Anthropology of Religion ANT 3241

Spring 2021

Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Office Location & Hours
Marit Tolo Ostebo	Marit.ostebo@ufl.edu	Zoom, Tues/Thurs 12 – 2pm

Grader/Teaching Assistant

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General Information

Description

This course introduces you 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. The course encourages critical thinking and self-reflexivity. It is important to acknowledge 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 expression of religious prejudices will not be tolerated.

General Course Objectives

The following are the objectives I have for this course

➢ Ensure that students master the course subject matter
➢ Ensure that students engage in discussions in a respectful way
➢ Develop students' ability to use course concepts in thinking and problem solving
➢ Prepare students to be life-long learners
➢ Develop students' interpersonal and team interaction skills
➢ Have students enjoy the course and make new friends.

Course Outcomes

When finished with this course, you will be able to:

➢ Describe how an anthropological approach to the study of religion differs from other disciplines
➢ Describe and critically discuss different definitions and theoretical approaches to the study of religion

- Describe and critically discuss key concepts within the anthropology of religion (e.g. symbols, magic, rituals etc.) using ethnographic examples
- Employ competing anthropological and social theories and theoretical terms and approaches developed within the anthropology of religion to critically discuss religious practices and beliefs
- Read a newspaper article about a religious issue with an anthropological lens
- Use relevant research to explore and test ideas and to support or refute generalization
- Apply anthropological concepts and knowledge to real-world problems
- Convey anthropological concepts and knowledge to others in an everyday language

Course Materials

Required Text

• Bielo, J.S. (2015) Anthropology of Religion – the Basics

• Hannig, A. (2017) Beyond Surgery. Injury, Healing, and Religion at an Ethiopian Hospital

Digital Subscription

• Learning Catalytics

Course structure

This class is structured after the team-based-learning (TBL) strategy. The course encourages collaboration and active learning for individuals and teams. While content knowledge also is an important part of the TBL strategy, the course will have a major focus on how to apply the concepts and theories that are introduced. The TBL strategy is specifically designed to enhance your problem-solving skills and to develop your level of critical thinking. TBL allows you to engage with me and other students in the class, and you will have plenty of opportunity to get to know people and to make new friends. Most in-class time will be spent working on team activities. For those of you who have negative experiences with group work I want to emphasize that TBL was developed to avoid the common drawbacks and flaws associated with traditional group work. You should therefore not assume that TBL is equivalent to regular group work or group projects. TBL is different. It is a strategy that is well researched, and several studies have shown that it has improved student performance. TBL is currently being used in many disciplines, including medicine, history, literature, anthropology, and law.

Teams will be formed during the first week of the semester. More information about this will be given in class and posted on Canvas.

The course is divided into six modules. The syllabus for each module, including learning outcomes (which I encourage you to use actively for the Readiness Assessment Tests) will be posted on Canvas a week before the start of a new module. Each module will contain specific learning objectives for that module and readings that will enable you to reach these objectives. Below is a *preliminary* schedule. The most updated information about course readings and assignments will be found on CANVAS.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS

COURSE INTRODUCTION

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Tuesday Jan 12	Introduction to course, Team Based Learning (TBL) and Learning Catalytics	
Thurs Jan 14	Practice Readiness Assessment Test	Read: Syllabus Bielo, J. S. (2015) Preface (pp. ix-xv)

MODULE 1 WHAT IS "RELIGION"?

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Tues Jan 19	**Readiness Assurance Test**	Read: Bielo, J. S. (2015) pp. 1-28
Thurs Jan 21	Applications and mini lecture	Read: King, U. (1990) Women Scholars and The Encyclopedia of Religion Bowie, F. (1998) Trespassing on Sacred Domains: A Feminist Anthropological Approach to Theology and Religious Studies
Tues Jan 26	Applications, mini lecture, intro to Team-project	Read: Gunn, T.J. (2004) Under God but Not the Scarf: The Founding Myths of Religious Freedom in the United States and Laicite in France Fernando, M. L. (2010) Reconfiguring freedom: Muslim piety and the limits of secular law and public discourse in France.
Thurs Jan 28	Applications and mini lecture	Read: (Testing out Perusal assignment) Hannig. A. (2017) Beyond Surgery pp. 1-28

Suggestions for further readings:

Asad, T. (1983) Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz
Cannel, F. (2010) The Anthropology of Secularism
Fernando, M. L. (2010). Reconfiguring Freedom: Muslim Piety and the Limits of Secular Law and Public
Harari, Y. (2016) Salvation by algorithm: God, technology and the new 21st-century religions
https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/09/salvation-algorithm-god-technology-and-new-21st-century-religions
Lofton, K. (2008) Public confessions: Oprah Winfrey's American religious history

