

## **Anthropology 308: Anthropology of Religion**

*Monday and Thursday, 9:15 - 10:35, Bio-205, Douglass Campus*

Prerequisite: Intro to Cultural Anthropology 01:070:101

Instructor: Assaf Harel  
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Office Hours: Tuesday, 4:00 – 5:00  
Thursday, 12:00 - 1:00  
or by appointment  
Ruth Adams #313

### **Course Description:**

What does it mean to study religion anthropologically? This course introduces students to anthropological approaches of studying religion. We will explore multiple religious beliefs, meanings, experiences, expressions and practices across diverse sociocultural environments. For example, what may be the relations between spirit possession in Malaysia and our consumption habits here in the U.S.? What is modern about witchcraft? Can secular people be religious? In what ways New Media influence experiences of faith? Through an engagement with anthropological works on ritual, sacrifice, death, healing, religious activism and identities, to name a few, we will learn how religion is understood, experienced and expressed across different sociocultural environments, in the past, and within the contemporary moment. In addition, throughout the course, you will pursue individual research projects that will allow you to deepen your understanding of a specific question pertaining to religion and gain training in research, writing and presentation skills. In accordance, by the end of this course, you will gain theoretical knowledge and analytical tools that will enable you to critically examine sociocultural dimensions of the religion and situate them within historical and global context.

### **Course Objectives:**

- To introduce students to theories of religion within anthropology such as structuralism, symbolic interpretation, representation, practice theory and phenomenology [CITE 1 see <http://anthro.rutgers.edu/undergrad-program/department-learning-goals>]
- To provide students an awareness of religion within diverse cultural environments at the U.S., international and global scales
- To encourage critical thinking on a range of dilemmas posed by readings and films [CITE 2]
- To develop students' proficiency in speaking critically and effectively about the religion, its cultures and politics [CITE 5]
- To develop students' ability to research and write cogently and/or persuasively about the sociocultural dimensions of religion [CITE 3 & 4]

### **Key Texts:**

- Pamela A. Moro. 2013. *Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, McGraw-Hill
- Readings on Sakai
- A few more readings might be added during the course. This syllabus is thus subject to a few minor changes.

### **Assignments and Grading Structure (see schedule below for due dates):**

#### **Attendance and Participation 25%**

Class attendance is required. *No more than two absences will be accepted.* If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. *Active participation entails contributing thoughtful comments regarding presentations, readings, films, and group discussions during each class meeting.*

#### **Reading Notes 25%**

Without a serious commitment to the readings, you will not learn as much about the anthropology of the religion as you hoped and deserve. Students are expected to complete *all of the weekly readings before the first class* and come to class prepared to discuss the material. In addition, students *must bring the weekly readings to each class*. Furthermore, to help your learning, each week you will prepare readings notes that should not be longer than *one page*. These notes can include summaries of readings and main arguments; questions that probe into the author's arguments and methods and/or draw connections between that week's readings or the previous week; general questions concerning the readings; reflections. The notes will be used to facilitate class and group discussion. You are expected to bring the notes to *both of the weekly classes* and *submit them at the end of Thursday's class*. I will grade the reading notes as +√/√/-√. More specific instructions will be handed out in class and posted on Sakai.

#### **Research Paper 30%:**

Beginning in the first few weeks of the course, you are required to think about a final research project to be conducted during the semester. The final paper - which should be around 10 double-spaced pages - is to be a written analysis that illustrates how anthropological approaches for interpreting a particular religious phenomenon can be useful, or not, for further understanding a social issue of interest to you. The paper must demonstrate a grasp of the concepts you engage, contain a clearly stated research question, and provide a discussion of findings in relation to course readings. In addition, the paper must meaningfully cite at least 6 course readings. It is fine if you have no idea of what to explore. I will help you identify a topic that matches your interests. More specific instructions will be handed out in class and posted on Sakai. On *Thursday, 02/09*, you will submit a brief research proposal, of no more than one or two

paragraphs, in which you present a research topic. On *Thursday, 03/23*, you will submit a preliminary draft, which should be no longer than 2 pages and will include a clear research question, a rough outline, and an initial list of sources. In addition, *you are encouraged to meet with me at least once* to review your research project. The final paper is due on *May 7<sup>th</sup>*.

### **Presentation 20%:**

You will present in class your research project. The presentation assignment is aimed to allow you to share your project with the rest of the class, further conceptualize your research project, receive critical feedback, and gain the opportunity to develop your public speaking skills. The presentation needs to incorporate visuals or audiovisual elements that enrich and/or support the main argument. The topic of your presentation will be determined and approved along with your research project. More specific instructions will be handed out in class and posted on Sakai.

### **Course Policies:**

**Academic integrity:** The work you submit must be your own. Cheating and Plagiarism will not be tolerated. It is the students' responsibility to be familiar with the rights and obligations associated with academic integrity. You are encouraged to read the full policy on academic integrity at the following website: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers> and to consult these resources for guidelines on producing academic work: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources>.

