

REL4936 (6049), REL5937 (1135), ANT4930 (0581),

ANG6930 (058G): M5; W4-5. AND-034

**"RELIGION AND ANTHROPOLOGY: THEORY AND METHOD"**

Prof. Robin M. Wright (Off. Hrs: T 10:00 - 2:00;  
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The main objective of the Course is to discuss and debate the relations of Anthropological and Religious Studies approaches to phenomena, experiences, and ideas that Human Subjects consider to be the basis for their religious beliefs and traditions. Besides offering a critical perspective on the history of the two disciplines, this course seeks to understand how several new approaches in the two disciplines have contributed to a more humanistic, phenomenological, symmetric, and diversified perspective in the study of Religion or religious traditions.

The topics to be covered over the next four months are:

1. A Critical Study of the History of Method and Theory in Anthropology and Religious Studies (in: *The Anthropology of Religion*, Lambek, ed.);
2. The Historically Vexed Relation between Religion Scholars, Theologians and Anthropologists in the Case example of Christianity vs Anthropology (in: *The Anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Fenella Cannell);

3. An Exemplary Post-colonial Critique of the relations of scholars to human subjects, in particular, a critique that seeks a more symmetric re-alignment among Indigenous Peoples, scholars of Religious Studies, Social Sciences, and the Humanities in the Contemporary Contexts (in: Jacob Olupona's *Beyond Primitivism*);
4. The contributions that recent anthropological studies of the Animist worldviews of native Amazonian peoples have made to re-dimensioning, critiquing, and challenging Western notions of personhood, 'things', 'objects' and 'persons', and the place of 'objects' in human life. The implications of this view of *The Occult Side of Things* (F. Santos-Granero, ed.);
5. An extensive and diversified rethinking of issues and approaches in Ritual theory, methods for interpreting ritual, exploring key analytical concepts for theorizing about ritual (in: Kreinath et al, *Theorizing rituals*);
6. Two Novel and Exemplary Approaches to Religious AND Anthropological questions:
  - One that seeks to forge a new understanding of Nature and Culture (Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*), evaluating the plethora of new movements and tendencies that have surged in modern times, as well as the deep roots of this relation in Western culture;
  - One that proposes a new way of studying religions, "one that sees them as dynamic, material, and historical expressions of the practices of embodied individuals who are embedded in social fields and ecological networks." (Vasquez, *More than Belief*) A

seminar with Dr. Taylor and another with Dr. Vasquez will be programmed during the semester.

**REQUIRED READINGS FOR THE COURSE (IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER). MOST ARE COLLECTIONS OF ARTICLES FROM WHICH WE WILL READ SELECTIONS:**

1. MICHAEL LAMBEK (ED.) *THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION*, (BLACKWELL) 2005;
2. FENELLE CANELL (ED.), *THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CHRISTIANITY*. (DUKE) 2006;
3. JACOB OLUPONA (ED.) *BEYOND PRIMITIVISM. INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND MODERNITY*. (ROUTLEDGE) 2004;
4. JENS KREINATH, JAN SNOEK, AND MICHAEL STAUSBERG (EDS.), *THEORIZING RITUAL. ISSUES, TOPICS, APPROACHES, CONCEPTS*. (LEIDEN: BRILL) 2008;
5. FERNANDO SANTOS-GRANERO, *THE OCCULT SIDE OF THINGS. NATIVE AMAZONIAN THEORIES OF MATERIALITY AND PERSONHOOD*. (UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA PRESS) 2009;
6. BRON TAYLOR. *DARK GREEN RELIGION. NATURE SPIRITUALITY AND THE PLANETARY FUTURE*. (UCBERKELEY) 2009;
7. MANUEL VASQUEZ, *MORE THAN BELIEF. A MATERIALIST THEORY OF RELIGION*. (OXFORD) 2011;

Beyond these, selected articles will be posted on the course website (Sakai), once it is established and running.

**Course Requirements:**

One mid-term research and reflection paper (40%) due at the end of February/beginning of March; and one end-of-the-semester research and reflection paper (40%), due at the

end of the reading period in late April. Each paper should be approximately 15 pp. in length, complete with bibliography, abstract, and notes. These papers will focus on theoretical and methodological questions that emerge during the class discussions, or in which the student has a long-term interest. The remainder of the grade (20%) will evaluate your participation in the class discussions.

Students are expected to attend all classes and complete assigned readings prior to each class meeting. Class participation will be important in final grade evaluation. Students should bring with them at least two or three questions that will be the focus of discussions for each class. These questions could include requests for clarification, points that are debatable in the authors' approaches, and points that are laudable in the students' evaluation. You should be ready to justify your positions.

**Continued absence will not be tolerated;** following the third absence, 3 grade points will be taken off the final grade for each day of absence. **More than 6 absences will lead to administrative withdrawal from the course;**

**There is one holiday (Martin Luther King Day, Jan. 16), and Spring Break (March 3-10) during this semester.**

#### **REGULATIONS OF THE COURSE:**

**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.