# Anth 2 Introductory Cultural Anthropology

Lecture 13: Religion

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Walk-in Music

- A. "My Sweet Lord" George Harrison (4:26)
- B. <u>"You Raise Me Up"</u> Josh Groban (4:49+)
- C. "Winter Winds" Mumford & Sons (3:54)
- D. "One of Us" Joan Osborne (4:58)
- E. <u>"Jesus is Just Alright"</u> The Doobie Brothers (4:39)

# Today's Lecture

- Your Paper Part B
  - Methods, Data, and Significance

#### Religion

- Perspectives on Religion
- Problems Categorizing Religion
- The Origin of Religion
- The Functions of Religion

## The Path of your Proposal

- Applied anthropologists do ethnographic research to gain knowledge which may be useful to address contemporary problems.
- There are several paths from doing research to helping to solve problems
- Which path do you think would be most effective for the problem you are exploring?
- **26%** A. Awareness: raising awareness or giving voice
- 10% B. Policy: creating or improving policies or laws
- **10% c. Activism:** getting involved, designing or implementing a solution, determining cultural compatibility
- 36% D. A combination of paths
- 19% E. Really not sure yet

### Your Paper Part B

#### Proposal to apply anthropology

- Like a formal proposal to get funding to do research
- Three Parts (with headings!)
  - 1. Statement of Purpose
  - Third Goals of the research
  - The **Special Features** of anthropology that will help you to realize those goals
  - First The Ethics of your research and your goals
- Fourth 2. Methods and Data
  - 3. Significance

#### **Methods and Data**

#### Methods:

- Participant-Observation Fieldwork
  - All proposals should include participant-observation
  - Think about where, how long, and with whom
- Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedures (REAP)
- Other supplemental methods (interviews, surveys, etc)

#### Data:

- Qualitative ethnographic information
  - What kind of questions you will ask
  - What kind of information you are going to look for

### Set your i>clicker to AB

- The belief that all living things have souls or spirits in addition to their physical bodies is called:
  - A. Animatism
  - B. Animism
  - c. Spiritualism
  - D. Spirituality
  - E. Religion

# Religion

- Religion is something in which many people believe very strongly!
  - That makes it a critical topic for anthropologists to explore
  - That also makes it a sensitive topic for many students
- Religion is one of the hardest topics to understand from both the emic and etic perspectives
  - If you are not religious, you will probably never understand the emic perspective and meanings of religion
  - If you are religious, the etic perspective of your own religion may seem almost blasphemous

### Do you believe: that people have souls or spirits in addition to physical bodies?

A. YES 66%

B. NO 34%

# Which most closely matches your beliefs?

# I Believe...

- 40% A. In one God
- 13% B. In a "higher power"
  - 0% c. In several Gods or Deities
- 32%D. There may or may not be a God/higher power
- 15% E. There is no God/higher power

# What Religion do you most closely identify with?

- 53% A. Christianity (all sects and denominations)
  - 0% B. Islam
  - 4% c. Judaism
  - 6% D. Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto
- 36% E. Other

#### How religious or spiritual are you?

- A. Religion or spirituality is a fundamental and central part of who I am
- Religion or spirituality is pretty important to me
  - 6%. I practice religion mainly because of family and tradition
- 28%. I am only a little bit religious or spiritual
- 32%. I am not religious or spiritual at all

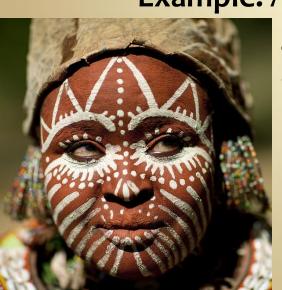
# Religion

- Religion is a cultural universal
- All societies have:
  - Rituals that appease supernatural forces
  - Sets of beliefs concerning what we would call the soul
  - Notions about life after death
- But what exactly is religion?

# Religion

- Religion is a cultural universal
- All societies have:
  - Rituals that appease supernatural forces
  - Sets of beliefs concerning what we would call the soul
  - Notions about life after death
- Religion: A shared system of myths, beliefs, symbols, and rituals dealing with cosmology and the "supernatural", which binds communities of people together

- 1. A Problem of Separation: Religion is not a discrete (separate, unconnected) category
  - Religion is not something that can be separated from the rest of a culture
  - When we categorize something as "religious", we have to be aware that it may also be other things
  - Example: A Kikuyu elder sacrifices a
    - goat at the grave of an ancestor-god.
      - Is that religion?
      - Is it economic?
      - Is it social or kinship





- 1. A Problem of Separation: Religion is not a discrete (separate, unconnected) category
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- The importance of Holism: "Religion" is integrated with different aspects of culture

- A problem of ethnocentrism: We use our meanings to interpret their culture
- Supernatural: The extraordinary realm outside the observable world, which is non-empirical and inexplicable in ordinary terms
- Example: Nyoro "Sorcery"
  - The Nyoro have a word that means "To injure another person by the secret use of harmful medicines"
    - Putting a person's body substances in an animal horn and placing it on the roof of the person's house
    - 2. Putting poison in a person's food or drink
- Example: The "Evil Eye"

- A problem of ethnocentrism: We use our meanings to interpret their culture
- Supernatural: The extraordinary realm outside the observable world, which is non-empirical and inexplicable in ordinary terms
  - A believer may not find anything out of the ordinary
  - It may very well be based on observable evidence
- It is not the observable evidence that makes something natural or supernatural, it is the cultural way that evidence is interpreted!

- A problem of ethnocentrism: We use our meanings to interpret their culture
- The importance of Cultural Relativism: What "religion" is, how it functions, and what it means are different in different cultures

# The origin of Religion

- To believers: Religion comes from God
- To non-believers: Religion is a human invention
- Universal Beliefs:
  - Animism: The belief that people and other beings have individual souls or spirits in addition to physical bodies.
  - Animatism: The belief in a generalized, impersonal power over which people have some measure of control
- Anthropologists now argue that no religion is more or less logical or evolved than any other

# Science and Religion

#### What do you think...

• Is science replacing religion?

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28% A. YES
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13% B. NO

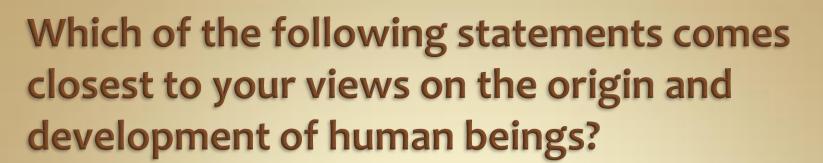
59% c. In Some Ways

## The Functions of Religion

- Cognitive: To Explain the Unexplainable
  - Cosmology: Knowledge about the universe and humanity's place in it
- Philosophical: To Explain Meaning and Purpose
  - The meaning of life and other "why" questions
- Emotional: To Give Comfort and Solace
  - Comfort and optimism in times of uncertainty
  - Solace and meaning to help deal with loss
- Social: To Promote Social Order and Harmony
  - Ethical systems that outline right and wrong behavior
  - Religion may function as a form of hegemony that reinforces a society's stratification system
- Community: To Build Solidarity
  - Binds people together through common faith and shared ritual

# A cosmological battle between science and religion?

- The origin of human beings
  - Creation, Evolution, or Both!





- A. Human beings have developed over millions of
   41% years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process
- B. Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God had no part in this process
  - C. God created human beings pretty much in theirpresent form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so