**ANTHROPOLOGY AND RELIGION**

**(ANTH 4751-100)**

**University of North Texas, Fall 2021**

**Syllabus**

**Professor:** Liz Bingham Thomas, M.A.

**Class Location:** Wooten Hall 112

**Class Meeting Times:** Th 6:00pm – 8:50pm

**Office Hours:** Wed 4:00pm-5:30pm in Sycamore 130 or by appointment (via Zoom)

**Email:** lbingham@smu.edu

**Course Description:** Anthropologists have a long tradition of studying the natural history of humans and the diversity of human cultures. As such, they have generated a wide variety of viewpoints for explaining and interpreting the origins, nature, and functions of religion. Anthropology has also done more than perhaps any other scientific discipline to demonstrate the place of religion in defining what it means to be human. Anthropologists have reconceptualized what constitutes "religion", "magic", and the notion of the "supernatural." Though it can be claimed that religion, however diverse in its forms of expression, is a human universal found in every culture, in many societies the distinction between what is religious and what is nonreligious is meaningless.

In an attempt to demonstrate that religion often permeates all aspects of life rather than constituting a distinct domain, this course will survey religion, ritual, and supernatural belief systems in various cultures around the world. We will focus first on some of the conceptual and theoretical issues that lay at the foundation of the cross-cultural study of religion. Through readings, films, lectures, classroom discussion, and independent research, students will explore the enormous variety of religious behavior and religious belief around the world. We will examine such phenomena as spirit possession, shamanism, syncretism, witchcraft, spiritual healing, and pilgrimage. We will also explore how religion intersects with art, economics, social organization, gender relations, and politics. We will look at the impact of colonialism and culture contact on religious behavior and institutions. The ultimate goals of the course are to understand the meaning of religion, magic, myth, and ritual in our own society by understanding these meanings within a cross-cultural context and thereby to further our understanding of the nature of the human experience in general.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast similarities and differences in religious practices and experiences across cultures.
2. Critically assess the universality of beliefs and practices in relation to the supernatural as well as how religion functions in society.
3. Understand and be able to apply the various theoretical approaches to the analysis of religion.
4. Develop a sophisticated knowledge and vocabulary of the key analytical concepts that are used to understand myth, ritual, and religious belief and practice.
5. Understand the intersections between gender and religion, religion and politics, religion and social change.
6. Develop a tolerant attitude toward differences in religious beliefs and practices and how religions alternately promote both cultural stability and cultural change.
7. Understand the methods and assumptions of anthropological research on religion, and understand how they complement those of the humanities and theology.

**Required Texts:**

Stein, R. L. & Stein, P.L.

(2011) *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft*. 4th Edition. Routledge.

Lofton, Kathryn

(2017) *Consuming Religion*. University of Chicago Press.

Desmangles, Leslie G.

(1994) *The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

***All other readings will be posted electronically on UNT Online***

**Grading and Assignments:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Course Component | Percent of Grade |
| Attendance and Participation  Discussion Leadership | 10%  5% |
| Paper Presentation | 10% |
| Research Paper **(Dec 7)**  Mid-Term Exam **(Oct 12)** | 25%  25% |
| Final Exam **(Dec 14)** | 25% |

*Grading Scale*

94-100 = A

90-93 = A-

87-89 = B+

84-86 = B

80-83 = B-

77-79 = C+

74-76 = C

70-73 = C-

60-69 = D

< 59 = F

**Course Evaluation:** Your grade in this course is based upon the following:

**Attendance and Participation (10%):** Participation is an important part of this course. I will take attendance each class – consistent attendance is required to earn a high participation grade. Simply attending class is not enough. I expect you to read and arrive to each class period prepared to actively discuss all assigned readings and weekly topics. **Please take notes on the readings and come prepared with at least one question or comment for each reading.** Highlight passages that intrigued or confused you, topics you are curious to discuss, or brainstorm other concrete ways to participate in class. Almost every week we will have a class discussion on the non-textbook readings that provide case studies about the topic at hand. High participation grades will come from frequent thoughtful contributions to the class discussions.

