Description: Theories and practices concerning supernatural phenomena found among non-literate peoples throughout the world. Writing Approved for General Education.


Learning Objectives:
1) To gain a comparative perspective on world religions and also on indigenous cosmological traditions, i.e. ‘an anthropological approach’ to the study of religion.
2) To use descriptive and analytic vocabulary in the study of myth, ritual and religious ideas and practices, and related application in the medical anthropology of health and well-being.
3) To demonstrate writing skills which meet, or exceed standards for a Writing Approved class.

Course Requirements: Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off for the duration of class. Please conduct class related email communication through UM account. Students must comply with the Student Conduct Code http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php in all course matters.

Grading criteria: Grades are based on performance and points earned when a student
1) attends all classes (as documented by informal writing assignments) 40 points
2) completes 13 objective quizzes based on assigned readings 130 points
3) writes two formal writing assignments* 200 points
4) revises and resubmit one essay 30 points
5) completes final exam (objective and short essay questions) 100 points
Total possible: 500 points

Grades are based on points assigned according to the following percentages: A 90-100%, B 80-89%, C 70-79%, D 60-69%. Below 60% F. +/- grading is at the discretion of the instructor.

*Formal writing assignments must be 6-8 pages excluding endnotes and bibliography, typed, double-spaced, and proofread, in 12-point Times New Roman with 1-inch margins. Citation should follow the American Anthropological Association style guide http://aaanet.org/publications/styleguide/pdf Paragraph structure must include an introduction, body and conclusion in development of an argument, and appropriate use of evidence to support the author's views, as well as to refute contrary views. The essay must identify a clear purpose, audience or genre. The instructor will provide summary feedback and grade based on four criteria: clarity of communication, development of ideas, identification of purpose and audience, and use of evidence. At least one formal writing assignment will be revised and resubmitted for a final grade.
Accessibility: University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments. The instructor will work with the student and the staff of the Disability Services for Students (DSS) to arrange accommodations. Students should contact DSS (243.2373, Lommasson Center 154) for more information. A web-based supplement for this class is available on Moodle: http://umonline.umt.edu/. Technical support is provided at: http://umonline.umt.edu/techsupport/helpdesk.aspx. This syllabus provides a general plan for the course. If deviations are necessary they will be announced in class.

SYLLABUS

Week One: What is myth, and why is it significant in the comparative study of religion?
Aug. 26 Introduction and Pretest  READ: Bowen, Chapter 1
Aug. 28 Concepts: Culture, Society and Religion  Optional read: Bessac, preface
Aug. 30 Studying Religion through Practice: Bowen’s approach and one myth

Week Two: Theories of Religion
Sept. 2 HOLIDAY no class  READ: Bowen, Chapter 2  Optional read: Bessac, chap. 1
Sept. 4 World Religions
Sept. 6 The Twin Transformations of “Religion” in state societies

Week Three: State Religion  READ: Bowen, Chapter 3  Optional read: Bessac chap. 2
Sept. 9 Domains and Boundaries of Religion
Sept. 11 State Religion in Japan and in the U.S.
Sept. 13 Indigenous religious traditions

Week Four: How is ritual central to anthropology and the study of religion?
Sept. 16 Rituals of Transition  READ: Bowen Chapter 4  Optional read: Bessac, chap. 3
Sept. 18 Pilgrimage to Mecca
Sept. 20 Life and Death

Week Five: Medical Anthropology
Sept. 23 Health and Healing  READ: Bowen Chapter 5  Optional read: Bessac, chap. 4
Sept. 25 Magic and Science
Sept. 27 Prayer

Week Six: Sorcery, Witchcraft and Modernity
Sept. 30 Sorcery and Witchcraft  READ: Bowen, Chapter 6  Optional read: Bessac, chap 5
Oct. 2 Witches in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the U.S.

First Essay due Oct. 4th
Week Seven: Worship, Hierarchy and Conflict
Oct. 7 Sacrifice  
Oct. 9 Violence  
Oct. 11 Conflict and Community: Hindus and Muslims in India

Week Eight: Imagery and Faith
Oct. 14 Relics and Images  
Oct. 16 Gender and Fetish  
Oct. 18 European Colonialism

Week Nine: Transatlantic Religion
Oct. 21 Pilgrimage  
Oct. 23 Trance  
Oct. 25 Shamans

Week Ten: Boundaries and Selves
Oct. 28 Taboo  
Oct. 30 Orthodoxy  
Nov. 1 Day of the Dead

Week Eleven: Speech and Grace
Nov. 4 Scripture and Testament  
Nov. 6 Charisma  
Nov. 8 Conversion  
Second Essay due Nov. 8th

Week Twelve: New Religious Movements
Nov. 11 Holiday no class  
Nov. 13 Cults  
Nov. 15 Revitalization Movements

Week Thirteen: Revelation and Authority
Nov. 18 Divination and Prophecy  
Nov. 20 Revelation and Authority  
Nov. 22 Writing Revisions Discussion

Week Fourteen: Virtual Religion
Nov. 25 Virtual Religions  
Nov. 27 Travel Day No class  
Nov. 29 Holiday No class  
Revisions due Nov. 25th

Week Fifteen: Secularism
Dec. 2 Secularism  
Dec. 4 Indigenous Others  
Dec. 6 Conclusion and Evaluation  
Final Exam: Tuesday, Dec. 10th 8:00-10:00 A.M.
Briefly define the following terms:
ancestor........................................................................................................................................
animism ........................................................................................................................................
cult................................................................................................................................................
divination........................................................................................................................................
magic...............................................................................................................................................
myth................................................................................................................................................
offering...........................................................................................................................................
pilgrimage....................................................................................................................................... 
ritual................................................................................................................................................
sacred............................................................................................................................................... 
sacrifice.......................................................................................................................................... 
shaman............................................................................................................................................
taboo................................................................................................................................................
trance................................................................................................................................................
witchcraft.........................................................................................................................................

Respond to ONE of the following questions in a paragraph.
1. What distinguishes world religions from indigenous cosmological traditions?
2. What is the relationship of myth and ritual, according to anthropology?
3. Debate the proposition: religion is a cultural universal across societies.