

Anthropology 3160
Anthropology of Religion
M, W, F 10:30-11:20
Fall 2015

Instructor Dr. Bonnie Glass-Coffin,
Office Old Main #245E
Office hours W 9:30-10:20, 1:30-2:20
e-mail bonnie.glasscoffin@usu.edu

UTF Dakyn Saunders
Classroom: Old Main 115
TA office hours: TBA
TA e-mail: dakyn@comcast.net

Required texts:

Winzeler, Robert L. Anthropology and Religion: What we Know, Think, and Question. Altamira Press, 2012 (2nd edition).

Reserve readings (available on Canvas)

Course rationale and assessment guidelines:

Religious practices and beliefs in all cultures of the world, whether ancient or modern, tribal or metropolitan, share remarkable similarities as well as key differences. The cross-cultural study of religion illustrates the anthropological perspective, showing the familiar in the strange and the strange in the familiar. This course will examine the role of religion in societies and cultures in fostering social integration and community, as well as its role in contributing to and resisting oppression. It will examine the role of religion in answering the “big” questions in life and in providing comfort, order and catharsis in times of stress and chaos. It will examine some definitions of religion common to the anthropological literature and will allow for discussion of the relationship between anthropological orientations to religion and more personal definitions that may guide our own lives. Topics we will cover include theories of religion, its history and evolution, myth, ritual, symbols and language, the relationship between experience, emotion, healing, and illness, types of religious practitioners including shamans, prophets, and priests, native revitalization and new religious movements, and anthropological perspectives on the “non-rational” or the “occult.” The course will incorporate lectures, on-line and in-class discussion, film, personal and field experience, and internet-based research.

This course seeks to neither promote nor disrespect any particular religious belief, practice, or person, whether regarding “primitive” religion, mainstream “world” religions, or modern “doomsday” cults. All religious activity will be viewed as forms of social and cultural expression, whether for good or ill. We shall endeavor to understand the varieties of religious experience in a spirit of respect, free inquiry and critical thinking. In short, prepare to leave preconceived notions, prejudices and proselytizing at the classroom door.

EXAMS: Two midterms will be given **ON-LINE**. Format will be discussed in class. (Worth up to 40 points each).

ON-LINE and IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS: Discussions (worth up to 10 points each) over relevant topics will add to your understanding of issues discussed in lecture and in the text. You

will be divided into groups at the beginning of the term for the purposes of these discussions. To receive full credit for participation in these discussions, you will need to do 2 things.

- **First**, you read the assigned article from the accompanying reader and prepare for class discussion. To do this, you will, **prior** to the start of class on the day of the discussion, **post on Canvas** two or three questions or comments about the article that you would like to bring up during the discussion (these postings, when they demonstrate critical thinking, understanding of the article's key points, and timely completion are worth up to 5 points). **Late entries (e.g. those posted after class begins on the day of the assigned discussion) will not receive credit.**
- **Second**, you come to class on the day of discussion and actively participate. You will provide evidence of your participation by writing a brief paragraph that answers the question, "what did I learn from participating in today's discussion that I didn't already know about this topic?" You will hand in this paper with your name and A number to the UTF at the close of the in-class discussion. **You must be in-class on the day of the discussion to receive these points. No exceptions can be made to this policy because these points are reflective of your in-class participation in the discussion.**

In consideration of the possibility that there may be discussion days that you must miss, I have scheduled **14 on-line/in-class discussion opportunities but participation in only 12 is required**. If you choose to participate in more than 12 on-line/in-class discussions, you may use these as an extra-credit opportunity. (Worth up to 120 points with an additional possible 40 points of extra credit).

