

ANT 3241 (Sect. 8119)**Anthropology of Religion****Fall 2006**

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Instructor: Gerald F. Murray**Time:** Tuesday 7th Period 1:55 - 2:45

Thursday: 7th 8th Period 1:55-3:50.

Place: Tue: Fine Arts B 0105 Thursday: Rinker 0110**Office hours:** (Grinter 331) Tu, Th 10:30-12:00**Phone/email** 392-3830 X 302 murray@anthro.ufl.edu**Course webpage** <http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/murray/>**Teaching Assistant** Alicia Peon. ampa@ufl.edu

Office Hours B134 Turlington Th 11-12 or by appointment

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]-->

Course Objectives.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

In this course students will be exposed to a large variety of religions practiced by different human groups throughout history and in different parts of the world. The course is designed to assist students to increase (1) their general *analytic skills* for analyzing religion in an anthropological framework and (2) their *specific knowledge* about particular religious systems. Much of the course will be spent analyzing the "world religions" practiced by well over 80% of the human species, including the varieties of Judaism and Islam encountered by the instructor during his research in the Gaza Strip and the varieties of folk-Christianity which he has encountered in Latin America and the Caribbean. But lectures and readings will also deal with localized indigenous or peasant religions of the type traditionally studied by anthropologists, including the Afro-Caribbean religious traditions studied by the instructor in his fieldwork in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

<!--[endif]-->

Analytic skills to be dealt with in the course

Defining religion. We want to distinguish *logically* between religion and other cultural domains such as economics, politics, and kinship. We cannot study how religion influences, and is influenced by, other aspects of life unless we have a conceptually clear definition of what religion is.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Understanding structures and functions. The key analytic strategy will be to treat religion as a **cultural subsystem** which, like any dynamic system, has **structures** and **functions**. Religious systems have structural components (some universal, some localized) which have to be described and logically separated from the multiple *functions* of religion – the many cognitive, emotional, social, liberating, oppressive, military, pacifying, ecological and other uses to which religion is put, often without conscious awareness on the part of the actors themselves. The distinction between the structures of religion and the functions of religion will be central to the course.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Understanding how systems change through time. In addition, because religious systems interact intimately with other cultural subsystems, particularly with local economic, political, and educational systems, the structures and functions of most religions are in constant *evolution*. The dynamic mutual interactions between the evolution of religion and the evolution of other cultural domains will also be a major focus of analysis in the course.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Identifying positive functions. The instructor will proceed from the assumption that religious systems have potentially positive functions. They can promote personal awareness, growth, confidence, serenity, and heightened states of intensified consciousness. They can solidify intra-group social bonds. They can generate compassion for and generosity toward individuals or

groups under stress. The guiding assumption, in other words, will lean toward the potentially positive functions of religion

Identifying negative functions. It is also clear that individuals in positions of religious power can mobilize their followers to do great harm. Religious leaders can manipulate followers into interpersonal violence and intergroup hatred, into self destruction and/or into the murder of unarmed civilians in the name of God. They can provide religious justification for the occupation and expropriation of the territory of less powerful groups also in the name of God. They can increase their personal wealth by manipulating the religious sentiments of believers, via television and other vehicles of public propaganda, into making heavy financial contributions. They can even pursue sexual gratification by exploiting, particularly among the vulnerable young, the mystique with which their religious authority surrounds them.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

In examining the shifting functions of religion, the course will explore the factors which veer religious systems away from positive functions into such destructive or abusive pathways.

Course requirements

<!--[endif]-->

Exams. The semester will be divided into four quarters. There will be an objective in-class exams at the end of each quarter. The exams will be for the most part based on the classroom lectures and the assigned readings from that particular section, though an occasional question from a preceding section may be asked. .

For students who prefer to write papers, an option will be made available to substitute eight page papers for the second and/or third exam. **All students must take exam 1 and 4.** Past experience indicates that most students will opt for four exams. Students who wish an A in the course must choose one of the paper options. A student with a final average of 90 or more who has not done a paper for exam 2 or 3 will get a B+ for the course. The paper itself need not be an A paper and can be dropped if it is the lowest of the first three scores. If the two exams plus the final average 90 or more, the student who has done a lower quality paper can still get an A.