**Discussion Leadership (5%):** Once during the semester, you will act as the discussion leader for our reading discussion time. You will lead the discussion for approximately one hour. You will be required to submit your list of 10 to 15 discussion points (questions, quotes to discuss, connections with other weeks of the course) prior to the discussion you are facilitating via Canvas. You will ideally guide us in highlighting themes across readings and concepts taught in the course.

**Paper Presentation (10%):** Each week, two to three students will present on a section of their term paper. This is not meant to be an overview of your entire, completed paper. It is meant to allow you to practice your presentation skills by talking about *one to two* topics that your paper will cover. A sign up will be provided the first day that will address the topic that you will cover in your presentation. Presentations should be between 10 and 15 minutes long and be presented using a PowerPoint presentation.

**Research Paper (25%):** This assignment allows you to analyze a religious tradition of your choice (hopefully one different from your own if you have one) according to the themes we are addressing in class. For this assignment, you will be required to do at least one hour of participant observation in the religion of your choosing, interview one adherent to the religion, and write (using your data and outside literature) to write a 10-to-15-page paper. We will discuss this assignment during class and an additional handout will be provided with more detailed criteria.

**Mid-Term Exam (25%):** For your midterm exam, you will be asked to complete a multiple choice and short answer exam that covers core anthropological and religious concepts and terminology. There will be 2 short essay questions to choose from that must be completed in class.

**Final Exam (25%):** For your final exam, you will be asked to complete a multiple choice and short answer exam that covers core anthropological and religious concepts and terminology. There will be 2 short essay questions to choose from that must be completed in class.

**Grading and Procedures:**

I view grades as being earned throughout the course and you never have an “A” or any other grade before you complete all assignments. Think of your grade as one that is always in progress and is influenced by your contributions to your own learning. I am here to help you and want everyone to succeed, so please contact me as soon as possible if you have concerns about your progress or if you want to discuss from class.

All assignments must be submitted as Word or PDF documents through UNT Online. Papers should be double-spaced with size 12 Times New Roman font and include citations following an academic citation style – ASA, MLA, APA or Chicago. Using a citation manager such as Endnote, Refworks or Zotero is highly recommended. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the class assigned.

Late work: All assignments must be turned in on time. I will mark down assignments that are late 10% for each day after the due date. If you are missing class with an excused absence, you should still submit the assignment on UNT online by the due date. Make-up exams will only be allowed in the case of an emergency, and documentation may be required. You must contact me as soon as possible if you are going to miss the exam.

**Attendance Policy:**

Because of the workload, pace, and cumulative nature of this class, regular attendance in class is essential. If you miss a class you must contact a classmate for any information, notes, or important announcements you may have missed. If you are entitled to an excused absence for university events or other documented reasons, you must contact me prior to each absence to be excused and get make-up materials. In the case of such scheduled events, alternate activities will be required for credit. I will keep up with attendance informally and based on in-class assignments, but chronic absences will impact your grade and I will contact Campus Life. Please email me or attend office hours if you have questions about my policies.

**Office Hours:**

This is time meant for you to address any questions or concerns you have about the course. Please make the most of it! Feel free to just stop in and ask questions. However, if you know you want to stop by, I highly recommend that you email me so that I can make sure to block off the time for you.

**Class Schedule**

This schedule may be adjusted throughout the semester as needed. All changes will be discussed and posted on UNT Online.