**In Class:** Please arrive on time for all class meetings. While in class, all mobile phones, iPods, etc. must be silenced. Laptop usage is permitted only as long as it is not bothersome to other students. For example, do not surf through your private information while sitting in front of other students who may be distracted. If you miss a class, contact another student in the course to find out what you missed and how to prepare for the next meeting. I encourage active debate and exploration of complex issues. At the same time, the classroom environment must be one of respect for conflicting views.

**Submitting work for Evaluation:** I will accept late work, but with a one grade reduction for each 24 hours period it is late.

**Learning differences and support services:** Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class, during office hours or by email at the beginning of the semester. In addition, students will need to contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

**Note:** Some of the material may be troubling to some students. If you have concerns about this, *please speak with me early in the semester.*

## Course Schedule

### **Week 1 – Introduction – Th 01/19**

### **Week 2 – Insider/Outsider – Mo 1/23, Th 1/26**

Firth, Raymond

1999 (1996) “An Anthropological Approach to the Study of Religion,” In *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, Ed. Russell T. McCutcheon, London and New York: Cassell pp. 114-123

Jackson, Michael

1999 (1989) “The Witch as a Category and as a Person,” In *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, Ed. Russell T. McCutcheon, London and New York: Cassell pp. 311-326

Miner, Horace

1999 (1945) “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” In *The Insider/ Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, Ed. Russell T. McCutcheon, London and New York: Cassell, pp. 23-27

Turner, Edith B.

1993 The Reality of Spirits: A Tabooed or Permitted Field of Study? *Anthropology of Consciousness* 4(1):9-12

### **Week 3 - Symbolism and Interpretation – Mo 1/30, Th 2/02**

Daugherty, Mary Lee

1976 “Serpent-Handling as Sacrament,” *Theology Today* 33(3): 232-243

Geertz, Clifford

2001 (1966) “Religion as a Cultural System,” In *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, Ed. Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy, Broadview Press, pp. 57-74

Ortner, Sherry B.

1973 “On Key Symbols,” *American Anthropologist* 75(5):1338-1346

Wolf, Eric R.

1958 “The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 71(279): 34-39

Recommended:

Asad, Talal

1983 “Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz,” *Man* 18(2):237-259

**Week 4 – Ritual – Mo 2/06, Th 2/09**

Heiko Henkel

2005 "Between Belief and Unbelief Lies the Performance of Salat": Meaning and Efficacy of a Muslim Ritual," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11(3): 487–507

Kapchan, Deborah

1993 "Moroccan Women's Body Signs," In *Body Lore*, Ed. Katharine Young, The University of Tennessee Press, pp. 3-31

Myerhoff, Barbara G.

2013 (1978) "Return to Wirikuta: Ritual Reversal and Symbolic Continuity on the Peyote Hunt of the Uichol Indians," In *Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp. 112-119

Turner, Victor

1967 "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Itaca, NY: Cornell University Press, Pp. 93-111

**\* Research Proposal Due**

**Week 5 – Sacrifice – Mo 02/13, Th 02/16**

Halbertal, Moshe

2012 *On Sacrifice*, Princeton University Press, pp 1-29

Hicks, David

1996 "Making the King Divine: A Case Study in Ritual Regicide from Timor," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2(4):611-624

Hubert, Henri and Marcel Mauss

1964 *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, translated by W. D. Halls, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 9-13, 95-103

Mason, Michael Atwood

2013 (2002) "I Bow my Head to the Ground": Creating Bodily Experience Through Initiation," In *Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp.101-111

Recommended:

Lienhardt, Godfrey,

1961 "The Control of Experience: Symbolic Action," In *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 281-297

**Week 6 – Specialists – Mo 2/20, Th 2/23**

Bilu, Yoram and Eyal Ben-Ari

1992 “The Making of Modern Saints: Manufactured Charisma and the Abu-Hatseiras of Israel,” *American Ethnologist*, 19(4): 672-687

Hall, John R.

1979 "The apocalypse at Jonestown," *Society*. 16(6):52 - 61

Margery, Wolf

1990 “The Woman Who Didn't Become a Shaman,” *American Ethnologist*, 17(3): 419-430

Turner, Victor

2008 (1968) “Religious Specialist - Anthropological Study,” Available at *Encyclopedia.com*  
<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045001058.html>

**Week 7 – Altered States – Mo 2/27, Th 3/02**

Furst, Peter T and Coe, Michael D.