Note: The following are provisional exam dates: Sept. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 7, Dec. 5

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Required Readings:

Three books and a packet are required reading for the course:

Religion and Culture, Annemarie de Wall Malefijt. is a traditional anthropological treatment of religion, written several decades ago, focusing on the religions of foragers, tribal peoples, and chiefdoms. It has an excellent overview of the history of the study of religion.

Ways to the Center: An Introduction to World Religions by Carmody and Brink. This book gives a history and overview of the major world religions.

Readings in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Corrigan, et. al., eds. This is a book of primary readings from three monotheistic traditions that will be dealt with heavily in the course.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Attendance. Regular attendance is expected and will be monitored with a sign-in system. For students with perfect attendance in any particular quarter, bonus points will be added to the cumulative average at the end of the semester. Penalty points will be subtracted from the final average for more than one absence during each exam period.

Special procedures and regulations. I have posted on my website detailed guidelines concerning attendance points, substitution of papers for exams, email protocols, and other matters. These "groundrules" are necessary in view of the large number of students in the class.

Violation of these guidelines can result in point deductions. Students must read these guidelines and procedures.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Special needs accommodation. If UF has determined that you need special exam accommodations, please provide proper documentation and the accommodations will be made.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Two separate sources of information for which students are responsible: Lectures and Readings.

During the course students will be responsible for following two separate informational tracks, lectures and readings. The readings are intended to give the students a factual overview of world religions. The in-class lectures, in contrast, will be used to discuss specific topics in some depth, not to spend time presenting factual information that students can easily glean in readings. The exams will assess the degree to which students have attended lectures and done the reading.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]-->

Grades The grade cutoff points for the final average are 90 for A, 86 for B+, 80 for B, 76 for C+, 70 for C, 66 for D+, 60 for C.

Topics to be covered in lectures.

The following is a provisional list of the lecture topics. Time constraints may lead to the elimination of some, and others may be added on the basis of current world events or class interest.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Topic: Theoretical issues in the anthropological study of religion

Definition of the scope of religion
 Religion vs. Magic
 Science of religion: anthropological vs. theological propositions
 Synchronic vs. diachronic perspectives
 Idealist vs. materialist perspectives
 Emic perspectives vs. etic perspectives
 Structuralist vs. functionalist approaches to religion
 Universal components: Pantheon, Rituals, Specialists

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Topic: Methodological issues in the anthropological study of religion

Observation
 In-depth interviews
 Surveys and other quantitative methods
 Direct participation and "going native".
 Dealing with diversity within the same religion. Which is the "genuine" variant?

Topic: Evolutionary origins of religion

Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic – categories of technological evolution
 Bands, tribes, chiefdoms, states – categories of cultural evolution
 Interpreting Neanderthal burials
 Interpreting female clay figurines
 Interpreting Paleolithic cave paintings
 The oldest profession: the shaman.

Topic: Anthropology of the spirit world.

Universal features of spirits
 The Supreme Being and the structure of monotheism.

The spirit world as a mirror of the social world: the hypothesis of evolutionary linkages.

Ethnography of the lesser spirit world

Zoomorphic and anthropomorphic spirits in tribal religions

Good spirits and evil spirits in European traditions: Angels, demons, shedim, dybbuks, ghosts, zombies, werewolves, vampires, fairies, leprechauns,.

Ancestral spirits of China and Africa

Beliefs concerning the human soul

The pre-existence of souls

Theories of special souls: Baptism and the transformation of the soul in Christianity; the neshama yehudit (Jewish soul) of the Kabbala and the Tanya, and the Atman of Hinduism.

Fate of the human soul: Heaven, hell, predestination, reincarnation:

Anthropology of the afterlife

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Topic: Evolution of the spirit world

Polytheism, henotheism, monotheism

Emergence of the Supreme Being

Special characteristics of the Supreme Being

The lawmaking, warrior God of the Torah

The Trinitarian God of Greco-Roman Christianity

The demanding but merciful God of the Qur'an

The impersonal, emanating God of the Kabbala

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Topic: Anthropological comparison of religious founders

Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammed

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Topic: People to whom special spiritual knowledge and power is attributed.