# **Course Schedule**

| Date | Topic | Media and Reading Assignments | Assignments |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aug 31 | UNIT 1  The Anthropological Study of Religion | Textbook Chapter 1 (pp.1-31)  **Discussion readings:**  Glazier, Stephen D. “Anthropology of Religion.” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*. W. Swatos, ed. Pp. 23-26. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press. URL (Hartford Seminary): Online: [**http://hirr.hartsem.edu/ency/Anthropology.htm**](http://hirr.hartsem.edu/ency/Anthropology.htm)  Desmangles, Leslie G.  (1994) *The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti.* (Chapter 1)  NPR’s Hidden Brain Podcast, Episode “Creating God” posted: *Jul 16, 2018* | Sign up for discussion leadership and project presentation days |
| Sept 7 | UNIT 2Mythology | Textbook Chapter 2 (pp. 32-57) **Discussion readings and viewings:**  Lévi-Strauss, Claude. Myth and meaning (pp. 1-24)  (.pdf available online) <http://historiaocharkeologi.com/kanada/myth_and_meaning.pdf>  Desmangles, Leslie G.  (1994) *The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti.* (Chapters 2-3)  Watch:  **Hopi Origin Story | Native America | Sacred Stories | PBS**  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D53yGnJwjT0>  **The Creation Story of the Maya**  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb5GKmEcJcw>  **Hindu Creation Stories**  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZ6hVl84sjg> | Discussion leaders |
| Sept 14 | UNIT 3 Religious Symbols | Textbook Chapter 3 (pp.58-81) **Discussion readings:**  Desmangles, Leslie G.  (1994) *The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti.* (Chapter 4)  Open Access  [**Building A New Identity on Religious Symbols: a Case Study of Village in South-Western Bulgaria**](https://tcu.summon.serialssolutions.com/2.0.0/link/0/eLvHCXMwrV1NT9swGH41QJp2YRvrRBlDvsAtI4ntfEwIlJa0tZSlEkmH2KWKP3IB2sLggPjz2IkjBAdOHO3YkqX3w8_r2M8DgP1frvMqJ9S1W0euCrmncIX1rsd1oCkcVdQnWEjyUhS3vVxonsZYc3dZskndcinMqfmhp-O4YSj3TlY3jtGRMv9brajGGmwYbnLt-RuTIRv963zMD-LQVNFdG2u47Dd8Nm32Ng9BaVOkYeqY_G6oO5VaXr3M1dRuQKPP77DWL7Bp0SdKWnf5Ch_UYgt6LVXIAzpAhoe2arR-H7bgY3dd-Rs8DmYsO2X5GCUoT88RO03zkpUXaJqjo-vq9vL4LM3YmE1nxdFh07bdxcWfwTTrOn_r6cOkSJHBoXrySLf_sixLxiliOSqms3LinKeFYelFg1k2Ts5Y0oNylJbDiWNlGxxBYs9RGmNwXXL7XNRhpGJCMfG5J7lnVMRxTQShIg5VGIfSFZGuTxURMhAa5-nSTQb4O6wvlgu1DaiqdLbQ-C3kFSZS-JxHtJZKUFcFUVCHfeg1tpnbuPs_Nxsydvuw_6rfhuHcSK20Y-YrWfdht7PW89BnU-28_fkHfNLoibbnMbuwfnd7r37C2p2432sq-z3rek8fTd0C)  by Georgieva, Albena  Wolf, Eric R. 1958. The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol. *Journal of American Folklore* 71:34-39. (FrogScholar, JSTOR) | Discussion leaders Project presentations |
| Sept 21 | UNIT 4Ritual | Textbook Chapter 4 (pp.82 – 109) **Discussion readings:**  Lofton, Kathryn  (2017) *Consuming Religion*. University of Chicago Press.  Introduction, Chapters 3-4  Watch:  **The power of ritual | Dimitris Xygalatas | TEDxAthens**  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrjCLvSQ_cw>  **Inside an Apache Rite of Passage Into Womanhood**  [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1Cx\_9YDQEc**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1Cx_9YDQEc) | Discussion leaders Project presentations |
| Sept 28 | UNIT 5Altered States of Consciousness | Textbook Chapter 5 (pp.110-126) **Discussion readings and viewings:**  Ember, Carol R., Christina Carolus. 2017.“Altered States of Consciousness” in C. R. Ember, ed. Explaining Human Culture. Human Relations Area Files  <https://hraf.yale.edu/ehc/assets/summaries/pdfs/altered-states-of-consciousness.pdf>  Greenfield, Sydney M. 1999. Hypnosis and trance induction in the surgeries of Brazilian spiritist healer-mediums*.* Pp. 211-226. *Across the Boundaries of Belief. M. Klass, ed.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.(UNT Library eReserve.) Watch:  **Trance and Dance in Bali**  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8YC0dnj4Jw> **Hallucinogenic Tree Sap | Earth Unplugged**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5S8DNFeM0Q> | Discussion leaders Project presentations |
