

University of Utah
Anthropology 4171: Myth, Magic, and Religion
Fall 2013
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:20 pm
AEB 310

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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4:00 – 5:00 pm; or by appointment

SYLLABUS

Description: Searches for patterns and meaning in the variety of beliefs and practices found among societies, from simple to complex, which convention designates as "religion." Examines how even contemporary secular societies make decisions and behave within religio/magical constraints.

Two warnings about content: In this course we will discuss a wide variety of religious beliefs – including some you may subscribe to – from a perspective known as *methodological agnosticism*. We are not interested in determining whether or not a given belief is *true*, but rather in understanding how that belief works within its cultural context. In addition, some of the behaviors and beliefs we will discuss are of a sexual or violent nature. Students likely to be offended by an agnostic treatment of their own beliefs or by a frank (but not prurient) discussion of sexual or violent attitudes and practices in another culture should bear this in mind.

Lectures: We will be covering a lot of material every class meeting, and attendance is essential. The PowerPoint slides used in each lecture will be available on the class website the following day as Adobe Acrobat pdfs (if you do not already have it, google “Acrobat Reader” to download the free program that will let you view these files). Viewing these slides is not a substitute for attending lecture – they will contain illustrations and topic headings, but the substance of each lecture will be delivered in class.

We may also watch some films over the course of the semester, and these will be part of the material covered by the exams. As they may not be available outside of class, either online or on reserve at the library, lecture may be your only opportunity to see them. I will make announcements both in lecture and via email the week before we watch them.

Texts: Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained*, Basic Books, 2001
E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, Abridged edition, Oxford University Press, 1976
Barbara G. Myerhoff, *Peyote Hunt: The Sacred Journey of the Huichol Indians*, Cornell University Press, 1976
Pamela Moro & James Myers, eds., *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, 8th edition, McGraw Hill, 2010
Optional: Rebecca Stein & Philip Stein, *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*, 3rd edition, Prentice Hall, 2011

You are expected to have completed the readings listed for each week *prior* to the first date listed for that week. Please check the weekly reading assignment in the syllabus carefully, and be sure to allow plenty of time to complete them, as there are often around 85 pages assigned for a given week.

Although new copies of all the books may be expensive, many of them have been in print for several years, so you should have no difficulty acquiring used copies, if you prefer. However, you must ensure you get the assigned *edition* of each of these books, as significant changes may have been made between editions in all of them. Copies of the books will also be on reserve at the Marriott library, for 3-hour check-out. You will need your student ID to check them out, as access will be limited to enrolled students

The Stein & Stein textbook is optional, as almost all of the material it presents will be given in lecture, but it may be a useful study aid. I recommend not purchasing it unless you determine you will need it extensively. Otherwise, you should be able to get by with the Marriott reserve copy as necessary.

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| Grading: | Reading Presentations: | 15% |
| | Exams (best 4 of 5): | 60% |
| | Final Exam, 12/18: | 25% |

Reading Presentations: Several times throughout the semester, each student will be expected to provide a brief, 5-10 minute presentation on one of the readings. The presentation will consist of a summary of the reading itself, answering a few questions from other students, and presenting a broad discussion question to the class. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis. As the number of readings each student will be assigned will depend on enrollment, the exact details will be discussed in class. Student preferences will be weighed heavily in these assignments, but cannot always be guaranteed.

Exams: There are five in-class exams scheduled throughout the semester. These will include both objective questions (multiple-choice, matching, or true-or-false) and subjective questions (short-answer or paragraph-length essays). They may include any material from lecture or readings for that section. The best four of these five exams will be used for your grade, and will account for 60% of your overall score. There will be no chance to make up a missed exam; if you miss class on the day of an exam, that will be the one dropped for calculating your grade.

Final Exam: The final exam will be in a similar format as the other exams, but will be comprehensive (although it will emphasize the final section materials), and will include more extensive essay questions.

Extra Credit: If you wish to do an extra credit project, please make arrangements to meet with me prior to Tuesday, 11/26. We will evaluate where your grade would fit in the curve as of then. The assignment will be to write a paper on a given topic, citing at least 2 sources that are not already part of the assigned reading. After the 11/26 class, I will email paper topics to everyone planning to do extra credit. The paper will be worth up to one additional letter on your overall course grade, and will be due prior to the beginning of the last lecture, on Thursday, 12/12. The difficulty of the topic and the number of pages required will depend on your current grade status: F → D: 5-7 pages, D → C: 6-8 pages, C → B: 7-9 pages, B → A: 8-10 pages.

