

“RELIGION AND HEALING”

REL 2930 (SECTS. 09B3, 09B4, 09B5)/ANT3930 (SECTS. 1A55, 1A57, 1A58)
FALL 2012

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Preliminaries:

The focus of the course will be on 'non-conventional' healers and healing practices in various religious traditions around the globe. The most important themes we shall discuss are: the 'efficacy of religious symbols' for the healing process; cross-cultural notions of the body, of pain, and healing; embodiment of healing powers by religious specialists; ritual performances and their meanings; the importance of sound, sonic imagery, and music to healing processes; the relations of healing practices to cosmology, metaphysics, and sacred narratives; and, finally, the transformations of self and meaning that emerge during or from a cure. The healing traditions we shall read about, by ethnic groups or geographical regions, are the following: (1) indigenous peoples of the Americas and urban mestizos of Latin America; (2) Asian and Southeast Asian; (3) African and African-derived traditions; (4) charismatic Christianity and Pentecostalism. How does each tradition compare and contrast with 'Western' bio-medicine? What relations does each maintain with conventional western bio-medical systems?

Another important issue we shall discuss has to do with our current national health system and whether it is capable of incorporating, or at least collaborating with, non-conventional forms of spiritual healing? Or are the interests of the industrial complex and the pharmaceutical complex more related to controlling the reproduction of a globalized, dominant system of 'scientific', medical knowledge and practice.

Themes to be covered in the Readings:

- Phenomenological (study of experiences) approaches to sickness and healing, among traditional peoples, for example, of the Himalayas;

- 'Aesthetic' aspects of healing: the importance of the religious imagination in representing pain, the notion of 'soul- loss'; synaesthesia, ethnopoetics, sonic

imagery; relations of the fields of ethnomusicology and medical anthropology;
example: traditional healers of Malaysia;

- 'Performance': traditional healing relies on a wide variety of performative aspects (e.g., dance and induction of altered states of consciousness) that must be mastered by the healer during his/her training; these aspects are crucial for the !Kung people of the Kalahari Desert who perform 'community healing' in which the specialists embody the ancestral energy, or life-force, transmitted in their cures;

- Diversity of cultural meanings given to sickness and healing; the 'category of the unknown' and sorcery, reversible 'deaths' (unconsciousness, comas), and levels of 'knowledge' in curing; sources of and access to, spiritual 'power';

- Plant spirit shamanism, 'ayahuasca' curanderos or 'vegetalistas' of urban South America who seek through visionary experience a cure for their clients; importance of sacred plants in healing rites;

- Healing as a process consisting of distinct phases; the relations between categories of illness and modes of healing; ritual forms, dietary restrictions, and preventive modes of protection against illness;

- idea of 'embodiment' of the sacred, for example, in Western Pentecostal Christianity, and its importance in understanding the processes of healing;

- The relevance of socio-political contexts in which non-conventional healers work, in relation to the 'dominant structures' of scientific expertise; AND economic, political power; for example, the "cancer industry."

Required Readings (not in order):

1. Csordas, Thomas. *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing*. UC Press. LA 0-520-20884-6. Paperback; On Amazon.com, used, paperback copies sell for 21.89. Recommended.

2- Robert Desjarlais, *Body and Emotion: the aesthetics of illness and healing in the Nepal Himalayas*. 1992. University of Pennsylvania press. Paperback. Isbn 0-8122-1434-x; an outstanding ethnography of the native peoples in the Himalayas and their forms of curing. Used Amazon.com copies sell for \$2.24 – 10.00. Required.

3- Marina Roseman, *Healing Sounds from the Malaysian Rainforest*. UC Press, 1993. ISBN 0-520-08281-8. Kindle, \$14.55; used, \$13.99. Music, Healing and Nature merge among the Temiar of Malaysia in this superb blend of ethnomusicology and ethno-medicine; Required

4- Richard Katz. *Boiling Energy: Community Healing among the Kalahari Kung*. Harvard U. Press, Cambridge. 1982 ISBN 0-674-07736-9. About the Kung people of the Kalahari Desert of Africa. Used at Amazon: \$.10 (cents); new, 15.00; a classic in ethnographies of healing among traditional peoples. Ancestral power becomes embodied during dances that induce altered states of consciousness; transference of healing force through community ritual to the sick; Required

5 – Stephen Beyer, *Singing to the Plants. A Guide to Mestizo Shamanism in the Upper Amazon*. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque. 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8263-4729-9 , available as e-book on Amazon Kindle. We will read selected parts of it. Peruvian curanderos, and ‘ayahuasca’ shamanism of South America. Modes of healing with plants, importance of poetics, sonic imagery. Used or New is \$20.00

Web Resources:

www.newstudiesonshamanism.com

www.plants-and-religion.com

Calendar of Readings and classes

Week 1: Introduction

W – 08/22: Introduction to Course, approach and requirements, the Sakai website.

F – 08/24: FIRST DISCUSSION GROUPS (presentations and general discussion of course objectives)

Week 2: Traditional Healers

M – 08/27: Reading "You Will Save Many Lives: Mandu (Baniwa jaguar shaman)" *Shamanism Annual* 2011, pp. 9-15; clip, "Blood of the Gods" and accompanying audio-visual material, based on 3 decades of association with Mandu;

Supplementary Reading: *Mysteries of the Jaguar shamans. Ancient Knowledge of the Baniwa Maliiri* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012), ch. 2.

