

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for ANTH 12

MAGIC, RELIGION, WITCHCRAFT, AND HEALING

Effective: Fall 2005

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

ANTH 12 — MAGIC, RELIGION, WITCHCRAFT, AND HEALING — 3.00 units

Cross-cultural perspectives on spirituality, religious practice, myth, ancestor beliefs, witchcraft and the variety of religious rituals and practitioners found in the cultures of the world. Examination of the cosmologies of different cultures through the anthropological perspective. Emphasis is placed on how knowledge of the religious practices and beliefs of others can help us to understand the multicultural world in which we live. Comparison of the ways in which diverse cultures confront the large and fundamental questions of existence: those dealing with the meaning life, birth and death, and with the relationship of humans to each other and to their universe. 3 hours.

3.00 Units Lecture

Grading Methods:

Optional

Discipline:

- Anthropology

	MIN
Lecture Hours:	54.00
Total Hours:	54.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT:

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

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

1. describe and understand the methodologies of social and cultural anthropology
2. describe and understand the anthropological approach to the study of religion
3. describe and apply some of the various theories that have been posited to explain religion from an anthropological perspective
4. demonstrate an ability to study cultural issues such as religion objectively
5. demonstrate a broadened knowledge of indigenous cultures, religious beliefs and practices
6. discuss the complex relationship between religious ideology, cultural practice, and social institutions
7. explain the difference between folklore, mythology, legend, and ritual, and describe the relationships between them
8. compare and contrast the various types of religious practitioners such as shamans, priests, prophets, witches and sorcerers
9. discuss the role of ancestors, ghosts, and souls in a variety of small religions
10. discuss the use of religion and ritual in medical and healing contexts
11. describe universal patterns of spiritual belief
12. describe and explain the phenomenon of religious revitalization
13. discuss the human search for transcendence through ritual, spiritual journey, prayer, and trance
14. display familiarity with a variety of non-Western myths, legends, and religious practices

V. CONTENT:

- A. The four-field, holistic approach of anthropology
- B. The culture concept
- C. Historical overview of the field, its scope, aims, methods, and relationship with other disciplines of scientific inquiry
- D. Theoretical approaches to the anthropological study of religion
 1. Unilineal evolutionary
 2. Historical materialist
 3. Structural/sociological
 4. Psychoanalytic
 5. Functionalist
 6. Cultural materialist
 7. Symbolic
- E. Ritual and symbolic behavior
 1. Theoretical approaches to ritual
 2. Rites of passage
 3. Selected case studies, for example:
 - a. Horace Miner, "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema"
 - b. Daniel Gordon, "Female Circumcision in Egypt and Sudan: A