| Oct 5 | UNIT 6Religious Specialists: Shamans, healers, priests and prophets | Textbook Chapter 6 (pp.127-144) **Discussion readings: and viewings:**  Kendall, Laurel. 1996. Korean Shamans and the Spirits of Capitalism. *American Ethnologist* 98(3):512-527. (FrogScholar, JSTOR)  **Clara Saraiva**. Afro-Brazilian Religions in Portugal: bruxos, priests and pais de santo. Etnográfica, vol. 14 (2) | 2010, 265-288.  Watch: **Magical Death** (1973) Napoleon Chagnon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txT0oWkMjJM> Mid-Term Review (UNITS 1-6) | Discussion leaders Project presentations |
| Oct 12 | Mid-Term Exam | Mid-Term (in-class) |  |
| Oct 19 | UNIT 7Magic and Divination | Textbook Chapter 7 (pp. 145-171) **Discussion readings and viewings:** E. E. Evans-Pritchard. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* . (Chapters I, II, III) - .pdf online Martin A. Mills. *The opposite of witchcraft: Evans-Pritchard and the problem of the person* (pp.1-15) .pdf available online  Watch:  **The Witchcraft Among the Azande** (African Warrior Tribe Documentary) | TRACKS  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwhVFmW7lYA> | Discussion leaders Project presentations |
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| Oct 26 | UNIT 8Souls, Ghosts, and Death | Textbook Chapter 8 (pp. 172-204) **Discussion material:**  Podcast – This American Life “One Last Thing Before I Go”, Act One “*Really Long Distance*” (22 minutes)  <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/597/one-last-thing-before-i-go-2016> Watch Film in Class: **Departures** | Project presentations |
| Nov 2 | UNIT 9Gods and Spirits | Textbook Chapter 9 (pp. 205-232) **Discussion material:** Taylor, Philip. 2002. *The Ethnicity of Efficacy: Vietnamese Goddess Worship and the Encoding of Popular Histories.* Asian Ethnicity 3(1):85-102. Stetson, George R. "The Animistic Vampire in New England." *American Anthropologist* 9, no. 1 (1896): 1-13.  Etzel Cardeña Yvonne Schaffler “*He Who Has the Spirits Must Work a Lot”: A Psycho‐Anthropological Account of Spirit Possession in the Dominican Republic.* Ethos (.pdf online)  Watch in class:  **Married to a Goddess: Joginis of India** | Discussion leaders Project presentations |
| Nov 9 | No class – at home project work day | We will not meet this day. Instead, work on your term paper/project. |  |
| Nov 16 | UNIT 10 Witchcraft | Textbook Chapter 10 (pp. 233-251) **Discussion readings and viewings:**  Alexis Malefakis “*Gridlocked in the city: kinship and witchcraft among Wayao street vendors in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania”*  Parish, J. (2018). Uncanny objects and the fear of the familiar: Hiding from Akan witches in New York City. *Journal of Material Culture*, *23*(1), 100–113.  <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/1359183517725100>  Watch:  **Inside Ghana's Witchcraft Refugee Camps**  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4wdmPWD9nk>  **The Burning Times** (1990)  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=34ow_kNnoro&feature=emb_logo> | Discussion leaders Project presentations |
|  | No Class | Thanksgiving break |  |
| Nov 30 | Unit 11Searching for Meaning | Textbook Chapter 11 (pp. 252-278) Palmer, Susan J. 2004. *Aliens Adored: Raël’s UFO Religion*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press. (pp.1-57)  Leatham, Miguel. 2005. New Religious Movements: New Religions in Latin America. In *Encyclopedia of Religion,* 2nd ed*.* Lindsay Jones, ed.-in-chief. 10:6575-6582. Detroit, MI: MacMillan Reference USA.  Watch in class:  **Waiting for John** (Documentary) | Project presentations |
| Dec 7 | Unit 12Religion, Conflict, and PeaceandFinal Exam Review | Textbook Chapter 12 (pp. 279-293) **Discussion readings and viewings:**  José C. M. van Santen ‘*My “veil” does not go with my jeans’: veiling, fundamentalism, education and women’s agency in northern Cameroon*  Jonathan Fox. *“In the Name of God and Nation: The Overlapping Influence of Separatism and Religion on Ethnic Conflict.”*  Watch:  **Religious and secular nationalism (HarvardX)**  [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\_UUMZNWgh4**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_UUMZNWgh4) | Research Papers Due Discussion leaders  Project presentations |
| Dec 14 | Final Exam | Final Exam |  |