2013 (1977) “Ritual Enemas,” *In Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp. 205-209

Harener, Michael

2013 (1968) “The Sound of Rushing Water,” *In Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp. 210-215

Hartogsohn, Ido

2015 “Psychedelic Society Revisited: On Reducing Valves, Reality Tunnels and the Question of Psychedelic Culture,” [psypressuk.com](http://psypressuk.com/2015/09/03/psychedelic-society-revisited-on-reducing-valves-reality-tunnels-and-the-question-of-psychedelic-culture/?utm_content=buffer14c02&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer)  
[http://psypressuk.com/2015/09/03/psychedelic-society-revisited-on-reducing-valves-reality-tunnels-and-the-question-of-psychedelic-culture/?utm\\_content=buffer14c02&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://psypressuk.com/2015/09/03/psychedelic-society-revisited-on-reducing-valves-reality-tunnels-and-the-question-of-psychedelic-culture/?utm_content=buffer14c02&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

Ong, Aihwa

1988 “The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia,” *American Ethnologist*, 15(1): 28-42

**Week 8 – Healing and Disease – Mo 3/06, Th 3/09**

Fadiman, Anne F.

2013 (1997) “The Spirit Catches you and You Fall Down,” *In Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp. 252-258

Foster , George M.

1977 “Disease Etiologies in Non-Western Medical Systems,” *American Anthropologist* 78(4): 773-782

Gilmore, Lee

2005 “Embers, Dust and Ashes: Pilgrimage and Healing at the Burning Man Festival,” In *Pilgrimage and Healing*, Ed. Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelman, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, pp. 155-177

Kenyon, Susan M

1995 “Zar as Modernization in Contemporary Sudan,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 68(2): 107-120

### **Spring Recess**

#### **Week 9 – Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic – Mo 3/20 Th 3/23**

Evans-Pritchard, Edward

1939 *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford Clarendon Press, pp. 63-83

Luhmann, Tanya M.

2013 (1989) The Goat and the Gazelle: Witchcraft, In *Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp.307-315

Lévi-Strauss, Claude

1963 “The Sorcerer and His Magic.” In *Structural Anthropology*, Trans. Claire Jacobson & Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. Basic Books, pp. 167-185

Thomas, Felicity

2007 “‘Our Families are Killing Us’: HIV/AIDS, Witchcraft and Social Tensions in the Caprivi Region, Namibia,” *Anthropology & Medicine* 14(3): 279–291

**\* Preliminary draft due**

#### **Week 10 - Death – Mo 3/27, Th 3/30**

Canon, Walter B.

1942 “‘Voodoo’ Death,” *American Anthropologist* 44(2): 169-181

Conklin, Beth A.

1995 “‘Thus Are Our Bodies, Thus Was Our Custom’: Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian, Society,” *American Ethnologist*, 22 (1):75-101

Lock, Margaret

2013 (2002) “When bodies Outlive persons: Defining Brain Death,” *Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp. 362-372

Metcalf, Peter

2013 (1978) “Death Be Not Strange,” In *Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp. 340-352

### **Week 11 – Identities – Mo 4/03, Th 4/06**

Bowen, Donna Lee,

2014 “A New Jordanian Generation Wears the Hijab,” In *Bowen, Donna Lee, Evelyn Earley and Becky Schulthies, Eds., Everyday Life in the Middle East*, 3rd Edition. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, pp. 186-201

Lewis, William F.

2013 (1993) “Urban Rastas In Kingston, Jamaica,” In *Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp. 378-382

Myerhoff, Barbara

2008 (1978) “Jewish Comes Up in You From Roots,” In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Second Edition, Ed. Lambek, Michael, Blackwell Publishing, pp. 342-349

Rouse, Carolyn and Janet Hoskins

2004 “Purity, Soul Food, and Sunni Islam: Explorations at the Intersection of Consumption and Resistance,” *Cultural Anthropology* 19 (2): 226-249

### **Week 12 – Activism – Mo 4/10, Th 4/13**

Darlington, Susan M

1998 “The Ordination of a Tree: The Buddhist Ecology Movement in Thailand,” *Ethnology* 37(1): 1-15

Erzen, Tanya

2013 (2008) “Religious Literacy in Faith-Based Prison,” *Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Ninth Edition, Ed. Pamela A. Moro, McGraw-Hill, pp. 431-436

Juergensmeyer, Mark

2002 Religious Terror and Global War, In *Understanding September 11*, Ed. Craig Calhoun, Paul Price and Ashely Timmer, New York the Free Press, pp. 27-40

Harding, Susan F.

1987 “Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion,” *American Ethnologist* 14(1): 167-181



**Week 13 - The Contemporary – Mo 4/17, Th 4/20**

Early, Evelyn A.

2014 “Tele-Preachers and Talk Shows: Egyptian Religious Discourse,” In Bowen, Donna Lee, Evelyn Earley and Becky Schulthies, Eds., *Everyday Life in the Middle East*, 3rd Edition. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, pp. 331-350

Klin-Oron, Adam

2014 "How I learned to Channel: Epistemology, Phenomenology, and Practice in a New Age Course," *American Ethnologist* 41(4): 635-647

Luhrmann, Tanya M.

2004 “Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary U.S. Christianity,” *American Anthropologist* 106(3):518–528

**Week 14 and 15 – Conclusion and Presentations - Mo 4/24, Th 4/27, Mo 5/01**

**Final Paper Due May 7<sup>th</sup>**