- c. Controversial Rite of Passage"
 - d. William K. Powers, "The Sweat Lodge: Inside"
- F. Folklore
 - 1. Legend and myth
 - 2. Theoretical approaches to the study of myth
 - 3. Selected case studies, for example:
 - a. Lee M. Hollander, *The Poetic Edda*
 - b. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*
 - c. W. D. Westervelt, *Hawaiian Legends of Ghosts and Ghost-Gods*
- G. Religious practitioners
 - 1. Shamans and priests
 - 2. Prophets
 - 3. Selected case studies, for example:
 - a. Margery Wolf, "The Woman Who Didn't Become a Shaman"
 - b. William Howells, "The Shaman: A Siberian Spiritualist"
 - c. Michael Barkhun, "Reflections After Waco: Millennialists and the State"
- H. Occult practices
 - 1. Witchcraft
 - 2. Sorcery
 - 3. Divination
 - 4. Magic
 - 5. Concepts of good and evil
 - 6. Selected case studies, for example:
 - a. E. E. Evans- Pritchard, "Consulting the Poison Oracle Among the Azande"
 - b. George Gmelch, "Baseball Magic"
 - c. Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic"
- I. Ghosts, souls and ancestors
 - 1. Spirits and animism
 - 2. Death and the deceased
 - 3. Selected case studies, for example:
 - a. J. H. M. Beattie, "The Ghost Cult in Bunyoro"
 - b. Rachel Attitug Qitsualik, "Anirniq: An Inuit 'Ghost' Story"
 - c. Allen Haney et al., "Spontaneous Memorialization: Violent Death and Emerging Mourning Ritual"
- J. The human search for transcendence
 - 1. Prayer
 - 2. Trance
 - 3. Vision quest
 - 4. Body modification
 - 5. The religious use of drugs
 - 6. Selected case studies, for example:
 - a. Michael Harner, "The Sound of Rushing Water"
 - b. Napoleon A. Chagnon, "My Adventure with Ebene: A 'Religious Experience'"
 - c. Fred W. Voget, *The Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance*
- K. Religion and healing
 - 1. Ethnomedicine
 - 2. Selected case studies, for example:
 - a. Arthur C. Lehmann, "Eyes of the Ngangas: Ethnomedicine and Power in Central African Republic"
 - b. L. A. Rebhun, "Swallowing Frogs: Anger and Illness in Northeast Brazil"
 - c. Wayland D. Hand, "Folk Medical Magic and Symbolism in the West"
- L. Old and new religions
 - 1. Cargo cults
 - 2. Revitalization movements
 - 3. New religious movements
 - 4. Selected case studies, for example:
 - a. Alice Beck Keyhoe, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization*
 - b. John R. Hall, "Apocalypse at Jonestown"
 - c. Barry Chavannes, "The Rastafari Abroad"

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. Textbook reading assignments; additional Internet and/or print assignments
- C. **Lecture** -
- D. **Audio-visual Activity** - Presentation of audio-visual materials
- E. **Research** - Research project
- F. **Discussion** - Class and group discussions

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Reading assignments 1. Read Marvin Harris, "Why We Became Religious," and "The Evolution of the Spirit World." 2. Read Alice Beck Keyhoe, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization*. 3. Read specified selections from Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's translation of *The Rig Veda*. B. Homework 1. Read chapters two and three of Raymond Scupin's *Religion and Culture: An Anthropological Focus* and answer the following questions: a. Describe the rationalist, unilineal perspective that E.B. Tylor applied to his study of religion. What are some of the flaws of this approach? b. Describe the approach that symbolic anthropology takes toward the study of religion. What has Clifford Geertz contributed to this style of inquiry? 2. Read selections from Lee M. Hollander's translation of *The Poetic Edda* and answer the following questions: a. Compare and contrast the "Lay of Thrym" and the "Lay of Fafnir"; into which categories of folklore do they fall? Why? How are the stories similar? How do they differ? b. What do the Eddic lays tell us about Viking culture? How accurately do you think they represent the times in which they were written (circa 800 - 1200 AD)? C. Class and group discussions 1. Class discussion topic: What is the difference between a cult and a religion? 2. Group discussion topic: What are some of the superstitions practiced by your own family and friends? Where do you think they come from? Why do you think they persist? D. Research project 1. Choose a religion that is not your own to study during the course of the term. You must introduce yourself to the community of practitioners and obtain their permission to write a term paper about them and their religion. You must attend meetings and conduct in-person interviews in order to collect the ethnographic data upon which you will base your final paper.

VIII. EVALUATION:

- A. **Methods**

1. Exams/Tests
2. Research Projects
3. Home Work

B. Frequency

1. Midterm and Final Examinations
2. Frequent homework evaluation
3. End-of-term evaluation of research project

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Lehmann, Arthur C., James E. Myers, and Pamela A. Moro *Magic, Witchcraft and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*. 6th ed., McGraw Hill, 2005.
2. Hicks, David *Ritual and Belief: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion*. 2nd ed., McGraw Hill, 2002.
3. Scupin, Raymond C. *Religion and Culture: An Anthropological Focus*, Prentice Hall, 2000.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: