

ANTH 0009 - MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT, RITUAL, MYTH AND RELIGION

Catalog Description

Hours: 54 lecture

Description: Exploration of supernatural beliefs and practices around the world and over time. Analysis of the forms and functions of myths, rituals, altered states of consciousness, spirit possession, religious movements, witchcraft, and curing. Investigation of the relationship between science, supernatural belief systems, and medicine. Examples drawn from many different cultures and addresses multiple aspects of people's religious and spiritual lives. (CSU, UC)

Course Student Learning Outcomes

- CSLO #1: Compare and contrast cultural, archaeology, linguistic and biological anthropology.
- CSLO #2: Apply approaches and methods of anthropology to the analysis of supernatural beliefs and practices
- CSLO #3: Examine religious and supernatural beliefs, rituals, personae and institutions within a diversity of cultures and societies.
- CSLO #4: Use diverse examples to discuss the ways religion and the supernatural influence other dimensions of peoples lives such as illness/healing, social order, family, identity, movements, etc.

Effective Term

Fall 2020

Course Type

Credit - Degree-applicable

Contact Hours

54

Outside of Class Hours

108

Total Student Learning Hours

162

Course Objectives

1. Explain and apply anthropological approaches to the study of supernatural beliefs and practices.
2. Identify and comparatively describe the major paradigmatic perspectives in anthropology as they pertain to the study of the supernatural.
3. Discuss and apply anthropological methodology as it pertains to the study of the supernatural.
4. Analyze the various functions of spiritual beliefs, rituals, myths and symbols.
5. Distinguish between shamans and priests and apply this distinction to original examples of religious leadership and authority.

6. Discuss the anthropological approach to studying healing practices and apply this perspective and associated concepts to contemporary and relevant examples.
7. Discuss altered states of consciousness and their role in various systems of supernatural belief and practice.
8. Analyze spirit possession from an ethnographic and cross-cultural perspective.
9. Apply these anthropological perspectives and concepts to new examples and demonstrate an understanding of the emergence, persistence and transformations of religious movements and cults, including messianic and cargo cults.
10. Analyze the function of religion in terms of power and mechanisms of social control.
11. Explore and discuss the dynamics of supernatural belief systems in the context of colonialism, post-colonialism and globalization.

General Education Information

- Approved College Associate Degree GE Applicability
 - AA/AS - Behavioral Sciences
 - AA/AS - Multicultural Studies
- CSU GE Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU approval)
 - CSUGE - D1 Anthro/Archaeology
- Cal-GETC Applicability (Recommended - Requires External Approval)
- IGETC Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU/UC approval)
 - IGETC - 4A Anthro Archaeology

Articulation Information

- CSU Transferable
- UC Transferable

Methods of Evaluation

- Classroom Discussions
 - Example: 4. The instructor assigns an article or book chapter for student scholars to read in preparation for an in-class reading discussion about cross-cultural beliefs and practices of spirit possession (course objective #4). Student scholars bring typed and printed reading notes about the assigned material to class for use during the reading discussion. The instructor directs student scholars to form small groups and to use their notes to begin discussing the main ideas and important information about the reading. Student scholars are then directed to discuss how the assigned reading pertains to the current learning unit in the course. Groups then work collaboratively to complete a reading discussion activity organizer which will be submitted for credit, along with reading notes, at the end of the class session.
- Essay Examinations
 - Example: 1. Student scholars will develop understanding of the basic ideas, benefits and issues of ethnography (course objective #3) through assigned reading, lecture and other learning materials. Formative assessments will then be used to ensure comprehension. The professor then assigns several case studies of ethnographic approaches to studying religion and the supernatural. In the next class session the professor facilitates a discussion about the articles. Student scholars will then write essays which compare and evaluate each ethnographic article.
- Objective Examinations
 - Example: 2. Student scholars will take scripted answer exams (ex. LMS quizzes) to assess basic comprehension of anthropological concepts, approaches and information about the connections

between supernatural belief systems and social control (course objective #10). Evaluation will be assessed based upon accuracy of answers.

- Projects
 - Example: 3. Throughout the semester student scholars will plan, conduct and present their own anthropological capstone projects (which will thus connect with most of the course objectives but in particular will draw upon course objectives #1, #2, #3 and #4). Student scholars will demonstrate their ability to apply anthropological approaches, theories and methods within their own independent, yet instructor guided, investigations. Student scholars are encouraged to examine topics which will advance their personal, academic and/or professional interests.

Repeatable

No

Methods of Instruction

- Lecture/Discussion
- Distance Learning

Lecture:

1. Professor lectures in order to define, explain and offer examples of the relationship between supernatural belief systems and healing practices (course objective #6). An academic and undergraduate level article is assigned which examines specific examples of the interconnection of religion and healing. At the next class session the professor directs student scholars to discuss in small groups the key points of the assigned readings. Student scholars brainstorm questions which are discussed by the class and facilitated by the professor. The instructor might then show a brief video which address other cross cultural cases. Student scholars are then directed to form new small groups and develop their own thoughts about the examples by applying the approaches and concepts learned earlier.
2. Instructor assigns reading about the impact of colonial regimes upon the supernatural beliefs and practices in Native North America (course objective #11). During the following session the instructor directs students to form small groups to discuss the article or book chapter. Towards the end of the discussion the instructor will hand out an in-class activity or exercise which requires student scholars to apply the ideas and information in the reading to example(s) which may involve screening a brief video. Students engage in the activity/exercise and work collaboratively to fill out the information and respond to critical thinking prompts. At the appropriate time the instructor calls the groups together to share their findings and reflections on the assignment in a general class discussion.