		Neumann, Iver B. (2006) Pop goes religion. Harry Potter meets Clifford Geertz

MODULE 2: STUDYING RELIGION ANTHROPOLOGICALLY

Tues Feb 2	**Readiness Assurance Test** The Possibility of Spirits	Read: Bielo, J. S. (2015) pp. 29-53
Thurs Feb 4	Applications	Read:(Perusal assignment) McCarthy Brown, K. (1987). "Plenty Confidence in Myself": The Initiation of a White Woman Scholar into Haitian Vodou.
Tues Feb 9	Applications Work on Team Project	Read: Howell, B. M. (2007) The repugnant cultural other speaks back. Christian identity as ethnographic 'standpoint' Thomas, T. (2016) Strangers, Friends, and Kin: Negotiated Recognition in Ethnographic Relationships
Thurs Feb 11	Applications	Read: (Perusal assignment) Hannig. A. (2017) Beyond Surgery pp. 31-56

Suggestions for further readings:
Bowie, F. (2008) Anthropology of Religion
Engelke, M. (2002) The Problem of Belief
Irvine, Richard D.G. (2011). The Experience of Ethnographic Fieldwork in an English Benedictine Monastery: Or, Not Playing at Being a Monk
Lawless, E. J. (1992) "I Was Afraid Someone like You... an Outsider... Would Misunderstand": Negotiating Interpretive Differences between Ethnographers and Subjects
Tafjord, B. A. (2020) Translating Indigeneities. Educative encounters in Talamanca, Tromsø, and elsewhere
Wagner, M.B. (1999) The Study of Religion in American Society
Harding, Susan F. (1987) Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion
Fernando, M. L. (2014) Ethnography and the politics of silence

Watch: Participant observation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo8xrY0XxT4

MODULE 3: BODIES, WORDS AND THINGS

Tues Feb 16	**Readiness Assurance Test** Work on Team Project	Read: Bielo, J. S. (2015) pp. 54-80 Hoodfar, H. (1993) The Veil in their Minds and on our heads. The persistence of colonial images of Muslim women
Thurs Feb 18	Applications	Read: (Perusal assignment) Mary Douglas (1966) Purity and Danger: An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo

Tues Feb 23	Applications Work on Team Project	Read: Rouse, C. & Hoskins, J. (2004) Purity, Soul Food, and Sunni Islam: Explorations at the Intersection of Consumption and Resistance Powers, M.N. (1980) Menstruation and Reproduction. An Oglala Case
Thurs Feb 25	**RECHARGE DAY – NO CLASS**	Read: (Perusal assignment) Hannig. A. (2017) Beyond Surgery pp. 57-90

Suggestions for further readings:

Beattie, J (1960) Nyoro Myth
Daugherty, M. L. (1976) Serpent-Handling as Sacrament
Lewis, I. M. (1971) Trance and Possession
Bialecki, J., Noel Haynes and Joel Robbins (2008) The Anthropology of Christianity
Robbins, J. (2017) Keeping God's distance: Sacrifice, possession, and the problem of religious mediation

MODULE 4: IN TIME, IN PLACE

Tues March 2	**Readiness Assurance Test** Work on Team Project	Read: Bielo, J. S. (2015) pp. 81-105
Thurs March 4	Applications. Interview: Left of Black with Su'ad Abdul Khabeer	Khabeer, S. A. (2018) Hip Hop Matters: Race, Space, and Islam in Chicago
Tues March 9	Work on Team Project	Read: (Perusal assignment) Hannig. A. (2017) Beyond Surgery pp. 93-121
Thurs March 11	Work on Team Project	No readings

Suggestions for further readings:

Beccaria, F. & Sande, A. (2003) Drinking games and rite of life projects. A social comparison of the meaning and functions of young people's use of alcohol during the rite of passage to adulthood in Italy and Norway
Kenyon, S. M. (1995) Zar as Modernization in Contemporary Sudan
Lock, M. (1996) Death in Technological Time: Locating the End of Meaningful Life
Turner, V.W. (1964) Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage

Watch: Insane Graduation Party Norway (RUSS) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZ3TfvvVF30

MODULE 5: WHO DO YOU TRUST?

