



ANT 3241 Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism

Section: RVDA

Internet/Fully Online

Summer Term 2025

UCC Category Description

This course satisfies the University Core Curriculum Social Science - Group Two requirement.

According to this category:

Students will demonstrate the ability to examine behavioral, social, and cultural issues from a variety of points of view. Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavioral, social, and cultural issues, past and present, local and global.

Professor Information

Robin Steiner

Contact: rsteiner@fiu.edu

Office Hours:

Virtual Office Hours available by appointment

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 Goals

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.

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 the 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.

Assignments

This course involves four graded components: 1) Projects; 2) Quizzes; 3) Discussion Board Posts; and 4) Discussion Board Post Responses. Details of each component of the course are outlined below.

Assessments

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

7 required x 60 points each = 420 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 may 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. Extra credit projects will be available. Each project is worth 60 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).

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

7 required x 60 points each = 420 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).

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

6 required x 20 points each = 120 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 as well as an ability to apply the acquired knowledge to an improved

understanding of the global world. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT).

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

6 required x 7 points each = 42 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

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: 4th edition (2017) or 5rd Edition (2024)

Copyright Date: 2017

ISBN 10: 9781138692527

ISBN 13: 978-1138692527

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.

Academic Integrity

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.

This syllabus is subject to change.

Please see Canvas for updated assignments/course schedule.