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**Classroom Expectations**:

You should be open to critical engagement and productively and constructively engage in discussion in class and UNT online discussions and activities. The classroom should be an open and welcoming space that respects people’s different histories, identities and social locations. Students are not required to agree with the material presented, but are expected to engage in a thoughtful intellectual analysis.

**Communication:**

The best way to contact me outside of class and office hours is through email. I will try to respond to all emails within 48 hours M-F during standard working hours of 8 am – 6 pm. Response times may be slightly longer on weekends. There is also an open discussion forum on UNT Online where you can ask general questions about content, assignments, and logistics – please don't ask about personal issues or individual grades on this open forum. Students are encouraged to meet with me during office hours to discuss questions about class or other more general issues related to the course, anthropology, life at UNT, and post-college plans. Sign-up for the scheduled hours and/or email me to set-up individual appointments.

**UNT Online:**

Latest information, announcements, assignments, and readings will be posted on UNT Online. Thus, you should plan to regularly log-on to UNT Online and familiarize yourself with the course page and UNT Online generally. If you have not yet taken the UNT Online Student Tutorial, please do so immediately. To access it, click on the "UNT Online Student Tutorial" on your home page. 

**Class Norms & Netiquette**

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, discussions, and chats. If I deem any of them to be inappropriate or offensive, I will forward the message to the Chair of the department and appropriate action will be taken. The same rules apply online as they do in person. Be respectful of other students. Hateful discourse will not be tolerated.

**Statement about Online Materials**

UNT students are prohibited from sharing any portion of course materials (including videos, PowerPoint slides, assignments, or notes) with others, including on social media, without written permission by the course instructor. Accessing, copying, transporting (to another person or location), modifying, or destroying programs, records, or data belonging to UNT or another user without authorization, whether such data is in transit or storage, is prohibited.

**Academic Misconduct**

Academic Misconduct–Any act that violates the academic integrity of the institution is considered academic misconduct. The procedures used to resolve suspected acts of academic misconduct are available in the offices of Academic Deans and the Office of Campus Life and are listed in detail in the Undergraduate Catalog (Student Policies>Academic Conduct Policy Details; Specific examples include, but are not limited to:

* Cheating: Copying from another student’s test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files and listings; using, during any academic exercise, material and/or devices not authorized by the person in charge of the test; collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or laboratory without permission; knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in its entirety or in part, the contents of a test or other assignment unauthorized for release; substituting for another student or permitting another student to substitute for oneself.
* Plagiarism: The appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another’s work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one’s own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another’s work without giving credit therefore.
* Collusion: The unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing work offered for credit.

I have a zero tolerance policy for cheating. Anyone caught cheating, whether they are caught during or after the fact, will receive a zero on the assignment, exam, or paper.

**Statement on UNT’s Discrimination Policy**

UNT prohibits discrimination and harassment based on age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, ethnic origin, disability, predisposing genetic information, covered veteran status, and any other basis protected by law, except as permitted by law. UNT also prohibits unlawful sexual and gender-based harassment and violence, sexual assault, incest, statutory rape, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, bullying, stalking, and retaliation. We understand that discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence can undermine students’ academic success and we encourage students who have experienced any of these issues to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

**Statement on Title IX at UNT**

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep any information your share private to the greatest extent possible. However, I have a mandatory reporting responsibility under UNT policy and federal law and I am required to share any information I receive regarding sexual harassment, discrimination, and related conduct with UNT’s Title IX Coordinator.

**Accommodations**

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.