) group to work together on take-home quizzes is not permitted in this course and will be considered cheating.

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 here-

[Routledge- Anthro of Religion, Magic and WitchcraftLinks to an external site.](#)

You may purchase your textbooks online at the [FIU BookstoreLinks to an external site.](#)

Additional readings, films, and other resources will be posted on our Canvas website on the weekly module for which they are assigned.



This course has four main graded components: Projects, Quizzes, Discussion Board Posts, and Discussion Board Post Responses.

Projects (*Due on Fridays by 11:59 pm, FL time*)

75 points each x 5 projects = 375 points total.

Throughout this course, you will have the opportunity to complete a variety of projects in response to project prompts. Depending on the week's prompt, projects provide you with the opportunity to summarize and reflect on a supplemental reading, write a personal reflection, listen and respond to a podcast or film, or conduct your own research and present your own analysis. Projects will require you to demonstrate

mastery of the material covered as well as an ability to apply acquired knowledge to an improved understanding of the global world. In addition to the five required projects, there will also be two additional optional projects which you may complete for extra credit. Each project is worth 75 points. Projects are due each week by 11:59 pm on Fridays. **Projects submitted late (including those completed extra credit) will lose 15 points.** (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT).

Quizzes (Due on Fridays by 11:59 pm, FL time)

70 points each x 7 weeks = 490 points total

Each week you will be asked to complete a quiz based on the assigned readings, lectures, films, and required course materials covered that week in class. Quizzes will be made up of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. You will have 60 minutes from the time you start the quiz to complete it. Quizzes are open book: you may use your notes, your textbook, course readings, and online multimedia to answer questions, but you may not give or receive help from your classmates. Quizzes must be completed by 11:59 pm on Fridays to receive credit. (GLOBAL AWARENESS).

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.

Discussion Board Posts (due on Wednesdays by 11:59 pm, FL Time)

15 points per post x 7 weeks = 105 points total

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 and apply the acquired knowledge to an improved understanding of the global world. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT).

Discussion Board Responses (due on Fridays by 11:59 pm)

5 points each x 7 weeks = 35 points total

In addition to your Discussion Board Posts, every week you will be required to read and respond to the posts of one or more of your classmates. You may build on something they said, add your own thoughts to an issue or experience they raised, or respond to a thought they brought up that made you think of something in a new way. This course and our discussion boards should be a safe place to experiment with and get to know new ideas; please ensure that your comments are constructive, respectful, and conducive to a positive learning environment where people are comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. While you may respond to and engage with as many posts as you like, one response of at least 50 words is required per week and must be completed by 11:59 pm on Fridays.

Grading Policy and Schema

Graded Items

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available
Projects	5	75	375
Quizzes	7	70	490
Discussion Board Posts	7	15	105
Discussion Board Posts Responses	7	5	35
Total			1005

Grading Schema

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

This syllabus is subject to change.

Please see Canvas for assignments and course schedule.

