

Course Syllabus ↕



Syllabus

ANT3241: Myth, Ritual, and Mysticism; Section RVBB

Professor Dr. Jean Muteba **Rahier**



(305) 348 - 2246

Office Hours: Zoom Only (Fridays from 10am to 12pm)

E-mail: Via the Canvas Inbox system **only**

You will reach the professor faster by sending a Canvas message than by leaving a voice-mail. He checked Canvas messages several times per day

Course Description and Purpose

This 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 not be to promote or debunk beliefs and practices, but rather to understand them using approaches from anthropology, sociology, social psychology and history, appreciating beliefs and practices in cultural, social and political contexts 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 beliefs in invisible supernatural forces and associated practices; appreciating the complexity and ambiguity of the historical and anthropological record, and with weighing alternative interpretations. We will see that the belief in the existence of invisible supernatural forces is not limited to the global south or rural areas, and are indeed also found in the global north and always growing urban areas.

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, 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.
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Student Learning Objectives

University Core Curriculum

This course satisfies the following University Core Curriculum requirement for Social Science Group Two (FIU-required):

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.

This requirement is supported by the following learning outcomes for the course. 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, 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 its different types.
- 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 invisible supernatural entities including gods, spirits, souls, ghosts, and ancestors.


Global Learning Assessments

In this course, the Final Essay fulfills the GL requirement. It asks students to demonstrate comprehension of the existence of various perspectives associated with different religious/spiritual subjectivities and diverse cultural backgrounds. It also asks students to demonstrate their willingness to engage—thanks to what they have learned—in problem-solving activities related to religions and religiously informed worldviews. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE and GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT)


Global Learning Student Learning Objectives

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, sorcery and various kinds of superstitions. (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 ([Go Global Website](http://goglobal.fiu.edu)  (<http://goglobal.fiu.edu>)).

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 [Go Global Website](http://goglobal.fiu.edu)  (<http://goglobal.fiu.edu>).

Important Information

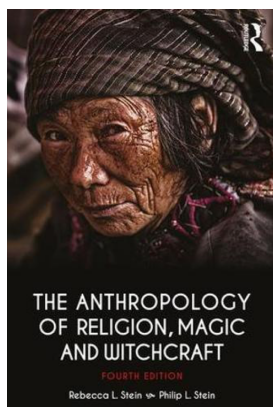
Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Policies](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/policies) (<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/policies>)
- [Netiquette](https://online.fiu.edu/html/canvas/policies/)  (<https://online.fiu.edu/html/canvas/policies/>)
- [Technical Requirements and Skills](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/technical-requirements-and-skills) (<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/technical-requirements-and-skills>)
- [Accessibility and Accommodation](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/accessibility-and-accommodation) ([https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/accessibility-and-](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/accessibility-and-accommodation)

accommodation)

- [Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/panthers-care-and-counseling-and-psychological-services-caps) (<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/panthers-care-and-counseling-and-psychological-services-caps>)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/academic-misconduct-statement) (<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/academic-misconduct-statement>)

Textbook and Course Materials



The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft

Rebecca L. Stein, Phillip L. Stein

Pearson, 4th Edition, 2017

ISBN: 9781138692527

E-text is available

You may purchase your textbook online at the [FIU Bookstore](http://fiu.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/BNCBHomePage?storeId=21551&catalogId=10001)  (<http://fiu.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/BNCBHomePage?storeId=21551&catalogId=10001>).

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.

Unfortunately, there is an error in the textbook, in the table 7.1 on page 155 (chapter 7). You should pay careful attention to this error as it might lead you to select the wrong answer to two questions included in quiz # 7. The table 7.1 on page 155 **erroneously** includes "prophecy" as a deliberate inspirational method of divination. It should instead have presented "prophecy" as a fortuitous inspirational method. The text surrounding that table is correct, however. **PLEASE MAKE NOTE OF IT.**

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, all essays will be automatically screened by turnitin.com, the vendor FIU uses to detect and fight against plagiarism.
2. All essays you write for this course **MUST** be originally written by the submitting student. **NO** usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the writing of any essay is allowed. You must write the essays you submit yourself, entirely. **You should be aware that Turnitin.com detects AI-generated essays or portions of**


essays. If your essay is flagged by Turnitin.com for any level of AI generation, you will be reported to Academic Affairs. NO USE OF AI ALLOWED. Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments must be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism. Ethics still matter and plagiarism is a serious offense.

3. Papers must include a title, your name, the course name and number, and **page numbers**.
4. **All Canvas message correspondence with me must begin with a proper 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 these.**
5. 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.
6. **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.**
7. 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.
8. **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.**
9. **You may not recycle a paper/essay you have written for another course as an assignment for this course. Turnitin.com will catch this. Any correspondance of any of the sections of your paper/essay with a paper/essay you have written for another course will be flagged by Turnitin.com as a case of plagiarism. You will therefore receive the grade of zero for that assignment.**
10. **All students must regularly read the contents of all announcements. Announcement contents are considered known by all enrolled students.**

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.

Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Video-Guide/Conversations-Overview-All-Users/ta-p/383696)  (<https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Video-Guide/Conversations-Overview-All-Users/ta-p/383696>) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Discussions and the Inbox.