Distance Learning

1. Professor lectures in order to define, explain and offer examples of the relationship between supernatural belief systems and healing practices (course objective #6). An academic and undergraduate level article is assigned which examines specific examples of the interconnection of religion and healing. At the next class session the professor directs student scholars to discuss in small groups the key points of the assigned readings. Student scholars brainstorm questions which are discussed by the class and facilitated by the professor. The instructor might then show a brief video which address other cross cultural cases. Student scholars are then directed to

form new small groups and develop their own thoughts about the examples by applying the approaches and concepts learned earlier.

2. Instructor assigns reading about the impact of colonial regimes upon the supernatural beliefs and practices in Native North America (course objective #11). During the following session the instructor directs students to form small groups to discuss the article or book chapter. Towards the end of the discussion the instructor will hand out an in-class activity or exercise which requires student scholars to apply the ideas and information in the reading to example(s) which may involve screening a brief video. Students engage in the activity/exercise and work collaboratively to fill out the information and respond to critical thinking prompts. At the appropriate time the instructor calls the groups together to share their findings and reflections on the assignment in a general class discussion.

Typical Out of Class Assignments

Reading Assignments

1. Read the assigned pages from the textbook on shamans and be prepared to discuss the topics during class meetings.
2. Read assigned articles from the reader or other designated source on altered states of consciousness and summarize the information in writing prior to class meetings.

Writing, Problem Solving or Performance

- 1) Ritual Ethnography and Analysis One of the strengths of the anthropological approach to the study of religion is the application of the ethnographic method. In brief, ethnography is an empirical method of participating and observing in the various local religious practices, discerning what practitioners specifically do as well as what they think and feel about what they are doing. For this ethnographic activity, students will brainstorm in groups to identify religious rituals which they may safely and relatively easily observe and participate in outside of class, such as meditation, alternative healing, or a ceremony. Students will then derive a plan for accomplishing the ethnographic portion of the study and put that plan into action within the week, being sure to take notes and then spend some time writing reflection notes and conducting research to fill in any gaps in understanding at a later time. The next class session student groups will represent their experience to the class. Depending on the student's level of familiarity and involvement of the ritual, this representation can take the form of a performance, a visual display, an oral report, or a combination thereof. In this representation students will be asked to identify the key practices, symbols, beliefs and myths embedded in this ritual. When the representation is concluded, the class will attempt to conduct a cultural analysis of the represented ritual. The group of student presenters, with the help of the instructor, will facilitate the analytical discussion. Students will follow up the activity with a written assignment. In this assignment each student will expand upon the ritual analysis conducted by the group and clearly link it to the course concepts regarding rituals and the anthropology of religion in general.
- 2) Myth Study After a discussion of the importance of myth and its role in supernatural belief systems, and cultural systems more broadly, students will be asked to apply the principles of analyzing myths to original examples. To do this, students will need to find their own myth. This can be accomplished by searching the internet, searching the library or contacting the instructor for assistance. Students will read through the myth a few times, making sure it is in presentable format, and then bring the myth to the next class session. In the next class session, students will be divided into small groups. While in groups each student will retell the myth to the other students in her or his group. After each myth has been presented, the groups will briefly discuss the cultural

significance and move on until all the myths have been read. Once all the myths have been read, the group will choose one of them to focus on and use as an example to apply the several established paradigms and perspectives to make sense of the myth. These paradigms are made known to the students working in groups and should be: a. Functionalism b. Structuralism c. Symbolic or Interpretive d. Marxism e. Gender Analysis f. Ethnic Studies Approach g. Culture and Power Perspective Students will share their group work out with the class and lead the way for a discussion of the major paradigms in thinking about mythology and religion in general. This can be used to introduce these paradigms and concepts as well as to review for them. Students can either be assessed on the basis of their group presentation itself or be assigned a follow up analytical essay where they exchange myths with another individual and conduct independent cultural analysis.

Other (Term projects, research papers, portfolios, etc.)

This course may contain a research project wherein students demonstrate the principles of the anthropological analysis of religion through application. This research project may take the form of ethnographic fieldwork or a review of existing literature on a particular subject.

Required Materials

- Magic, Witchcraft and Religion
 - Author: Moro and Meyers
 - Publisher: Mayfield Publishing Company
 - Publication Date: 2012
 - Text Edition: 9th
 - Classic Textbook?: No
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft
 - Author: Stein and Stein
 - Publisher: Prentice Hall
 - Publication Date: 2017
 - Text Edition: 4th
 - Classic Textbook?: No
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- Religions in Practice: An Approach to the Anthropology of Religion
 - Author: Bowen
 - Publisher: Prentice Hall
 - Publication Date: 2013
 - Text Edition: 6th
 - Classic Textbook?: No
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- Supernatural as Natural: A Biocultural Approach to Religion
 - Author: Winkelman and Baker
 - Publisher: Prentice Hall
 - Publication Date: 2008
 - Text Edition: 1st
 - Classic Textbook?: No

• OER Link:

• OER:

- Magic Witchcraft and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion

• Author: Moro and Meyers

• Publisher: McGraw-Hill

• Publication Date: 2012

• Text Edition: 9th

• Classic Textbook?: No

• OER Link:

• OER:

Other materials and-or supplies required of students that contribute to the cost of the course.