

Introduction to Shamanism:
Shamanic Healing for Personal and Planetary Transformation
Anth/Rels 3090
Thursday evenings, 6:00-9:00 pm/Main 201
Bonnie Glass-Coffin, PhD
Office hours: W 9:30-11:20 and 1:30-2:20

Course rationale:

This course presumes that a Liberal Arts Education should be transformative and deeply engaging of intellect, heart, *and* spirit. While a liberal arts education should not teach any ONE way of thinking, feeling or believing as right, good, or true, it should challenge students to deeply explore their core values and to build capacity for respectful interaction with those who hold different beliefs as well as to provide access to new knowledge. Too often in universities, students are asked to leave their “hearts” and “spirits” at the door when exploring new ways of thinking in and about the world.

This course will introduce methods that are utilized by shamanic healers for deep inner exploration as well as for building capacity to interact successfully across difference. It provides a framework for you to explore the “heart” and “spirit” as well as the “mind.” Because of this orientation and its commitment to experiential learning modalities, the course returns to a more classical definition of the Liberal Arts because it emphasizes the skills necessary for you to take an active part in civic life, with a special emphasis on learning to “positively interact with those who orient around religion differently.”

The course utilizes curricula originally developed by don Oscar Miro-Quesada, which introduces a kind of cross-cultural shamanism that is broadly based in both north Peruvian and central Andean shamanic practices. The experiential practices of the course are focused on a ritual space called the “pachakuti mesa” that symbolizes powers and processes of human experience as well as of the natural world. Its mandala-like organization becomes a vehicle for reflection and for transformation. It is viewed as both a kind of “microcosm” of universal principles and a “game board” which can be actively engaged to restore order within and between the individual and natural, social and cosmological realms. Use of the pachakuti mesa to give *voice* to your deepest values and beliefs, to *engage* respectively and appreciatively with those who hold beliefs that fundamentally differ from your own, and to *act* across these differences in service to the common good is the focus of the course. As such, the course has an explicit goal of building capacity for interfaith dialogue and cooperation where “interfaith” is defined as “building capacity for positive interaction among people who orient around religion differently.” Because of the tools you will learn in this course, you will also gain direct experience in the art of shamanic healing as practiced by ritual specialists in multiple cultural contexts.

The course will be useful to students of Religious Studies, Anthropology, Folklore, Psychology, Community Health as well as any who have interest in deepening their understandings of themselves and learning how to interact effectively with others through engaged learning.

PLEASE NOTE THAT EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REQUIRES STUDENTS TO BE FLEXIBLE TO CHANGES IN THE WEEKLY SCHEDULE. THE COURSE OUTLINE LISTED BELOW IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT THIS COURSE IS AS MUCH A DEEPLY TRANSFORMATIVE PERSONAL INITIATION AS IT IS A TOOL FOR RESPECTFUL INTERACTION WITH OTHERS AND THAT STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT OPEN TO DOING SIGNIFICANT PERSONAL WORK AND TO EXPERIENCING FUNDAMENTAL SHIFTS IN THEIR LIVES ARE STRONGLY DISCOURAGED FROM ENGAGING IN THIS PARTICULAR COURSE.

Assessment criteria:

For this course, students will

- Be introduced to the role of culturally-specific forms of experiencing the sacred.
- Be introduced to several tools for inner exploration including shamanic journeying, guided meditation, breath-work, free-writing, etc. and be introduced to the transformative experiences that result from these experiences.
- Be introduced to the importance of telling stories as a tool for exploring and examining personal beliefs and values as well as for bridging religious/spiritual difference, building community, and acting together across difference for the common good.
- Be introduced to the historical and mythological roots of Peruvian shamanism and its role in construction of the underlying cosmovision and lineage of the Pachakuti Mesa
- Apprentice to the fundamentals of the Pachakuti Mesa including the archetypal meanings of physical, emotional, spiritual, mental, and relational equilibrium associated with each direction of the mesa.
- Read and reflect on two core texts that
 - summarize the potential of the Pachakuti Mesa Tradition as a tool for personal and planetary transformation,
 - provide basic knowledge about multiple religious and spiritual traditions,
 - challenge you to think about core beliefs/values as “exclusive,” “inclusive” or “pluralist,”
 - provide tools for voicing, engaging, and acting with those of other religious/spiritual traditions in service to the common good
- Successfully complete an “interfaith service project” with other members of the class and present an overview of actions/outcomes to the class as a whole.

Because the course utilizes a “hands-on-learning” approach to introduce students to cosmologies and methods utilized by shamanic practitioners, attendance and active participation at each session is mandatory. Information is cumulative and successful course completion is based on contact hours as well as assessment of course readings and of the service project. Students missing one class session may make up that session without impacting their semester grade at the instructor’s discretion. **Students missing two or more class sessions will not receive credit for the course.**

There are two grading options for this course. The DEFAULT is the “graded” option, with assessment criteria described below, yet the experiential nature of the course makes Pass/Fail grading an option for students desiring simply to actively participate in classroom activities.