Discussion Forums

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other students. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

90 points of the final grade (90/1,000) will be reflective of your level of participation in the chapter discussions that the professor will initiate. There will be more than one discussion open per chapter. The chapter discussions will be open for a limited time period, which will correspond to the chapter we are covering in each specific week (see Course Calendar at the bottom of the syllabus). What is looked for here with this system is your enthusiastic participation IN DUE TIME. It is highly recommended that you keep up with the program set up in the syllabus and calendar. Previous participation in chapter discussions helps students score better in quizzes. **At the end of the semester**, the professor will review the level of participation of each student in the course's e-archives and assign a participation grade accordingly. The objective of these discussions is to provide the students with the opportunity to discuss material that might be novel and surprising. Discussions help the comprehension of new concepts. However, in order to facilitate the actual discussions, and make sure that they stay on focus, students should enter relatively brief (3 paragraphs maximum) interventions at a time. **It is expected that students will participate in at least 2 to 3 discussions per chapter.** Feel free to respond—in a courteous manner—directly to another student's posting. **The more you post, the better it is for your participation grade.** Twice a week, the professor will take a look at the evolving discussions and intervene as he sees it necessary. **The e-space of the discussions may NOT be used for the transmission of a personal message from a student to another, or from a student for the professor. For the latter, the course's e-mail and message posting systems must be used.**

- **There are 12 Sets of Questions** (check schedule below for due dates)



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 for my office hours.

[Zoom Test Meeting Room \(https://zoom.us/test\)](https://zoom.us/test)

Use this link to access the Zoom Test Meeting Room. This meeting room is available to test out the software before joining an actual session.

Reference the provided links to access Zoom student tutorials to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.

- [Download Zoom \(https://zoom.us/support/download\)](https://zoom.us/support/download).
- [Login to Zoom through Desktop Application \(https://fiu.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article&sys_id=4483f98adbdc37484968fbf9af9619a5\)](https://fiu.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article&sys_id=4483f98adbdc37484968fbf9af9619a5)
- [Enable and Test Audio & Webcam \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362283-How-Do-I-Join-or-Test-My-Computer-Audio-\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362283-How-Do-I-Join-or-Test-My-Computer-Audio-).
- [Schedule a meeting \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362413-How-Do-I-Schedule-Meetings-\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362413-How-Do-I-Schedule-Meetings-) or

- [Join a Zoom meeting \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-How-Do-I-Join-A-Meeting-\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-How-Do-I-Join-A-Meeting-)
 - [Invite others to join meeting \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362183\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362183)
 - [Chat \(Professors\) - Students look at attendees section for instructions \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/205761999-Webinar-Chat\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/205761999-Webinar-Chat)
 - [Share My Screen \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362153-How-Do-I-Share-My-Screen-\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362153-How-Do-I-Share-My-Screen-)
 - [Record a Local Zoom meeting \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362473-How-do-I-record-a-meeting-\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362473-How-do-I-record-a-meeting-)
 - [Host Control in Meetings \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362603-Who-Is-The-Host-Of-The-Meeting-\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362603-Who-Is-The-Host-Of-The-Meeting-)
 - [Getting Started with iOS \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362993-Getting-Started-with-iOS\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362993-Getting-Started-with-iOS)
 - [Getting Started with Android \(https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/200942759-Getting-Started-with-Android\)](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/200942759-Getting-Started-with-Android)
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Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the [Practice Quiz \(%24CANVAS_OBJECT_REFERENCE%24/quizzes/g8d68a98bb6ca51202c569e26a4ed68c3\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/important-information-about-quizzes) 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 \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/important-information-about-quizzes\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/important-information-about-quizzes) page.

There are eleven quizzes based on assigned readings and films. These quizzes have multiple choice questions and cover both the contents of the required readings and films. There are 20 questions per quiz. The questions come from a question bank. No two quizzes will have the exact same questions.

- **11 Quizzes** (check Course Calendar or the Assignments link for due dates)
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Assignments

- **Final Essay**

The prompt will become available at a set date (see the bottom section of the syllabus. That essay will deal with the content of chapter 12 (and by extension with the contents of all chapters).

For assignment availability, detailed instructions, grading criteria and feedback response time, please review the [important information about assignments \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/important-information-about-assignments\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/important-information-about-assignments) page.

Grading

Your final grade will be calculated out of 1,000 points.

Grading Criteria Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available
11 Quizzes	11	60	660
Final Essay (3-4 pages)	1	250	250
Class E-Participation			90
Total		N/A	1000




Grading Schema Table














Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%
A	Above 920	B	830 - 869	C	700 - 769
A-	900 - 919	B-	800 - 829	D	620 - 699
B+	870 - 899	C+	770 - 799	F	Below 620














Course Calendar (<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/pages/course-calendar>)

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
	 Module 1 Discussions https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324583	due by 11:59pm
Sun Nov 12, 2023	 Module 2 Discussions https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324584	due by 11:59pm
	 Module 3 Discussions https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324585	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
	 Module 4 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324586)	due by 11:59pm
	 Module 5 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324587)	due by 11:59pm
	 Module 6 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324588)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 1 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324572)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 2 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324573)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 3 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324575)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 4 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324581)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 5 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324571)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 6 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324576)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Dec 3, 2023	 Final Essay (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324595)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Dec 10, 2023	 Module 10 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324592)	due by 11:59pm
	 Module 11 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324593)	due by 11:59pm
	 Module 12 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324582)	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
	 Module 7 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324589)	due by 11:59pm
	 Module 8 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324590)	due by 11:59pm
	 Module 9 Discussions (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324591)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 10 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324579)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 11 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324578)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 7 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324574)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 8 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324577)	due by 11:59pm
	 Quiz 9 (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324580)	due by 11:59pm
	 Class Participation (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324594)	
	 Mid-Semester Grade (UCC Requirement) (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2268567)	
	 Mid-Semester Grade (UCC Requirement) (https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/172229/assignments/2324596)	