

## CONTEMPORARY SHAMANISMS

**REL3938 (037E), RLG5937 (1018H), ANT3930 (212A), ANG6930 (212B):**

MWF6: 12:50 - 1:40  
MAT103

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**Objectives of Course:** This course examines the varieties of religious experience that have come under the rubric of ‘shamanism’ and ‘shaman’. The course will include contemporary developments of shamanism among traditional peoples including shamanic revitalization movements; urbanized, non-indigenous movements, especially core shamanism and the neo-shamanic movement; and prophet movements of the Americas directly connected to shamanic cosmologies. The societies we will be focusing our attention on in the course include: contemporary ‘core shamanism’; Central American; Amazonian; Asian.

Part I presents an overview of **shamanic spiritualities** throughout the world, the processes of becoming a shaman, altered states of consciousness and shamanic transformations, the relations of shamans to the cosmos, and the long-range historical development of shamanic consciousness; the relation of shamans to nation-states.

The next four units focus on shamans in history: II. **Assault sorcery**; III. **Priestly knowledge and powers**; IV. **Prophet movements**; V. **Core shamanism**. While there is overlap amongst all of these units, there are features that nevertheless distinguish one from the other, in regards to forms of knowledge and power, sociality, relations among human and other-than-human beings (spirits, especially).

Each unit will be amply illustrated and discussed through readings, audio-visual material from the Professor’s own research and experiences. Slides, films, tape recordings, CDs from that research will be used during class. In addition, the course’s Canvas website has a

section on Resources that contains several bibliographies and a selection of other relevant readings.

**Course Readings:** The most important books from which the readings for the course will be drawn, are:

1. Michael Harner, *Cave and Cosmos. Shamanic Encounters with Another Reality*, 2013. North Atlantic Books (paperback, \$19.95, Amazon.com);
2. N. Whitehead & R. Wright, *In Darkness and Secrecy*. 2004, Duke. (paperback, used \$8.24 on Amazon.com);
3. Pedro Pitarch. *The Jaguar and the Priest. An Ethnography of Tzeltal Souls*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 2010.
4. R. Wright, ed. *Religion, Medicine and Healing. Contemporary Perspectives*. 2014. Dubuque, Iowa: kendallhunt.

All books will be put on Reserve at Smathers Library. Copies of all articles will be uploaded to the course Canvas website.