Option 1: Students desiring the pass/fail option simply “show up” for all class sessions, write **five** 1-2 paged, double-spaced reflection papers about their class experiences. These are turned in during Thursday class on weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, and 13. Students are also strongly encouraged to keep a journal in which they write daily reflections about dreams, classroom activities, challenging moments they experience, etc.. Attendance guidelines for the pass/fail option are listed above. **Please note that students desiring the pass/fail option MUST inform the registrar’s office of this by filling out the appropriate paperwork by the Pass/Fail deadline. It is incumbent upon you, the student, to take care of this paperwork and to get instructor signatures in a timely fashion.**

Option 2: Students desiring a letter grade for the course must complete all the pass-fail requirements listed above. In addition, you will write **four** 1-2 paged, double-spaced papers about how the required readings intersect with classroom experiences. These are due at the Thursday night class meeting in weeks 4, 6, 8, and 10 respectively. These papers are intended to demonstrate your understanding of the readings. Each paper has a topic or theme (see course outline for more details). Students desiring a grade for the course will also participate in writing a **3 page** team-based proposal for an interfaith service project (due, week 12) and will present a presentation about the service project. Each presentation will be 20 minutes in length, and will need to include a general description of what was accomplished, how appreciation for religious difference was fostered through the project, how many people were impacted, a summary of outcomes, and recommendations for next steps.

Grading:

For students enrolled with Pass/Fail option:

- Participation in ALL CLASS MEETINGS (up to one meeting may be missed for a passing grade)
- Successful completion of 5 reflection papers as outlined above (will be graded pass/fail)

For students enrolled with the letter grade option:

- Participation in ALL CLASS MEETINGS (up to one meeting may be missed for a passing grade)
- Successful completion of 5 reflection papers as outlined above (each paper will be graded pass/fail) 10 points each x 5 = 50 points
- Successful completion of 4 reading papers: up to 25 points each x 4 = 100 points
- Service project proposal: 50 points
- Service project presentation: 100 points

Total points possible

300 points

Required readings (all students):

- Glass-Coffin, Bonnie and don Oscar Miro-Quesada. Lessons in Courage: Peruvian Shamanic Wisdom for Everyday Life. (2013). Rainbow Ridge Books (hereafter LIC).
- Eck, Diana. Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras 2003 (1993) Beacon (hereafter Eck).

Optional readings (TBA):

Course Outline:

Week 1: Aug 28th Tuning In

- Required reading: Glass-Coffin and Miro-Quesada, pp. vii-42
- Introduction to the course and logistics including liability waiver
- Brief lecture: What is a shaman? How is shamanism taught/practiced? Why should we study shamanism?
- DVD Presentation
- Selected personal sharing and intention statements

Week 2: Sept 4th Shamanism and Interfaith Cooperation

- Required reading: Glass-Coffin and Miro-Quesada, pp. 43-132
- Required attendance at Eboo Patel lecture (Kent Concert Hall, 7pm).
- Homework: do the exercise on pp. 39-42 of LIC. Collect medicine pieces as described in LIC, pp. 66-70 as well as a ground cloth upon which you will build your mesa. Bring these to class beginning next week.

Week 3: Sept 11th The SOUTH: Constructing Our Stories of “Self”

Meet at Lundstrom Living Center Multipurpose Room (1255 E 1000 N)

- Required reading: Eck, pp. ix-21
- DUE: Reflection paper #1, ALL STUDENTS write on this question: How do you think shamanism can help us to “find a common ground” as we begin a journey towards interfaith cooperation and religious pluralism? (Be sure to include quotes from Eboo Patel lecture and from Glass-Coffin and Miro-Quesada book).
- Ritual opening: Tools for centering ourselves

- Teachings of the SOUTH: our participation in a physical world: space, place, and *pachamama*
- Ritual process: guided meditation with *pachamama* stone
- Teachings: creating safe spaces for dialogue
- Council Process: A first introduction to our stories of “self.” Each student shares around these three topics, “I am xxxx. I am from: xxxx, My gifts are xxxx”
- Into Me I See exercise
- Closing
- Homework: journaling about your story: What are the influences on your life and what are the lessons you have learned from the religious/spiritual ideas/practices that were part of your upbringing? What are your thoughts about this quote (from our Eck text)? “Relationship is the mirror in which we see ourselves as we really are.”

