

**ANT 3241-U06
MYTH, RITUAL, AND MYSTICS
FALL 2024**

Meeting Location: Charles E. Perry (PC) 426

Meeting Time: Tu 3:30-4:45 pm

Instructor:

Teaching Assistant

Dr. Alfonso Matas
Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies
Office: SIPA I 504
Office Hours: After Tuesday's class
Email: CANVAS mail

N/A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the anthropological study of religion and will focus upon phenomena that may be categorized broadly as “religion” and the closely related concept “supernatural.” this is not a course in theology, broadly defined as the systematic study of the nature of religious belief. Rather, the course examines and analyzes the way religion is practiced and performed in diverse societies through reviewing central aspects of religion, such as mythology, symbolism, ritual, religious specialists, gods and spirits, witchcraft, and magic. This course will approach these topics from the perspective of anthropology. The course begins with an overview of anthropological approaches and theoretical contributions to the study of religion. We will look at the role religion plays in everyday life via reviewing topics such as sickness, death, and uncertainty. The course ends with an examination of religion and violence.

Student Learning Objectives and Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Understand the culturally informed and quite diverse imaginations about 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 links that exist in different societies between spirituality, religious beliefs, and conviction of the existence of supernatural forces and healing, 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, 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 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.

GL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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 discuss 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).
- Develop the intellectual skills for analyzing and solving a variety of sociocultural issues around the globe (GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT).

TEXTBOOK (REQUIRED)

Rebecca L Stein and Philip Stein, *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*, Publisher: Routledge 4th edition (2017), ISBN 9781138692527, ISBN-10: 0205718116, ISBN-13: 978-0205718115. 5th edition.

CHECK CANVAS FOR ADDITIONAL READINGS AND REQUIRED WORK FOR EACH WEEK!

YOU ARE REQUIRED TO READ ASSIGNED READINGS AND COMPLETE REQUIRED WORK PRIOR TO CLASS. THE SUCCESS IN CLASS WILL DEPEND ON YOUR COMPLETION OF THESE ASSIGNED WORKS.

CANVAS: Additional Readings, Requirements, Course Slides, Project Guidelines, Citation Guidelines will be on CANVAS.

Login via <http://canvas.fiu.edu/login/> and check that you can access the course website. If you encounter any technical problems, then call UTS at 305.348.2284 or go to Green Library Rm. 150.

CLASS STRUCTURE

This is a Hybrid course. This means that we meet only once a week face-to-face. However, you will be given weekly assignments to be completed during the week prior to the next meeting, thus enhancing knowledge through these assignments. With this in mind, you will be directed to watch videos on chapter topics on a weekly basis as well. Also, you are expected to get exposure to the course content

prior to class—that is, to read the assigned textbook chapter, articles, and videos—and will be quizzed on your understanding of such content.

GRADING

1. CANVAS Quizzes	25%	(due after class on CANVAS)
2. Weekly Group Assignment	25%	(At-Home assignment)
3. Preliminary Site Visit Report	5%	(At-Home CANVAS)
4. Final Religious Site Visit report	20%	(At-Home assignment, CANVAS)
5. Final Exam	20%	(At-Home assignment, CANVAS)
6. Attendance	5%	
TOTAL	100%	

1. INDIVIDUAL (ONLINE) CANVAS QUIZZES (25% OF FINAL GRADE)

CANVAS Quizzes are short multiple choice, True/false, and/or short answer quizzes on the week's chapter that you will be taken individually, online after the corresponding class lecture. Quiz dates will be indicated on Syllabus and on CANVAS. No make-ups are allowed for these quizzes. Even if you are not planning to attend the lecture, you are required to take the quiz online before the due date.

2. AT-HOME WEEKLY GROUP ASSIGNMENTS (25% OF FINAL GRADE)

These assignments represent an important element of this course. The assignments are geared to strengthen and complement the book material and lectures. These at-home group assignments will require you to read articles, watch videos and respond to a series of questions on topics directly related to the textbook chapter under study (Global Awareness, Global Perspective).

3. PRELIMINARY RELIGIOUS SITE VISIT REPORT (5% OF FINAL GRADE)

This is a one-page report intended to be submitted prior to attending your final visit to the religious site you have selected (read the project description in CANVAS).

