

Anthropology of Religion
ANT 3241
University of Florida, Department of Anthropology
Spring 2015
Little Hall 101
T 11:45-1:40 and R 12:50-1:40

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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, with examples from both small-scale religions and from the world's major religions. 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 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.

Course readings

Bowen, John R. (2014). Religions in Practice. An Approach to the Anthropology of Religion (6th Edition)
Stein, R. L. & Stein, P.L. (2011) The Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft

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

General Course objectives

The following are the objectives I as an instructor 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

Course outcomes

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

- 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

Course structure

This class is structured after the team-based-learning (TBL) strategy, first developed by Larry Michaelsen. 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. I implemented TBL for the first time last semester, and the students in my course gave *very* positive feedback. 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 in order to avoid 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 a number of studies have shown that it has

improved student performance. TBL is currently being used in a number of disciplines, including medicine, history, literature, anthropology and law.

Teams will be formed during the first week of the semester. Each team will have their own team folder, where scores of the team Readiness Assessment Test (tRAT, see below for more information) and other assignments will be recorded.

I will also combine TBL with the use of a web-based application called Learning Catalytics (LC). LC is a “bring your own device”, student engagement, assessment and classroom intelligence system which has particular features tailored for TBL. (For more information about LC see <https://learningcatalytics.com/>). Normally students have to pay a 20 \$ fee to get access to LC, but since I will be trying out LC for the first time in this class, I have managed to get you all free access to the program. LC requires that you all bring an electronic device to class. I ask you to have some patience with me, since it is the first time I will be using LC.

The course itself is divided into nine 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.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE		
DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
COURSE INTRODUCTION		
Tuesday January 6	Introduction to Course Topic and Team Based Learning (TBL) Course expectations Team formation	
Thursday January 8	Practice readiness assurance test Mini lecture: PREPARE FOR MODULE 1	Syllabus
MODULE 1: The Anthropological Study of Religion		
Tuesday January 13	Readiness Assurance Test # 1 Grade weighting	Stein& Stein: Chapter 1 Bowen: Chapter 1 & 2
Thursday January 15	Applications Mini lecture: PREPARE FOR MODULE 2	
MODULE 2: Domains and Boundaries of Religion		
Tuesday January 20	Readiness Assurance Test #	Readings:

	2 Applications	Bowen: Chapter 3 & 16 Gunn, T.J. (2004) Under God but Not the Scarf: The Founding Myths of Religious Freedom in the United States and Laicite in France
Thursday January 22	Film: Shinto: Nature, Gods and Man in Japan Applications	
Tuesday January 27	Applications: The Pledge of Allegiance MINI LECTURE: PREPARE FOR MODULE 3	
MODULE 3: RITUALS		
Thursday January 29	Readiness Assurance Test # 3	Readings: Stein & Stein: Ch. 4 Bowen: Ch. 4 Powers, M.N. (1980) Menstruation and Reproduction. An Oglala Case
Tuesday February 3	Film: Inside Mecca Application	
Thursday February 5	Application Mini-lecture: PREPARE FOR MODULE 4	
MODULE 4: MYTHS AND SYMBOLS		
Tuesday February 10	Readiness Assurance Test # 5 Applications	Readings: Stein & Stein: Ch. 2-3 Beattie, J (1960) Nyoro Myth Wolf, E. R. (1958) The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican Symbol
Thursday February 12	Movie: The Devil's Miner part 1	
Tuesday February 17	Movie: The Devil's Miner part 2	
Thursday February 19	Applications Mini-lecture: PREPARE FOR MODULE 5	
MODULE 5: BODIES AND SOULS		
Tuesday February 24	Readiness Assurance Test # 5 Applications	Stein & Stein: Ch. 5 & 8
Thursday February 26	Application	Cross-cultural perspectives on

