Anthropology of Religion
ANT 3241
University of Florida, Department of Anthropology
Spring 2014
Turlington Hall, L007
T 11:45-1:40 and R 12:50-1:40

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Office: Grinter Hall 496
Office Hours: T 2:00 – 3:30 and R 2:00 – 3:30

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Office: Turlington Hall B331
Office Hours: T 9.30-11.30 and R 11:45-12:45

Course description
This course provides an introduction to the anthropological study of religion. In addition to exploring different theoretical positions and concepts that have informed anthropological conversations about religion, we will critically study and compare religious practices and beliefs. Course readings will include selected classical texts as well as anthropologically informed contemporary studies of religion. Due attention will be given to discussions and analysis of the role of religion in an increasingly transnational world. The course encourages critical self-reflexivity, acknowledging that the way we see things and the questions we ask are influenced by our biographical, historical, and cultural and religious/non-religious background.

IMPORTANT: Students should be aware that this is NOT a course that promotes a particular religious or spiritual belief. We will not discuss whether a religion is true or false. The focus will be on critically exploring different religious beliefs and practices with as little judgment as possible. The expression of religious prejudices will not be tolerated.

Learning outcomes
By the end of the course students will have
- Acquired knowledge and understanding of basic concepts and major theoretical debates within the anthropology of religion
- Acquired knowledge and understanding of what constitutes an anthropological approach to the study of religion
- Developed the ability to critically analyze and discuss religious practices and beliefs using theoretical terms and approaches developed within the anthropology of religion
- Developed an understanding of self-reflexivity as key to anthropological studies in general and to the study of religion from an anthropological perspective in particular

**Required text**

PDF files of other required readings are available at the course e-learning website (Sakai).

**Class requirements and assignments**
All assignments (except for the in-class quizzes) are announced well in advance, and cannot be made up for unless the absence is excusable. For information on excusable absence see [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx)
In the case of excusable absence the student must notify the instructor prior to the missed class or assignment AND provide a doctor’s note or note from the proper University authorities.

**5 in-class Quizzes (10 % of course grade)**
5 in-class unannounced quizzes will be given throughout the semester. In addition to assess students’ comprehension of the course topics, the quizzes will serve as a proof of attendance. Make-up missed quizzes will only be allowed if the student have notified the instructor in advance AND if the absence is excusable.

**Response papers (30 % of course grade)**
The objective of these papers is to engage the students in critical, in-depth reading and reflection of course readings (including films). It is expected that the students draw on theories and concepts that have been introduced in the course readings, lectures and class discussions and that they articulate their own informed and analytical responses. The response papers should include proper reference to at least two texts/articles (excluding the article/film the students are responding to, see class schedule). Reference texts could either be course readings or other relevant articles selected by the individual student. Students, who use and critically engage with texts or articles that are not part of the course readings, will have the opportunity to receive extra credit (see below). Students should use the American Anthropological Association citation style: [http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf)

The format for the response papers is 1.5 line space / font size 12. The papers should each be three pages in length. Papers must be uploaded to Sakai in .doc or .docx form, with no
spaces in the file name, before class on the due date. Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated and the response papers may be subject to control through Turnitin.

Please note that acts of plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper or assignment that was written by someone else.
- Copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from the work of another author without proper citation and quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing or restating in your own words, text or ideas written by someone else without proper citation.

**Midterm (24 % of course grade)**
The midterm will cover materials from the first half of the course, including readings, lectures, class discussions, videos and on-line materials. Exams will be administered in class during regularly scheduled class time. Makeup exams will only be possible in cases of excusable absences (see above). In such cases, you must contact the instructor with written documentation from an appropriate authority at least 24 hours before the exam.

**Final (36 % of course grade)**
The final exam will be cumulative. It can potentially include material covered in lectures, class discussions, readings, videos and online materials. Requirements as described above for the midterm apply.

**Extra credit**
Total available extra credit is 5 %. More information about extra credit will be given in class.

**Gradebook overview**

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<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>% OF COURSE GRADE</th>
<th>% OF CATEGORY</th>
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Grading scale

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UF Policies

Academic Honesty: When students enroll at UF they commit themselves to honesty and integrity. As a result of completing the registration form at the University of Florida, every student has signed the following statement: “I understand the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”

On work submitted for credit by UF students, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

Campus Helping Resources: Students experiencing crisis or personal problems that interfere with their general wellbeing are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. The UF Counseling and Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students.

