

Spring 2006

Anthropology 222: Visions of the Sacred

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Office Hours: MW 11:00 – 12:00; MW 3:00 – 4:00 and by appointment

I. Objectives

This course is an introduction to the anthropological study of religion. It takes a comparative, cross-cultural approach to the study of religious systems and spirituality. We will examine the religions of native peoples, as well as organized religions and new religious movements as parts of complex cultural systems which include subsistence, economics and social structure. Our primary focus in this course is not religious belief, but practice: what people do and why they do it. Among the topics we will cover are myth (sacred narrative), cosmology, types of spiritual beings, religious specialists, the role of ritual, magic and witchcraft, gender and religion, drugs, ethnomedicine and healing, millenarian cults and New Age spirituality. We will read and critique what anthropologists have written about religion. It is helpful for students taking this class to keep an open-minded, non-judgemental approach to religion; each of the religions and belief systems we will examine have their own unique vision of the sacred.

Anthropology 222, "Visions of the Sacred," fulfills the lower division GE Section C Humanities requirement.

II. Format

This course will be taught in a lecture format, with occasional class exercises and discussions. Lectures are designed to complement, *not duplicate*, the readings. You are expected to attend class regularly, arrive prepared (having read and taken notes on the day's assignment), and participate in class activities and discussions. Attendance means arriving on time, staying for the duration of the class, and notifying the instructor in case of prolonged absence. You have two "sick days" – classes you may miss without penalty. Classes missed beyond that point will count against your final grade, unless special provisions have been made with the instructor. Two late arrivals count as one absence. Participation means regularly taking part in class discussions and activities by contributing relevant comments and questions, and maintaining a respectful attitude towards others in the class. This includes speaking only when called on, not interrupting others, and being respectful of different opinions and beliefs.

Cell phones and pagers are not allowed in this class. In consideration of your fellow students, please turn them off before coming to class.

III. Requirements

The following text is required reading for the course:

**Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers, ed., *Magic Witchcraft and Religion*.
Mayfield Publishing, 6th Edition.**

It is available for purchase at the Matador Bookstore, as well as on reserve in the Oviatt Library. You are encouraged to buy the text, as there may be a lot of demand for reserve items, especially before tests and exams. You may sell your text back to the bookstore at the end of the term, as this book is used in many college classes. This course requires up to 20 pages of reading every week. Material from readings will appear on the tests. If you are not able or willing to do the work, you should drop the class.

Occasionally throughout the semester, films and slides will be shown in class to illustrate points in the lectures and readings. It is possible, but complicated, to make up missed films; it is impossible to view missed slide shows. It is important to attend them, as you will be tested on their content.

In addition to the tests (see below), students will complete a written assignment. More information on this assignment will be available in a separate handout. **Late assignments will be downgraded 1 letter grade for each day they are handed in late.**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. It involves copying material from sources without giving a full bibliographic citation, handing in work in which unacknowledged material appears, and handing in material written by a person other than the student handing in the assignment. Penalties for plagiarism range from failing the course to expulsion. Plagiarized work will automatically receive no credit. All plagiarism will be reported to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for testing taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at (818) 677-2684.

IV. Tests

There will be three tests, one on each unit in the course. They will include multiple choice, true false, and short answer questions. If you miss one test due to illness, your grade will be calculated based on the average of your other two test grades. If you miss more than one test, *you will be assigned a grade of 0 (zero) for the second test you miss.*

Final grade analysis:

Attendance and participation.....	10%
Writing assignment.....	30%
First midterm.....	20%
Second midterm.....	20%
Third midterm.....	20%

V. Grading Scale

93-100 = A	83-88 = B	73-77 = C	63-67 = D
90-92 = A-	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-
88-89 = B+	78-79 = C+	68-69 = D+	59 and below = F