SCHEDULE

Subject to change

"Reader" refers to Moro & Myers 2010

"Textbook" refers to Stein & Stein 2011

The readings listed as "OPTIONAL" cover material presented in lecture and do not need to be read before class, but may be useful in preparing for exams

SECTION 1: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION

Week 1: Introduction to the Anthropology of Religion (8/27 & 8/29)

READINGS: *Boyer*, 1: What is the origin?, pp. 1-50;
Reader, 1: The Anthropological Study of Religion, pp. 1-5;
Horace Miner, "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema," pp. 135-138

Week 2: Theories of Religion (9/3 & 9/5)

READINGS: *Boyer*, 2: What supernatural concepts are like *and* 3: The kind of mind it takes, pp. 51-136;
Reader, Clifford Geertz, "Religion," pp. 6-15;
OPTIONAL: *Reader*, Dorothy Lee, "Religious Perspectives in Anthropology," pp. 20-27;
Claude E. Stipe, "Anthropologists Versus Missionaries: The Influence of Presuppositions," pp. 28-33;
Textbook, 1: The Anthropological Study of Religion, pp. 1-28

EXAM 1 on 9/10

SECTION 2: OTHER WORLDS

Week 3: Altered States of Consciousness (9/12)

READINGS: *Myerhoff*, 1: Ramón and Lupe, pp. 29-51;
Reader, 5: Altered States of Consciousness and the Religious Use of Drugs, pp. 184-187;
I.M. Lewis, "Trance, Possession, Shamanism, and Sex," pp. 188-195;
Michael Harner, "The Sound of Rushing Water," pp. 214-219;
OPTIONAL: *Textbook*, 5: Altered States of Consciousness, pp. 103-118

Week 4: Gods and Spirits (9/17 & 9/19)

READINGS: *Boyer*, 4: Why gods and spirits? *and* 5: Why do gods and spirits matter?, pp. 137-202;
Myerhoff, 3: Huichol Religion, pp. 73-111;
OPTIONAL: *Myerhoff*, 2: Ethnographic and Historical Background, pp. 52-72;
Textbook, 9: Gods and Spirits, pp. 189-212

Week 5: Ghosts, Souls, and Death (9/24)

READINGS: *Boyer*, 6: Why is religion about death?, pp. 203-228;
Reader, Marvin Harris, "Why We Became Religious *and* The Evolution of the Spirit World," pp. 16-19;
8: Ghosts, Souls, and Ancestors: Powers of the Dead, pp. 328-331;
Peter A. Metcalf, "Death Be Not Strange," pp. 345-348;
OPTIONAL: *Textbook*, 8: Souls, Ghosts, and Death, pp. 161-188

EXAM 2 on 9/26

SECTION 3: COMMUNION

Week 6: Religious Specialists and Ritual (10/1 & 10/3)

- READINGS:** *Myerhoff*, 4: The Peyote Hunt as an Event, pp. 112-188;
Reader, 4: Shamans, Priests, and Prophets, pp. 139-141;
 Victor W. Turner, "Religious Specialists," pp. 142-149;
 Piers Vitebsky, "Shamanism," pp. 150-157;
- OPTIONAL:** *Reader*, Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, "Training for the Priesthood Among the Kogi of Colombia," pp. 162-176;
Textbook, 4: Ritual, pp. 77-102;
 6: Religious Specialists, pp. 119-135

Week 7: Ritual and Myth (10/8 & 10/10)

- READINGS:** *Boyer*, 7: Why rituals?, pp. 203-264;
Myerhoff, 5: The Deer-Maize-Peyote Complex, pp. 189-228;
Reader, 2: Myth, Symbolism, and Taboo, pp. 42-45;
 Scott Leonard and Michael McClure, "The Study of Mythology," pp. 46-57;
 3: Ritual, pp. 83-86;
 Victor W. Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," pp. 87-96;
- OPTIONAL:** *Reader*, John Beattie, "Nyoro Myth," pp. 58-62;
 Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Harelips and Twins: The Splitting of a Myth," pp. 63-66;
 Mary Lee Daugherty, "Serpent-Handling as Sacrament," pp. 77-82;
 Roy A. Rappaport, "Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations Among a New Guinea People," pp. 116-125;
Textbook, 2: Mythology, pp. 29-55

