

BUTTE COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION

ANTH 13 - Magic, Witchcraft and Religion

3 Unit(s)

Prerequisite(s): NONE

Recommended Prep: Reading Level V; English Level IV

Transfer Status: CSU/UC

51 hours Lecture

This course is a cross-cultural study of the forms and functions of supernatural beliefs and rituals in contemporary and historical societies. The course focuses on non-western societies and their religious systems. Descriptive anthropological methods (ethnography and ethnology) are discussed as important aspects of the study of belief systems cross-culturally. Moreover, various theoretical models are employed to inform the study of beliefs and practices associated with both nonwestern and western societies. An integrated view of religion is taken to demonstrate how belief in supernatural forces reflects other cultural patterns of behavior and thinking. For example, religion is integrated with such areas of basic human concern as subsistence practices, social organization, and culture changes that arise in contact situations.

II. OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. define and describe the basic anthropological approaches (method and theory) to the cross-cultural study of religion.(e.g. belief systems).
- B. name and appraise the work of important anthropologists who have studied religious belief systems from an anthropological perspective.
- C. recognize certain theoretical explanations that can be applied to a functional understanding of religious behavior and thinking and apply these models to contemporary life.
- D. recognize and describe various religious functionaries as they are found across a variety of societies and cultural circumstances.
- E. recognize the integrated nature of belief in terms of how rituals and religious themes often reflect recurring patterns of subsistence cycles, social organization, and psychological imperatives.
- F. compare and contrast non western belief systems with those typically predominate in the west.

III. COURSE CONTENT

A. Unit Titles/Suggested Time Schedule

Lecture	
<u>Topics</u>	<u>Hours</u>
1. Introduction: The Anthropology of Religion	6.00
2. The Historic Development of Anthropological Approaches to Understanding Religious Belief and Practice: Myth, Rituals, and Taboos	4.00
3. Forms and Functions: Theoretical Approaches and Concepts of Culture	5.00
4. Shamans, Priests, and Prophets: Religious Practitioners from a Crosscultural Perspective	4.00
5. Subsistence, Social Organization, and Other Aspects of Culture: Integration with religious Beliefs and Practices	12.00
6. Religion and Healing: Traditional Healers as Religious Practitioners	4.00
7. Witches, Ghosts, Demons and other Miscellaneous Beliefs	4.00

8. Revitalization Movements	4.00
9. Religion and Culture Contact	4.00
10. Belief and Practice in a New Age Context	4.00
Total Hours	51.00

IV. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

- A. Lecture
- B. Collaborative Group Work
- C. Homework: Students are required to complete two hours of outside-of-class homework for each hour of lecture
- D. Discussion
- E. Problem-Solving Sessions
- F. Multimedia Presentations
- G. Students will write a minimum of 1,500 words in the form of formal essays and research papers. Formal writing styles will be required (e.g. MLA, APA, or Chicago)

V. METHODS OF EVALUATION

- A. Exams/Tests
- B. Quizzes
- C. Essays and research papers

VI. EXAMPLES OF ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Reading Assignments
 1. Read the article from your supplemental text that deals with anthropological definitions of religion and belief. Be able to discuss why anthropological approaches to belief systems have allowed for significant insights into the religious beliefs and practices of hunter-gatherer societies found in different parts of the world (e.g. in Australia, the Kalahari Desert and the more remote areas of the Amazon Basin).
 2. Read the article from your supplemental text that deals with “syncretism.” This concept is often confused with “acculturation” and “cultural blending.” Be prepared to discuss in class what syncretism is and provide a few ethnographic examples (e.g. Maya , Tarajumaran, and Kayapo syncretism).
- B. Writing Assignments
 1. Write a three page summary outlining the basic characteristics of shamanism. Focus on shamanic practices in Peru. Include references to Brujos and Brujas. How do these specialists retain aspects of traditional shamanism?
 2. Write a three page essay focusing on animism. What is animism? How does an animistic world view influence perceptions of other aspects of life (e.g. subsistence, social organization, and ritual life).
- C. Out-of-Class Assignments
 1. Several Native American traditional healers will be visiting campus this week. Attend their panel discussion and report your observations and comments to class. Did these participants seem to have knowledge of traditional medicine that derived from older more traditional sources or were there ideas and practices more in line with New Age beliefs. Go back over the articles on traditional shamanism vs. New Age healing.
 2. Search on the internet, find information on local shamanism. Be prepared to share with class.

VII. RECOMMENDED MATERIALS OF INSTRUCTION

Textbooks:

- A. Hicks, David ed.. Ritual and Belief: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion. 4th Edition. McGraw Hill, 2008.
- B. Lehmann, Myers and Moro, eds.. Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion. 9th Edition. McGraw Hill, 2010.
- C. Crapo, Richley. Anthropology of Religion: The Unity and Diversity of Religion. 1st Edition. McGraw Hill. , 2002.
- D. Spradley, James and McCurdy, David. Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology. 12th Edition. Allyn and Bacon, 2006.

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