W – 08/29: Film: "Sastun Mayan Healer", by Rosita Arvigo; (20 min.); and Reading: "Six Principles of Mayan Medicine", pp. 6-40 in Arvigo & Epstein, *Rainforest Remedies* (on course website);

Supplementary Reading: *Sastun. My Apprenticeship with a Maya Healer.* Arvigo & Epstein. Harper-Collins, 1994 (chs. 3, 7, 10,15, 16, 18, 19).

F – 08/31: Discussion of Baniwa Jaguar shamans and Mayan healers.

Week 3. Non-Traditional Western Shamanic Healing

M : LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

W – 09/05: *Core shamanism in Western society.* Readings: S. Mokolke, “Core shamanism and New Age shamanism” ; M. Harner, “Transpersonal Healing”, http://www.shamanism.org/media/harneraudio_clips.html listen to all audios;

Supplementary Reading:
<http://www.shamanism.org/articles/article13page2.html>

F – 09/07: Discussion of Core shamanism, neo-shamanism and healing

Week 4. Plant Spirit Shamanism. Mestizo, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous in Latin America

M – 09/10: S. Beyer, *Singing to the Plants*, Part I, chs. 1-5

W – 09/12: S. Beyer, chs.: 14-19; Film: “Shipibo Icaros”,

F – 09/14: Discussions of Film and Readings

Week 5: Ayahuasca Shamanism and Globalization

M – 09/17: S. Beyer, chs.: 20-25

<http://www.singingtotheplants.com/2009/01/extreme-celebrity-ayahuasca/>.<http://www.singingtotheplants.com/2009/09/metamorphosis/>..

W – 09/19: Beyer, chs.: 31-35; Film: “Vine of the Souls”,

F – 09/21: Discussion and Reaction Papers.

Week 6 : Himalayan Healers, Aesthetics and Bodily Emotion

M – 09/24: R. Desjarlais, chs.: 1-3;

W – 09/26: Desjarlais, chs.: 4-6; Film: “Fate of the Lhapas” (2007);
<http://www.der.org/films/fate-of-the-lhapa.html>

Supplementary Bibliography: “A Revival of Mongolian Shamanism”, p. 3-11, *Shamanism Annual*; “The Revival of Shamanism in State-Level Societies”, F. Lipp, pp. 11-17; “In Search of Traditional Shamans”, Daur in Inner Mongolia...”, Grimaldo, pp. 17-24; “Soul Loss or Diminishment”, Sifers, pp. 24-30. All Readings in same issue of *Shamanism Annual (on Reserve at Smathers)*

F – 09/28: Discussion of Readings and Film

M – 10/01: Film: “The Knowledge of Healing... Dorschi Dugarow” (2004, Icarus Films);

W – 10/03: Desjarlais, chs.: 7-9;

F – 10/05: Discussion groups and MID-TERM TAKE-HOME EXAM

Week (07/23 – 07/27) : *Malaysian Healers: Sound and Healing*

M: Roseman, chs. 1-2; the shamans, in context.

Roseman, chs.: 3-4; Film, “Temiar Healing Rite” ;

W: Roseman, chs.: 5-6; Film, “Trance & Possession in Java”(2011);

Roseman, chs.: 7; Film, “The Medium is the Masseuse” (1982-3);

F: Discussion and Film reaction papers

Week (07/30 – 08/03): *Boiling Energy !Kung of the Kalahari and Community Healing*

M: R. Katz, chs.: 1 – 4; Katz, chs.: 5 - 8 ; Film: “A Curing Ceremony”

W: Katz: chs.: 9 - 12 ; Film, “N’um Tchai (Medicine Dance)”, (John Marshall)

Katz, chs.: 13 - 17; Film, “Bushmen’s Secret”

F: Discussion and Film reaction papers

Week 6 (08/06 – 08/10): charismatic healing in *The Sacred Self*, by Thomas Csordas.

M: Csordas, ch. 1;

T: Csordas, ch. 2;

W: Csordas, ch 3; Film: “NUMEN: THE NATURE OF PLANTS”, by Terrence Youk & Ann Armbrrecht, 2012;

R: Film: “The Gerson Story” The Politics Of Conventional And Non-Conventional Cancer Therapy

F: Discussion

FINAL PAPERS DUE: 08/13 (5 p.m.). Late papers will not be received unless documented justification is provided. Send by email or deliver to Department of Religion before 5 p.m.

Course Requirements

The course requirements are:

- 1) Do Readings on time, according to course schedule; any changes in the readings will be announced in advance on the course Sakai e-learning website;
- 2) A mid-term take-home exam, worth 35% of the final grade;
- 3) A final paper, 5 pp., worth 35% of the final grade; topics to be announced shortly after the mid-terms have been returned;
- 4) Three SHORT (3) 'reflection papers' (500 words apiece) to audio-visual material (videos), worth 30% of final grade. Questions for reflection will be distributed prior to screening.
5. **Discussion sessions** with the TA every Friday are important for clarifying issues, and generating ideas related to both the readings and audio-visual presentations.

Course Regulations:

1. **Plagiarism or cheating:** Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm><http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm> for more information on UF policies.
2. **Incompletes are strongly discouraged** and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete **before** the end of the semester.
3. **Make-up exams and quizzes** will be given only under very special circumstances, such as a medical emergency. In that case, students must bring a doctor's note.
4. Students engaging in **disruptive behavior** will be asked to leave the classroom. Please turn phones and pagers off during class.

5. Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.

6. Attendance will be taken every class and discussion session; more than three unjustified absences will result in points taken off final grade. All absences should be justified with appropriate documentation. Consistent, late arrivals to class or consistent, early departures from class will also mean point reduction.