Week 4: Sept 18th The SOUTH: Embracing and Releasing the Past

- Required reading: Eck, pp. 22-44
- DUE: Reading paper #1, “The origins and frontiers of identity” (“grade” based students only)
- Ritual opening: Tools for encountering the Other
- Practice: Animal ally journey
- Teaching: Encountering and embracing the “Shadow”
- Ukhupacha journey
- Embracing and releasing activity
- Ritual of release
- Closing
- Homework: creating your own rituals of release

Week 5: Sept 25th The WEST: Constructing Our Stories of “Us”

- Required reading: Eck, pp. 45-80
- DUE: Reflection paper #2, ALL STUDENTS
- Ritual opening: Toning the “I-Am”
- Shaman’s Anamnesis: “Who Am I? Who Am I Becoming? Who Can I Be?”
- Teaching: construction and activation of personal altars
- Council process and sharing of selected experiences
- Closing
- Homework: journal around the following questions: “When have you felt misunderstood because of your faith/no-faith tradition?” OR “When have you felt moved by the suffering of another?”

Week 6: Oct 2nd The WEST: Dealing with Difference and Finding Common Ground

- Required reading: Eck, pp. 81-117
- DUE: Reading paper #2, “Dealing with Difference” (“grade” based students only)
- Ritual opening: Tools for embracing the Other: toning the directions of the mesa
- Teachings of the West: Our participation in an emotional world: the cycles and the flow of *mamakilla*.

- Ritual process: guided meditation with *mamakilla* stone
- Council process: sharing from your journal homework.
- Journey: the life review
- Solar/lunar puja OR “the paradox of the one and the many”
- Ritual sharing/council process:
- Closing
- Homework: what have I learned in this class so far that helps me to shift my perspective?

Week 7: Oct 9th The NORTH: We Are More Than Our Stories: the Breath of Spirit

- Required reading: Eck, pp. 118-143
- DUE: Reflection paper #3, ALL STUDENTS
- Ritual opening: shamanic breath work as in-spiration
- Teachings from the North: Our participation in the world of Spirit, the story of condor and sacred “re-membering”
- Guided meditation with the *wiracocha* feather.
- Teaching: Andean apus as a bridge between the worlds
- Journey to the apus and introduction to the apu-guia
- Council process and selective sharing
- Closing
- Homework: journal about your dreams this week

Week 8: Oct 16th The NORTH: Attending to the Present/ce

- Required reading: Eck, pp. 144-165
- DUE: Reading paper #3, “The Winds of Spirit” (“grade” based students only)
- Opening: guided meditation as a tool for attending to the present
- Activity: reflecting and responding to sacred quotes from many traditions
- Journey: to the farthest reaches of the hanaqpacha
- Free-writing
- Council process: selected sharing
- Ritual closing
- Homework: how have your direct experiences of Spirit influenced your ability to interact appreciatively with others?

Week 9: Oct 23rd: The EAST: Constructing Our Stories of “Now”

- Required reading: Eck, pp. 166-199
- DUE: Reflection paper #4, ALL STUDENTS
- Ritual opening: student driven, sacred sound
- Teachings from the East: Our participation in the world of wisdom, *inti* and the power of the illumined mind
- Guided meditation with the candle
- Journeying to the “temple of the Self” exercise and embodiment of experience into personal altar

- Teaching: from seed thought to manifestation, “consciousness structures matter...”
- Writing our personal intention statements:
- Ritual closing
- Homework: “The Power of One.” Think about a contemporary issue that arises because of religious intolerance. Journal (or draw/paint/sculpt) your vision of how this issue looks when participants practice interfaith cooperation. (Remember: thoughts and words are powerful. Act as though YOU are creating a new world with your vision!)

Week 10: Oct 30th: The EAST: Towards a Paradigm of Pluralism

- Required reading: Eck, pp. 200-231
- DUE: Reading paper #4, “Towards a paradigm of pluralism” (“grade” based students only)
- Ritual opening: (students share summaries of their journal work, beginning with the phrase, “I see...”)
- Teaching: cultivating an “attitude of gratitude” and owning the power to change the world.
- Teaching: haywas and despachos as material forms of offering
- Creating a despacho
- Council process
- Ritual closing

Week 11: Nov 6th The CENTER: Embracing a Path of Wholeness and Service

- Required reading: TBA
- DUE: Reflection paper #5, ALL STUDENTS
- Ritual opening
- Small group work: planning out interfaith action
- Ritualizing this work
- Closing

Week 12: Nov 13th The CENTER: Planning Our Interfaith Action

- Required reading: TBA
- DUE: Service Project Proposal (“grade” based students only)
- Ritual opening:
- Council process: brief presentation of proposed interfaith service projects.
- Rainbow Bridge Activation
- Teachings on the 12 core attributes of the shamanic healer
- Teaching: taking interfaith cooperation into the world: dealing with difficult conversations: respect, relationship and the common good
- Council process: final remarks.
- Closing

Week 13: Optional class meeting, Nov. 19th (Work in Teams on Service Projects)

- The Wednesday night link up

Week 14: November 27th, no class meeting/Thanksgiving

Week 15: Dec. 4th Presenting Our Projects and Planning Our Next Steps

- Required reading: none
- DUE: Service Project presentations (“grade” based students only)
- Course wrap-up