FALL BREAK – NO CLASS on 10/15 & 10/17

Week 8: Myth and Symbols (10/22)

- READINGS:** *Myerhoff*, 6: The Purpose and Meaning of the Peyote Hunt, pp. 229-264;
Reader, Eric Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe," pp. 67-71;
- OPTIONAL:** *Textbook*, 3: Religious Symbols, pp. 56-73

EXAM 3 on 10/24

SECTION 4: WITCHCRAFT

Week 9: Witches, Vampires, and Zombies (10/29 & 10/31)

READINGS: *Evans-Pritchard*, 1: Witchcraft is an organic and hereditary phenomenon *through* 4: Are witches conscious agents, pp. 1-64;
Reader, Paul Barber, "The Real Vampire," pp. 332-337;
Karen McCarthy Brown, "Vodou," pp. 338-344

Week 10: Witchcraft and Sorcery (11/5 & 11/7)

READINGS: *Evans-Pritchard*, 5: Witch-doctors *through* 7: The place of witch-doctors in Zande society, pp. 65-119;
Reader, 7: Witchcraft, Sorcery, Divination, and Magic, pp. 276-282;
James L. Brain, "An Anthropological Perspective on the Witchcraze," pp. 283-289;
Naomi M. McPherson, "Sorcery and Concepts of Deviance among the Kabana, West New Britain," pp. 290-298;

OPTIONAL: *Textbook*, 10: Witchcraft, pp. 213-229

EXAM 4 on 11/12

SECTION 5: MAGIC

Week 11: Divination and Tabu (11/14)

READINGS: *Evans-Pritchard*, 8: The poison oracle in daily life *through* 10: Other Zande oracles, pp. 120-175;

OPTIONAL: *Textbook*, 7: Magic and Divination, pp. 136-160

Week 12: Tabu, Magic, and Medicine (11/19 & 11/21)

READINGS: *Evans-Pritchard*, 11: Magic and medicine *and* 12: An association for the practice of magic, pp. 176-220;
Reader, Mary Douglas, "Taboo," pp. 72-76;
Bronislaw Malinowski, "Rational Mastery by Man of His Surroundings," pp. 314-319;
George Gmelch, "Baseball Magic," pp. 320-327

Week 13: Magic and Medicine (11/26)

READINGS: *Evans-Pritchard*, 13: Witchcraft, oracles, and magic, in the situation of death, pp. 221-225;
Reader, Sydney M. Greenfield, "Hypnosis and Trance Induction in the Spirit Surgeries of Brazilian Spiritist Healer-Mediums," pp. 196-206;
6: Ethnomedicine: Religion and Healing, pp. 236-239;
L.A. Rebhun, "Swallowing Frogs: Anger and Illness in Northeast Brazil," pp. 249-260

THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS on 11/28

EXAM 5 on 12/3

SECTION 6: TRADITION AND CHANGE

Week 14: Revitalization Movements (12/5)

READINGS: *Boyer*, 8: Why doctrines, exclusion, and violence?, pp. 265-296;
Reader, 9: Old and New Religions: The Changing Spiritual Landscape, pp. 356-359;
Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," pp. 360-365;
OPTIONAL: *Reader*, Alice Beck Kehoe, "The Ghost Dance Religion," pp. 366-370;
Peter M. Worsley, "Cargo Cults," pp. 371-375

Week 15: Fundamentalism, Secularism, and New Movements (12/10 & 12/12)

READINGS: *Boyer*, 9: Why belief?, pp. 297-330;
Reader, Michael Forbes Brown, "Dark Side of the Shaman," pp. 158-161;
Michael Barkun, "Reflections After Waco: Millennialists and the State," pp. 177-183;
T.M. Luhrmann, "The Goat and the Gazelle: Witchcraft," pp. 299-307;
10: Religion as Global Culture: Migration, Media, and Other Transnational Forces, pp. 408-411;
Mark Juergensmeyer, "Religious Terror and Global War," pp. 435-443;
OPTIONAL: *Reader*, Homa Hoodfar, "The Veil in Their Minds and on Our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women," pp. 412-427;
Textbook, 11: The Search for New Meaning, pp. 230-258

FINAL EXAM on Wednesday, 12/18, 1:00 – 3:00