1. Counseling and Wellness Center, http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/
2. Student Health Care Center: http://shcc.ufl.edu/

For an overview of various resources see http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help

Disabilities: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Technical assistance: For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Sakai, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml
Class schedule

(Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the course schedule. However, no changes will be made to the exam schedule and the assignment due dates.)

Week 1 (Jan 6-10) Introduction

READINGS
Tuesday
Course overview
Thursday
Chapter 1 in Bowen (p 1-10)

Week 2 (Jan 13-17) Theoretical perspectives on religion

READINGS
Tuesday
Chapter 2 in Bowen (p 11-31)
Geertz, C. (1973) Religion as a Cultural System (chapter 4 in The Interpretation of Cultures)
Thursday
Asad, T. (1993 [1982]) The Construction of Religion as an anthropological category

Week 3 (Jan 20-24) Domains and Boundaries of Religion

READINGS
Tuesday
Chapter 3 in Bowen (p 33-47)
FILM: Religions of the World: Shinto (available as a VHS in the library course reserve and also possible to watch, in four parts, on you-tube
Thursday
Adrian, M. (2009) France, the veil and Religious Freedom

Week 4 (Jan 27 – 31) Symbolism, worldview and myth

READINGS
Tuesday
Ortner, S. (1973) On Key Symbols
Thursday
The structural study of myth (Levi-Strauss, 1955)
Beattie, J. (1960) Nyoro Myth
**ASSIGNMENT:** Response paper # 1 due January 31. Text: Under God but Not the Scarf: The Founding Myths of Religious Freedom in the United States and Laicite in France

**Week 5 (Feb 3-7) Rituals of Transitions**

**READINGS**

*Tuesday*
Chapter 4 in Bowen (p 48-68)
Movie: Inside Mecca (National Geographic)

*Thursday*

**Week 6 (Feb 10-14) Healing and illness**

**READINGS**

*Tuesday*
Chapter 5 in Bowen
Foster, G. M. (1976) Disease Etiologies in Non-Western Medical Systems
Csordas, T. J. (1988) Elements of Charismatic Persuasion and Healing

*Thursday*
Vecchiato, N. L. (1993) Illness, therapy and change in Ethiopian Possession Cults

**DEADLINE FOR EXTRA CREDIT PROJECT NO 1: FEBRUARY 14**

**Week 7 (Feb 17-21) Sorcery, witchcraft and magic**

**READINGS:**

*Tuesday:* Chapter 6 in Bowen;

Gmelch, G. (1971) Baseball magic

**Week 8 (Feb 24-28) Worship, Hierarchy, Conflict: Focus on Hinduism**

**READINGS**

*Tuesday:* Chapter 7 in Bowen
Review for mid-term exam

*Thursday:* Mid-term exam

**SPRINGBREAK (March 3-7)**
Week 9 (March 10-14) Gender and Religion

READINGS
Tuesday

Thursday

Week 10 (March 17-21) Sacred speech, messages and prayer
READINGS:
Tuesday
Chapter 11 and 13 in Bowen

Thursday
Shapiro, J. (1987) From Tupa to the Land without Evil. The Christianization of Tupi-Guarani Cosmology

Week 11 (March 24-28) Religious boundaries and identities
READINGS:
Tuesday
Chapter 10 in Bowen
Film: Live and become

Thursday: Live and become cont.

Week 12 (March 31 – April 4) Religion and globalization
READINGS:
Tuesday: Chapter 9 in Bowen (p 129-140),
ASSIGNMENT: Response paper #2 due April 4. Film: Live and become

Week 13 (April 7 – 11) Religion and globalization
READINGS:
Tuesday:
Chapter 14 in Bowen, Redefining the Boundaries of Belonging. The institutional Character of Transnational Religious Life (Levitt, 2004)

Thursday:
The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity (Robbins, 2004)

Week 14 (April 14 – 18) Religion, social justice and change

READINGS:
Tuesday: Religious Literacy in the Faith-Based Prison (Erzen, 2008)
Ver Beek, K. J. (2000) Spirituality: A development taboo

Week 15 (April 21 - 25) Course Conclusion and review

Tuesday: Exam review
Thursday: Reading day

Week 16: Exam
COMPLETE REFERENCE LIST