4. FINAL RELIGIOUS SITE VISIT REPORT (20% OF FINAL GRADE)

For this individual project students are required to write a term paper (7-8 pages). Further guidelines for this project can be found in CANVAS. (Global Awareness, Global Perspective, and Global Engagement).

5. FINAL EXAM – ONLINE (20% OF FINAL GRADE)

Final Exam is a multiple-choice exam. You will take it online during finals week. It is a timed test. It will test your overall understanding/learning in the course. It will not be based on memorization. It will be based on your individual assignments/discussions, and key learning points in the course. You can find the detailed guidelines on CANVAS.

GENERAL CLASS POLICIES

Attendance: all students are expected to be prepared and to be on time. Students are expected to treat the instructor, as well as other students with dignity and respect, especially in cases where a diversity of opinion arises. Students who engage in disruptive behavior are subject to disciplinary action, including removal from the course. **Attendance will be graded and will represent 5% of**

your final grade). If you need to miss a class due to illness (medical doctor's note), religious observances or team participation (official paperwork) you must notify me prior to the class.

You are expected to come well prepared to every class, be on time and be prepared to participate in class discussions. Prior to each weekly lecture, you are expected to have read the assigned chapter.

Everyone has the responsibility of making the classroom a "safe" environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing his or her thoughts. In this class environment opinions are respected, even when all members of the class may not share them. Class discussions and activities will help you to understand the connection between what is being taught in class and how it relates to the everyday life.

CANVAS - My Grades: Check your grades periodically. It is your responsibility to check your grades on CANVAS and to inform me on missing grades/assignments before the semester ends. **DO NOT CONTACT ME ABOUT MISSING GRADES AFTER FINAL GRADES ARE POSTED!!!**

Academic Conduct: Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty: As an FIU student, you are always 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 are not familiar with how to avoid plagiarism, you will receive some instruction and additional guidelines in this course. In sum, should anything you produce, cite any data, research or information that you have not generated, and which is not general knowledge then you must cite it appropriately following one of the disciplinary conventions of the academic disciplines represented by the faculty teaching this course. More information about citation formatting will be given to you via CANVAS. Please become completely familiar with bibliographic styles and citation conventions. If you do not cite others' work adequately you can be accused of plagiarism and FIU takes these accusations very seriously. Several of your written assignments will be submitted using Turnitin.com to check your work for plagiarism. Finally, I reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed. You will be notified of any changes.

Tardiness: Assignments received after the deadline will lose 1/2 or 1 grade; one week and over 1 full grade or more.

Special Needs Students: Please notify the faculty prior to or immediately upon commencement of this course about your accommodation needs as in accordance with FIU policy. You will be accommodated accordingly.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of the University. The principles of academic freedom are integral to the conception of the University as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and the communication of knowledge in an atmosphere of tolerance

and freedom. The University serves the common good through teaching, research, scholarship/creative activities, and service. The fulfillment of these functions rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of teaching, expression, research, and debate. We affirm that academic freedom is a protected right in addition to a faculty member's constitutionally protected freedom of expression and is fundamental to the faculty member's responsibility to seek and to state truth as he or she sees it.

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint of belief.

Getting Help

Please come to me with any problems or questions because I want to help you succeed in my class. Beyond the instructor, students may benefit from other resources FIU offers. Here are some frequent obstacles students face, and the programs and services that FIU provides to assist with the obstacle.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

I'm having trouble with a writing assignment. I can't get started, organize my ideas, develop this beyond the first two pages, etc.

[Center for Excellence in Writing](#) (more casually called the Writing Center): During any stage of the writing process, the writing consultants at the writing center are available to help you set clear goals, bring focus to your ideas, and encourage creative and critical thinking. I may, at any point in the semester, recommend you visit the writing center. However, I do actively encourage all students to take advantage of this great resource. Even the most confident writers can benefit from the help our writing center provides.

I'm having trouble reading these academic articles. I am finding it difficult to study effectively. My high school study strategies aren't working in college.

[University Learning Center](#): The Learning Center also has peer tutors available to help you. The Learning Center is the place to go if you want assistance focused on reading or study skills.

I'm really stressed out and it's affecting my classwork or my life. I'm having personal problems that are interfering with school.

[Counseling Services](#): If you find your academic performance (or just your daily life) is hindered because of anxiety, stress, depression, relationship issues, or other personal struggles, FIU offers Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to help you. CAPS consists of licensed psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and trainees with expertise in dealing with student concerns and development. Registered students are eligible to utilize these services and participate in the programs.