PROJECTS: Three class projects will allow you to deepen your critical thinking skills, will give you practice with written expression, and will help get you out of the classroom and "into the field." These will be discussed in more detail in class. They are as follows:

- 1) A one-two page personal assessment of "what religion means to me" that will allow you to consider your own beliefs and practices in the context of anthropological perspectives. This will be due early in the term. (Worth up to 10 points)
- 2) A one-two page description of participant observation of a religious ritual that is NOT part of your personal faith/religious experience. This exercise requires you to step outside the bounds of your own religious beliefs and behaviors while introducing you to a congregation of believers different from your own. To complete this assignment attend at least one ritual performance of a faith-based organization to which you do not belong and describe the ritual process using etic as well as emic measures (we will discuss these in class). The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to experience anthropological fieldwork and to deeply engage the concepts of cultural relativism, ethnocentrism, emic and etic forms of analysis, and anthropological theories on the foundations and functions of religion from an anthropological perspective. It is also to reflect upon Geertz's definition of religion as an institution with cognitive, emotional, psychological, and social functions. Details will be discussed in class. (Worth up to 20 points)
- 3) Use of the internet to explore, describe, and analyze one "new religious movement" from an anthropological perspective. Details will be discussed in class. This project will be presented in lieu of a final exam. (Worth up to 70 points)

TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE:

Midterm exams	40x2 =	80
In-class/on-line discussions	12x10 =	120
Reflection papers	10 + 20 =	30
Final project		<u>70</u>
<u>Total points possible:</u>		300

Extra credit on-line/in-class discussions: 10x2 = 20

Late/Make-up Assignment Policy:

In-class discussion points cannot be made up. Make-up of all other assignments is at instructor discretion and must generally be arranged for by students requiring accommodations *prior* to the due-date scheduled. Late assignments may be accepted, at instructor discretion, but frequently result in a point penalty.

ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES: (a complete discussion of assessment guidelines in anthropology are available at anthropology.usu.edu/. The mission of the Anthropology Program at Utah State University is to prepare students for careers requiring skills and knowledge from a synthesis of the liberal arts and natural sciences. Graduates in anthropology are broadly thinking individuals exhibiting intellectual depth, effective reading and writing skills, and the ability to solve problems that span the humanities, the natural sciences, and the cultural diversity characteristic of the modern world. Specific Learning Goals of this course as these relate to the Mission Statement include the following:

Successful completion of this course contributes to a) disciplinary knowledge of the nature, intent, and scope of anthropology, b) provides in depth exposure to cultural anthropology and especially its long standing concern for understanding human similarity and difference of religious experience and belief as a window to culture, c) provides experience doing out-of-class field work using a core method of cultural anthropology, which is “participant observation,” d) develops your ability to recognize and to respect human differences. This course also provides practice a) reading material appropriate to course levels, b) communicating effectively in writing and orally, c) conducting research, using a computer, and internet as well as print resources d) encouraging critical thinking about issues in ways that require a synthesis of perspectives in a culturally diverse world. Course assignments are all designed to foster these skills. The instructor is open to feedback and constructive suggestions for improvement of content delivery and assessment via e-mail at bonnie.glasscoffin@usu.edu, via Canvas, or via face-to-face meetings during office hours or by appointment at her office in Old Main 245A.

ADA and FERPA:

IN COOPERATION WITH THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER, reasonable accommodation will be provided for students with disabilities. Please meet with the instructor during the first week of class to make arrangements. Alternative format print materials, large print, audio, diskette or Braille, will be available through the Disability Resource Center.

The Family Education Right to Privacy Act prohibits grades, graded-essays, or any other form of graded assignment from being released by phone or from being placed in a public setting (e.g. outside the classroom, etc.) except with explicit written permission from the student in question.