Charismatically acquired power: spirit healers and sorcerers.

Institutionally licensed power: priests, ministers, rabbis

Prophets

Witches

Topic: Varieties of rituals

Life cycle rituals: Birth, Adolescence, Marriage, Death

Annual and weekly calendrical rituals

Public and private daily rituals

Special crisis rituals

Hunting, agricultural, and other occupational rituals

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Religion, language, and scriptures

Language and the spirit world

How the spirits communicate with humans

How humans communicate with the spirits

Sacred scriptures: Vedas, Tenach (Hebrew Bible), New Testament, Qur'an

Glossolalia: Speaking in tongues

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Religion and economics

Agricultural and pastoral rituals: first fruit offerings and animal sacrifice.

The occupational castes of Hinduism

Theories of the "Protestant ethic" and capitalism

Haitian Voodoo and the circulation of land.

The charitable contributions of churches, synagogues, mosques:
 Televangelist scams. "You owe God money. Send it to this address. Or else"

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Religion, food, and drink.

Religious food taboos and regulations
 The forbidden pigs of Judaism and Islam
 The sacred cows of India

Religious fasting

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Religion and sexuality.

Non-religious vs. religious mechanisms of sexual regulation
 Religion and differential male / female roles
 Religion, premarital, and extramarital sexuality
 Religion and celibacy
 Religion and homosexuality
 Religion and abortion

Topic: Religion and violence

Killing animals for God: Animal sacrifice
 Killing people for God:
 Human sacrifice for hungry deities
 Slaughtering Canaanites for the God of Abraham
 Burning heretics for Jesus
 Blowing up buses for Allah
 Killing enemies with spirit power: sorcerers and witches
 Enslaving Africans for God.
 Religion and the Holocaust
 Grabbing real estate for God:
 American Manifest Destiny
 Israelis in Gaza and the West Bank

Topic: Religion and healing:

The earliest profession: Spirit healing and shamanism
 Techniques of spirit healers
 Jesus the healer
 Hassidic Rebbes as healers
 Charismatic healing in America
 Haitian Voodoo: healing more than sorcery

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Topic: Mysticism: The search for inner silence and deepened awareness

Monasticism: Eastern and Western traditions
 Meditation: Eastern and Western traditions

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

Reading schedule:

The readings are intended as an additional source of information about religion that there is no time to discuss in class. Students are expected to read chapters from all three books as per the following reading schedule. The instructor will indicate either verbally or in writing to which elements of the readings students should pay particular attention. Exam questions will be included on such matters, though they may not have been discussed in class.

The dates given are the dates by which the chapters should have been read.

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

The following chapters are from the book *Religion and Culture*

- Sept 5 Anthropology and the Study of Religion
 History of the study of Religion
- Sept 12 The science of religion
 20th century theories of religion
 Prehistoric religion
- Sept 19 Religious beliefs
 Myth and ritual
 Religious communication
- Sept 26 Religious specialists
 Religious healing
 Witchcraft and sorcery
 Functions of religion
 Religious change

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

The following chapters are from the book *Ways to the Center*

- Oct 3 Religions of ancient civilizations
 Greek and Hellenistic religions
 Hinduism
- Oct 10 Judaism
- Oct 17 Christianity
- Oct 24 Islam
- Oct 31 Buddhism
 China and Japan

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->

The following chapters are from the book *Readings in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*

- Nov 7 Scripture and Tradition: Chaps 1 – 3
- Nov 14 Monotheism Chaps. 4 – 6
- Nov 21 Authority and Community Chaps 7 – 9
- Nov 28 Worship and Ritual Chaps. 10-12
- Dec 5 Ethics Chaps 13 – 15
 Religion and the Political Order Chaps 16 – 18

<!--[if !supportEmptyParas]--> <!--[endif]-->