	Euthanasia	Euthanasia (see link google docs)
SPRING BREAK		
Tuesday March 10	Review game Mini lecture: PREPARE FOR MODULE 6	
MODULE 6: MAGIC, SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT		
Thursday March 12	Readiness assurance test # 6	Stein & Stein: Ch. 7 & 10 Thomas, F. (2007) "Our Families are Killing us": HIV/AIDS, Witchcraft and Social Tensions in Namibia Gmelch, G. (1971) Baseball Magic
Tuesday March 17	Applications "Meet a Wiccan"	
Thursday March 19	Applications Mini-lecture: Prepare for Module 7	
MODULE 7: RELIGIOUS SPECIALISTS AND AUTHORITIES		
Tuesday March 24	Readiness assurance test # 7 Lecture: Does religious leaders have power?	Stein & Stein: Ch. 6 Foster, G.M. (1976) Disease Etiologies in Non-Western Medical Systems Stein & Stein: Ch. 7 & 10
Thursday March 26	Applications	
Tuesday March 31	Applications Mini-lecture: Prepare for Module 8	
MODULE: 8 GODS AND SPIRITS		
Thursday April 2	Readiness assurance test # 8	Stein & Stein: Ch. 9 Østebø, T. (2014) The revenge of the Jinns: Spirits, Salafi reform and the continuity in change in contemporary Ethiopia
Tuesday April 7	Applications Mini-lecture: Prepare for Module 9	
MODULE 9: GENDER AND RELIGION		
Thursday April 9	Readiness assurance test # 9	Hoodfar, H. (1993) The Veil in their Minds and on our heads. The persistence of colonial images of Muslim women

		Fayder, A. (2006) Learning faith: Language socialization in a community of Hasidic Jews
Tuesday April 14	Applications	
Thursday April 16	Applications	
Tuesday April 18	Course review and evaluations	
Tuesday April 21	Final test	

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:

1) Readings

At the start of each module, you will complete a number of readings outside of class. These readings contain the core concepts and ideas of that particular 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 on in each module.

2) Individual Readiness Assessment Test (I-RAT)

The first in-class activity for each module is the I-RAT, which is based on the assigned readings. 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 Learning Catalytics so you have to bring your laptop or a device where you can do this during the assigned time in class. Your I-RAT scores will be anonymous.

3) Team Readiness Assessment Test (T-RAT)

Right after finishing the I-RAT you will take the same test as a team. You are allowed to discuss the questions as a team and decide on an answer for each question. You will also take the t-RAT on Learning Catalytics. (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.) The teams T-RAT scores will be posted on Canvas so teams can monitor one another’s performance.

4) 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 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 or not other teams successfully appeal the question.

Applications

Most of the class meetings will consist of team-based activities that will allow you to apply the material learned from the readings. I will assign different types of applications including gallery-walks (more information in class) and debates. Most of the application exercise will, however pose a question (often based on a news article, a case, a film), 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 of the Teams will simultaneously show their decisions. Then we will discuss the question as a class. Over the semester we will do many smaller applications. 6 randomly selected Team Applications will be graded. The Team Portion of each graded application is worth 20 points and will be posted on Canvas.

Essay

You will work on an essay through this semester. The essay should be maximum 1500 words in length. The objective of this paper is to help you develop your writing abilities. As part of the group applications we will work on how to hammer out arguments and on how to support an argument through active and critical engagement with course theory and literature. In this essay you are challenged to work on this at an individual level, but you will also get feedback from your peers during the writing process. More information about the format of these essays will be given in class and posted on Canvas.

Final test

The final test will consist of multiple-choice questions and two-three essay questions. The majority of the questions will be drawn from the pool of questions in the Readiness Assurances Tests.

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.

Extra Credit

You will have the opportunity to earn extra credit through individual and group efforts. More information about this will be given in class.

Grading

Grades are based on three categories of evaluations

A) Individual Performance		
a.	9 IRAT scores, 40 points each	360
b.	Essay (including draft, peer feedback and final paper)	200
c.	Final test	100
d.	Attendance	100
B) Team Performance		
a.	9 GRAT scores, 40 points each	360
b.	6 graded Team Applications, 30 points each	180
C) Team Contribution		
a.	Mid-term peer evaluation	100
b.	Final peer evaluation	100

You will decide, as a class, how much each category above will contribute to your final grade. We will decide these proportions during the second week of the course. Your final grade will be determined by your standing in the overall distribution within our class.

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

Class requirements and assignments

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>