Course Outline:

Week #1 (Aug 31-Sept 4)

Reading assignment: Chapter 1

Monday: Introduction to class: The Scope of Anthropology and the Definition of Culture

Wednesday: In-class discussion: "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema"

Friday: What is religion? Anthropological definitions and viewpoints

Week #2 (Sept 9-11)

Reading assignment: Chapter 2 of text

Monday: NO CLASS...LABOR DAY

Wednesday: The building blocks of religion (and Wade Davis TedTalk)

Friday: Religion as Beliefs in Spirit or as Relatedness to Divine (Harris and Lee in Lehmann and Myers) discussion

Week #3 (Sept 14-18)

Reading assignment: Chapter 3 of text

Monday: Religion, Evolution and Prehistory

Wednesday: Ancient Religions of the Mediterranean video

Friday: Reading: Epilogue (Sanday in Hicks) and in-class discussion, "has the 'goddess' disappeared?"

Week #4 (Sept 21-25)

Reading assignment: Chapter 4 of text

Monday: Religion, Adaptation and the Environment

Wednesday: **Reflection paper #1 due** and in-class discussion "what is religion?"

Friday: Anthropological methods in the study of religion and Dubisch (in Lehmann and Myers)

Week #5 (Sept 28-Oct 2)

Reading assignment: Chapter 5 of text.

Monday: Film, "Oh My God"

Wednesday: Finish watching "Oh My God" and discussion.

Friday: Religion and the Nature/Culture Debate: On Natural Symbols Reading, Mary Douglas, "Taboo" (in Lehmann and Myers).

Week #6 (Oct 5-9)

Reading assignment: Chapter 6 of text

Monday: Religion and Mythology

Wednesday: Film: Selection from Joseph Campbell, TBA

Friday: Reading and Discussion Leach, "Genesis as Myth"

Week #7 (Oct 12-15)

Reading assignment: Chapter 7 of text.

Monday: Religious Ritual

Wed Reading and Discussion: Turner, "Betwixt and Between" (in Lehmann and Myers)

Thur, "Video: "Holy Things for the Holy and Pure," intro to the Holy Qurbana OR "The Holy Ghost People"

Week #8 (Oct 19-23)

Reading assignment: Chapter 8 of text

Monday: **Midterm #1**

Wednesday: Witchcraft and Sorcery, overview and Reading "Dark Side of the Shaman."

Friday: Presentation: TBA

Week #9 (Oct 26-30)

Reading assignment: Chapter 9 of text.

Monday: Shamanism and Neo-Shamanism

Wed: Joralemon, 1990

Fri: Video: Healing States and **reflection paper #2 due**

Week #10 (Nov 2-6)

Reading assignment: Chapter 10 of text

Monday: Monday: **Introduce Term Project**

Wednesday: Lecture: Religious movements and revitalization

Friday: Reading and Discussion: Kehoe "Ghost Dance Religion" and discussion (in Lehmann and Myers)

Week #11 (Nov 9-13)

Reading assignment: Chapter 11 of text

Monday: Anthropology and World Religions

Wednesday: Reading and discussion, "Biblical Literalism: Constricting the Cosmic Dance" AND "the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy" (<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1332>) AND

<http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/creeds/chicago.htm>.

Friday: Film: "The Forbidden Garden"

Week #12 (Nov 16-20)

Reading assignment: Chapter 12.

Monday: Religious Change in Social and Political Context

Wednesday: Video "Miracles Are Not Enough" or

Friday: Reading: "The Transforming Influence of American Gatherings" (in Hicks)

Week #13 (Nov 23 ONLY)

Reading assignment: TBA (More on Religious Change and the Anthropological Perspective)

Monday: **Midterm #2**

Wed.-Fri. THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week #14 (Nov 30-Dec 4)

Reading assignment: None

Monday: Lewis “Urban Rastas in Jamaica” and discussion (in Lehmann and Myers)

Wed: TBA: Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8MWSMoEJdw>

Fri: No meeting, work on term projects

Week #15 (Dec 7-11)

Reading assignment: TBA (Evaluating the non-rational: Anthropological perspectives)

Monday: Reading: Glass-Coffin, 2010

Wednesday: Reading: “Occult Beliefs” (in Lehmann and Myers)

Friday: Course wrap up

FINAL PROJECT DUE: Wednesday, DEC. 16th, 5:00 p.m.