A = Outstanding; far surpasses basic requirements and shows excellence in knowledge, understanding and skills
 B = Proficient; surpasses basic requirements in knowledge, understanding and skills
 C = Satisfactory; meets basic requirements in knowledge, understanding and skills
 D = Passing; meets requirements, but shows significant deficiencies in knowledge, understanding and skills.
 F = Failing; does not meet basic requirements in knowledge, understanding and skills

Week-by-Week Course Syllabus

Week of	Topic and Readings
1/30 – 2/3	Introduction: the Anthropological Study of Religion Read: Geertz, “Religion,” pp. 6-15; Lee, “Religious Perspectives in Anthropology,” pp. 19-25.
2/6 – 2/10	Myths: Our Sacred Stories Read: Leonard & McClure, “The Study of Mythology,” pp. 56-67 Film: <i>The Popol Vuh</i>
2/13-2/17	Cosmology: How We Organize the World Read: Douglas, “Taboo,” pp. 72-76; Brown, “Voodoo,” pp. 317-322
2/20-2/24	Spirits: Why We Believe and How We Relate to Them Read: Harris, “Why We Became Religious” and “The Evolution of the Spirit World,” pp. 15-18; Santino, “Yellow Ribbons and Seasonal Flags,” pp. 83-91. Film: <i>TBA</i>
2/27-3/1	Ritual Read: Turner, “Betwixt and Between,” pp. 96-105; Magliocco, “Ritual is My Chosen Art Form,” pp. 127-139.
3/3	Test 1

- 3/6-3/10 Religious Specialists: Priests, Prophets and Shamans
Read: Turner, "Religious Specialists," pp. 147-154; von Furer-Haimendorf, "Priests," pp. 155-159.
Film: *Between Two Worlds: Hmong Shaman*
- 3/13-3/17 Altered States: Drugs and Religious Ecstasy
Read: Kiyaani and Csordas, "On the Peyote Road," pp. 188-190; Harner, "The Sound of Rushing Water," pp. 195-200.
Film: *Eduardo the Healer*
- 3/20-3/24 Witchcraft and Sorcery
Read: Brain, "An Anthropological Perspective on the Witch Craze," pp. 258-264; McPherson, "Sorcery and Deviance in ... West New Britain," pp. 265-273.
- 3/27-3/29 Magic and Divination
Read: Gmelch, "Baseball Magic," pp. 294-300; Evans-Pritchard, "Consulting the Poison Oracle Among the Azande," pp. 282-287.
Film: *Consulting the Poison Oracle*
- 3/31 Cesar Chavez Day; No Class!**
- 4/3-4/7 Ethnomedicine and Healing
Read: Rebhun, "Swallowing Frogs," pp. 233-244
Film: *Spirit Doctors*
- 4/10-4/14 Spring Break; No Class!**
- 4/17-4/19 Ghosts and the Dead
Read: Barber, "The Real Vampire," pp. 311-316; Haney, Leimer and Lowery, "Spontaneous Memorialization," pp. 333-340.
- 4/20 Test 2**
- 4/24-4/28 Religion and Social Change: Revitalization Movements
Read: Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," pp. 361-366; Beck Kehoe, "The Ghost Dance," pp. 367-371.
Film: *Ghost Dance*
- 5/1-5/5 New Religions
Read: Luhrmann, "The Goat and the Gazelle," pp. 274-281; O'Leary, "Cyberspace as Sacred Space," pp. 462-475.
Film: *Beltane in Berkeley*

5/1

Written assignment due in class!.....

5/8-5/12

Millenarian Movements and “Cults”

Read: Barkun, “Reflections After Waco,” pp. 172-180;
Whitmore, “Religious Dimensions of the UFO Abductee
Experience,” pp. 392-401.

Film: *Waco: the Inside Story*

5/15-5/19

Fundamentalism and Religious Identity in a Changing
World

Read: Hoodfar, “The Veil in Their Minds and on Our
Heads,” pp. 407-422; Jurgensmeyer, “The Global Rise of
Religious Nationalism,” pp. 453-461.

May 22

12:45 – 2:45 PM Test 3!