Tues March 16	**Readiness assurance test**	Read: Bielo, J.S. (2015) pp. 106-134

Thurs March 18	Applications	Read: (Perusal assignment) Moro, P. (2018) Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Magic
Tues March 23	Lecture: Religion and Covid-19 in Ethiopia	Read: Foster, G. (1976) Disease Etiologies in Non-Western Medical Systems Roberts, E. F. S. (2006) God's Laboratory: Religious Rationalities and Modernity in Ecuadorian in vitro Fertilization
Thurs March 25	Applications	Read: (Perusal assignment) Hannig. A. (2017) Beyond Surgery pp. 122-146

No Shamans here https://savageminds.org/2005/06/21/no-shamans-here/
Gmelch, G. (1971) Baseball Magic
Metcalf, P. A. (1978) Death Be Not Strange
Conklin, B. A. (2001) Cannibal Epistemologies
Thomas, F. (2007) "Our Families are Killing us": HIV/AIDS, Witchcraft and Social Tensions in Namibia
Favret-Saada (1989) Unbewitching as therapy
Geshiere, P. (1998) Globalization and the Power of Indeterminate Meaning: Witchcraft and Spirit Cults in Africa and East Asia
Ziewitz, M. (2016) Governing Algorithms: Myth, Mess, and Methods

MODULE 6: GOING GLOBAL

Tues March 30	Readiness assurance test	Read: Bielo, J.S. (2015) pp. 135-160
Thurs April 1	Applications	Read: Premawardhana, Devaka (2012) Transformational Tithing Sacrifice and Reciprocity in a Neo-Pentecostal Church
Tues April 6	Applications	Read: Peña, Elaine A (2017) Time to Pray: Devotional Rhythms and Space Sacralization Processes at the Mexico–US Border
Thurs April 8	Applications	Read: (Perusal assignment) Hannig. A. (2017) Beyond Surgery pp. 149-208
Tues April 13	Presentation of Team projects	No reading
Thurs April 15	Presentation of Team projects	No reading
Tues April 20	Course review and evaluations	No reading
Tues April 27	Final essay due	No class

Each module will follow a sequence known as the Readiness Assurance Process.

Readiness Assurance Process (RAP)

The RAP is an integral piece of the TBL Strategy. This process allows you numerous opportunities to demonstrate that you comprehend the readings and course concepts, while receiving immediate feedback on your progress. The RAP takes place in a sequence containing the following components:

Readings

At the start of each module, you will complete readings one chapter from Bielo's book. Each chapter contains the core concepts and ideas of that module. While these will not be the only reading for each module, they will provide you with the foundation that will be built upon with supplemental readings later in each module.

Individual Readiness Assessment Test (I-RAT)

The first in-class activity for each module is the I-RAT, which is based on the assigned reading. These are in the form of a short quiz featuring multiple-choice questions focused on the key concepts and ideas of the readings. They are designed both to assess comprehension as well as to maintain accountability for reading the assignments on time. You will take the I-RAT on InteDashboard. Your I-RAT scores will be anonymous.

Team Readiness Assessment Test (T-RAT)

Right after finishing the I-RAT you will take the same test as a team. You will discuss the questions as a team and decide on an answer for each question. You will also take the t-RAT on InteDashboard. (If this by any chance should not work, you will take the team using a special "scratch-off" answer sheet that immediately tells you whether you have the correct answer.)

Appeals

After the T-RATs are completed, teams can appeal any question they missed on the team test. Appeals are only granted when an argument is presented demonstrating comprehension of the concepts. An appeal must be submitted in writing and explain in a couple of short paragraphs why the team believes its answer to be correct. *Direct evidence from the reading must be used and cited*. Appeals are to be submitted to me by e-mail within 24 hours after class. If the appeal is successful, the points will be added to the team score as well as for any individual that answered the same way as the team. Any team members who had the question correct initially will continue to receive credit on the question. ONLY the members of a team that appeal will be eligible for a change in score, meaning each team must complete and submit a separate appeal. If an appeal is unsuccessful (or your team does not submit an appeal) you will not receive points of the question, regardless of whether other teams successfully appeal the question.

Class activities, requirements, and assignments

Applications (Team assignment)

Most of the class meetings will consist of team-based activities that will allow you to apply the material learned from the readings. Within TBL these activities are called applications. Most of the application exercises pose a question or a significant problem and require that you as a Team make a decision. Your Team will need to poll each member, listen to each member's ideas and their explanation for why their idea should be supported, and then reach a Team consensus. At the end of your deliberation, all the Teams will be asked to simultaneously report their decisions. Then we will discuss the question as a class. Over the semester we will do many smaller applications. I typically do not grade applications, but if I see a decline in class engagement with literature, I may consider randomly grading your application activities.

Children's Story Book (Team assignment)
As a team, plan, write and illustrate a 10-15-page children's storybook that address a theme or question you have encountered in this class.

Essay (Individual assignment)
Write a 3-5-page essay that illustrates the knowledge you have of the subject matter your team wrote about in your children's story book. This essay should

• explicitly state the objective of the storybook

• provide a brief overview of the general topic you chose to address in your book, and a discussion of why you think the topic is important

• clearly explain how course material was applied in the creation of the storybook

• outline your contribution to the final group project

More information about the format of this essay will be given in class and posted on Canvas.