I have a diagnosed disability and need accommodations to do my best.

[Disability Resource Center](#): Any student with a diagnosed disability has access to special accommodations through the DRC. You must register with the DRC to receive such accommodations.

I am encountering technical problems in my Canvas course.

[LMS Help Support Services](#): Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring. I can usually help you if you are having a problem with a very specific assignment. However, if you

are having trouble accessing Canvas or if you are noticing something that seems like a technical glitch, please contact Canvas support.

COURSE OUTLINE

C: CANVAS **Tu:** Tuesday

WEEK 1

August, **Tu** 27 Introduction, Syllabus Review, Brief Introduction to Anthropology, Getting to Know Each Other
***** Take the Practice Test on Syllabus by Th 29!!!**
See CANVAS for the link!

WEEK 1- READINGS:

-Chapter 1: Start reading The Anthropological Study of Religion

Required canvas week 1 uploaded videos

Strangers Abroad Off the Verandah
 Doing Anthropology

WEEK 2

Sep, **Tu** 3 The Anthropological Study of Religion, The Anthropological Perspective, What is "Religion"? Attempts at Defining Religion, Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion.
Take CANVAS quiz 1 due Fr 6 @ 11:59 pm
Complete at-home group assignment. Due Sat. 7 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK 2- READINGS:

-Chapter 1: The Anthropological Study of Religion, continued.
 - Article-1: Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (C)

All canvas week 2 uploaded videos are required

WEEK 3

Sep. **Tu** 10 Myths and Symbols, The Nature of Myths, Understanding Myths, Approaches to Analysis of Myths, In-class Activities
Take CANVAS quiz 2 due Fr 13 @ 11:59 pm
Complete at-home group assignment 2 due Sat 14 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-3 READINGS:

Chapter-2: Mythology
 Bronislaw Malinowski, The Role of Myth in Life (C)

All canvas week 3 uploaded videos

All canvas short films found in canvas are required

Optional documentaries but highly recommended

Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth I Ep. 2: "The Message of the Myth"
Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth I Ep. 3: "The First Storytellers"

WEEK 4

Sep. Tu 17 Religious Symbols, Sacred Art, Sacred Space and Time, The Symbolism of Music and Dance, In-class Activities
Take CANVAS quiz 3 due Fr 20 @ 11:59 pm
Complete at-home group assignment 3 due Sat 21 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-4 READINGS:

Chapter-3: Religious Symbols

Eric Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol" (C) (necessary to complete the group assignment).

All canvas week 4 uploaded videos are required**Optional documentaries but highly recommended**

Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth I Ep. 1: "The Hero's Adventure"

WEEK 5

Sep. Tu 24 Ritual and Myth, The Basics of Ritual Performances, Rites of Passage, Classification of Rituals, Religious Obligations
Take CANVAS quiz 4 due Fr 27 @ 11:59 pm
Complete at-home group assignment 4 due Sat 28 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-5 READINGS:

Chapter-4: Ritual

V. W. Turner, Ritual Symbolism, Morality, & Social Structure among the Ndembu (C)

-Edmund Leach, Ritual Symbolism (C)

-Turner, Victor (1964) Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage

Classification of rituals (a condensed summary)

All canvas week 5 uploaded videos are required**WEEK 6**

Oct. Tu 1 Altered States of Consciousness (ASC), Entering an ASC, Ritual setting in ASC, Ethnographic Examples of ASC, In-class Activities
 Take CANVAS quiz 5 due Fr 4 @ 11:59 pm
 Complete at-home group assignment 5 due Sat 5 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-6 READINGS:

Chapter-5: Altered States of Consciousness

Napoleon A. Chagnon, My Adventure with Ebene: A "Religious Experience" (C)

All canvas week 6 uploaded videos are required

WEEK 7

Oct. Tu 8 Religious Specialists, Shamans, Priests, Other Specialists, In-class Activities
 Take CANVAS Quiz 6 due Fr 11 @ 11:59 pm
 Complete at-home group assignment due Sat 12 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-7 READINGS:

Chapter-6: Religious Specialists

Margery Wolf, The Woman Who Didn't Become a Shaman (C)

The two short articles entitled "Lakota Declare War against Shamans" and "Resolution of the 5th Annual Meeting of the Tradition Elders Circle."

All canvas week 7 uploaded videos are required

WEEK 8

Oct. Tu 15 Magic and Divinations, Magic and Religion, The Function of Magic, Magic in Society, Divination, Forms of Divination, In-class Activities
 Take CANVAS Quiz 7 due Fr 18 @ 11:59 pm
 Complete at-home group assignment 7 due Sat 19 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-8 READINGS:

Chapter-7: Magic and Divination

George Gmelch, Baseball Magic (C)

All canvas week 8 uploaded videos are required

WEEK 9

Oct. Tu 22 Souls and Ancestors, Variation in the Concept of the Soul; Souls, Death, and the Afterlife, Bodies and Souls, Death Rituals, Funeral Rituals, In-class Activities: Halloween

Take CANVAS Quiz 8 due Fr 25 @ 11:59 pm

Complete at-home group assignment 8 due Sat 26 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-9 READINGS:

Chapter-8: Souls, Ghosts and Death

The Contemporary American Funeral Ritual" by Whiteaker (C)

All canvas week 9 uploaded videos are required

Optional documentaries but highly recommended

Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth I Ep. 4: "Sacrifice and Bliss"

WEEK 10

Oct. Tu 29

Gods and Spirits; Supernatural, Gods, Spirits and Society; Monotheism; Polytheism, In-class Activities

Take CANVAS Quiz 9 due Fr 1 @ 11:59 pm

Complete at-home group assignment 9 due Sat 2 @ 11:59 pm

One-page proposal Site Visit Report due Nov 3 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-10 READINGS:

Chapter-9: Gods and Spirits (T)

Classical Mythology, refer to the pages mentioned in the group assignment (C))

Harari "Sapiens" - chapter pages discussing God (C)

Evans Pritchard "Witchcraft among the Azande" (C)

All canvas week 10 uploaded videos are required

Optional documentaries but highly recommended

Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth I Ep. 5: "The Love and the Goddess"

Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth I Ep. 6: "Masks of Eternity"

WEEK 11

Nov. Tu 5

Witchcraft and Sorcery; Witchcraft in Small-Scale Societies, Euro-American Witchcraft Beliefs, In-class Activities

Take CANVAS Quiz 10 due Fr 8 @ 11:59 pm

Complete at-home group assignment 10 due Sat 9 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-11 READINGS:

Chapter-10: Witchcraft

E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande (C)

All canvas week 11 uploaded videos are required

WEEK 12

Nov. Tu 12 Special lecture: Explaining gender inequalities: An Anthropological Perspective of Witchcraft
No quiz or group assignment this week

NO READINGS THIS WEEK

WEEK 13

Nov. Tu 19 Adaptation and Change; Syncretism and Revitalization; Domains and Boundaries of Religion, Fundamentalism, Secularism, and New Religious Movements, In-class Activities
Take CANVAS Quiz 11 due Fr 22 @ 11:59 pm
Complete at-home group assignment 11 due Sat 23 @ 11:59 pm

WEEK-13 READINGS:

Chapter-11: The Search for New Meaning
Alice Beck Kehoe, "The Ghost Dance Religion" (C)

All canvas week 13 uploaded videos are required

Watch the 4 short films found in canvas for a total of 20 minutes

WEEK 14

Nov. Tu 26 Role of Religion in conflict and violence. Fundamentalism. Religion, terrorism and peace.

WEEK-14 READINGS:

Chapter-12: Religion, conflict, and Peace

FINAL RELIGIOUS SITE VISIT REPORT DUE NOVEMBER 24TH

WEEK 15

Dec. Tu 3

Special lecture: Beyond Good and Evil

NO READINGS THIS WEEK

FINAL EXAM REVIEW

WEEK 16

******* FINALS WEEK DEC 8-14 *******

ONLINE FINAL EXAM DECEMBER 10th
CANVAS

This course syllabus is subject to change if the instructor deems it necessary in order to accomplish the course objectives. Students will be advised about any change made to the syllabus.

IMPORTANT DATES/CHECKLIST

- CANVAS Quizzes.....After each class Due on Friday (CANVAS)
- Group at-home assignments.....Saturdays at-home (CANVAS)
- One-page proposal SITE VISIT REPORT..... November 3rd (CANVAS)
- FINAL RELIGIOUS SITE VISIT REPORT..... Nov. 24th (CANVAS)
- ONLINE FINAL EXAM..... Dec.10th (CANVAS)