Peer Evaluation
One of the most significant concerns with working in a group and receiving team grades is that some of the members of the team may work harder than others or "free-ride" off those in the group willing to put in more effort. You will be given a chance to evaluate your team member peers during the course. There will be an informal evaluation at the mid-term point, used as feedback for individual team members. At the end of the semester, each of you will complete a confidential "peer evaluation" to assess the contribution of the other members of your team. You will be evaluating each member on his or her participation in team activities. (Did they come to class regularly? Were they prepared for the day's activity? Did they contribute productively to the team? Respect others' ideas?) These evaluations are completely anonymous and give you a chance to reward or punish teammates based upon their team efforts. I will provide more information about this in class and a copy of the evaluation form will be posted on Canvas.

Weekly Encounters (Individual assignment –250 points total)
I want you to engage with and reflect on how the materials we read, relate to every-day life. When you start learning how the world works, you notice new things. Over the course of the semester, you need to submit five "weekly encounters" with anthropology of religion in a discussion board on Canvas. You can only submit ONE post per week. (e.g. you cannot post all your comments during the very last week). I will grade these on a Pass/Fail basis. Pass = 40 (total 200 points); Fail = 20.)

Instructions for submissions:

• They should be 200 words long, minimum

• You need to fully describe what you "encountered" – a personal experience, a song, film, tweet, video game, book, conversation with a parent, friend, etc.

• You must clearly connect this to some theme in our course (ESSENTIAL TO PASS!) – this means linking it to questions or topics we discuss in class.

• If appropriate, provide a link to whatever you are discussing

In addition, you should post a minimum of ten comments to other student's posts. These comments should be distributed throughout the semester (e.g. if you post all your comments during the two last

weeks of class, you will fail this part of the assignment (20 points.) If you submit a minimum of ten comments through the semester, you receive a passing grade (50 points).

Perusal (Individual assignment)

This semester I am testing out Perusal for the very first time. Perusal is a collaborative e-book reading platform that allows you to engage with the texts we are reading in a thoughtful manner. My hope is that Perusal will provide you a meaningful experience with the readings. Perusal assignments are graded. More information about Perusal will be given in class.

Grading

Grades are based on three categories of evaluations

Individual Performance (40 % of grade)

6 IRAT scores, 40 points each	240
8 Perusal assignments (20 points each)	160
Weekly Encounters (posts 200, comments 50)	250
Essay	200

Team Performance (45 % of grade)

6 TRAT scores, 40 points each	240
Book Project	300

Team Contribution (15 % of grade)

Mid-term peer evaluation	100
Final peer evaluation	100

Grading scale

GRADE	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
TOT %	94-100	88-93	82-87	76-81	71-75	66-70	61-65	56-60	51-55	46-50	40-45	<40

Courses in the Time of Covid-19

I understand that this course is being offered in a time of tremendous uncertainty, and I recognize that you (and I) may encounter unexpected challenges during this semester. That includes challenges related to health and illness, technology, caregiving responsibilities, work responsibilities, and more. I am one of many people who came down with Covid-19. By being open about my own experience and status I hope that I can make it easier for others to share the fears and challenges that are associated with Covid-19.

My goal this semester is to support you in doing the best work you can considering the challenges you face. I understand that as students you face tremendous pressure to work hard, be productive and be as "successful" as possible. That said, I encourage you to remember that your health and well-being are far more important than the work you do in this class or any class. I encourage you to take the time you

need to care for yourself and for your loved ones. I have also included one "mental-health-day" in the syllabus: during the semester, I grant each of us (yes, it includes my grader and myself!) one un-excused absence. Be aware, that you cannot take these absences on the days when Readiness Assessment Tests are scheduled, or on the day you are scheduled to present your team-project. To "cash-in" your mental health day, simply send an email to Shambhavi Bhushan within three days following your absence.

If you are finding it difficult to balance your health and well-being with your work in this class, please let me know. It is better to ask for help and to acknowledge when you are struggling, rather than remaining silent. I am happy to help connect you with resources and services on campus and make accommodations to our course plan as needed. I am accessible by email, and I will do my best to respond to messages within one business day. If I do not respond within 24 hours, you have the right to send me a reminder. I will also have virtual office hour appointments available for you to meet with me to discuss any questions or concerns or thoughts you have about the course or the material more generally.

I also ask that you be patient with me if the challenges of this semester force me to make last-minute changes to the course plan. I will do my best to communicate any changes clearly and make them with respect for the inconvenience, frustration, and confusion that change may cause.

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 with Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

Learning-support@ufl.edu

(352) 392-HELP - select option 2

https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml