

SACRED PLANTS
SPRING SEMESTER 2017

PROF. ROBIN M. WRIGHT,
DEPARTMENTS OF RELIGION & ANTHROPOLOGY

REL3988 SECT.036G;
RLG5937 SECT.01C5
ANT3930 SECT. 2H30
ANG6930 SECT.2H33

MWF 7 (1:55 – 2:45) AND 101

Office Hours: MWF 11:35 – 1:40)

Anderson Hall 107C

Objectives of the Course:

This course explores the sacred relationships constructed among humans and plants in cultures primarily of the Americas. Among topics to be discussed are: plants as concocted to become intermediaries between humans and the divine; plants as constitutive of the “body” of the gods; sacred rituals involving plants; human/plant relationships as the privileged locus of discourse on the nature of the divine and spirit worlds.

Part 1 - Introduction

Week 1: 01/04 – 01/06:

Presentation of Course and Syllabus; Perspectives and Approaches

Readings: Robin Wall Kimmerer *Braiding Sweetgrass* (hereafter *BS*), “*Skywoman Falling*”;

Film:

Part 1: Plants, Humans and the Sacred

Week 2: 01/09 - 01/13:

Readings: E. O. Kuhn, *How Forests Think*, “Introduction”; Anna Tsing, “More-than-Human Sociality”, in *Anthropology and Nature*, edited by Kirsten Hastrup; Schultes, Hofmann & Ratsch, *Plants of the Gods*, pp. 1-31; E. L. Zent, “We Come from Trees”, in *JSRNC*, pp. 9-35.

Part 2: The Roots (manioc, yams, taro, kava)

Week 3: 01/18 – 01/20 (01/16 Holiday, No Class)

Readings: (Amazonia, Hawaii, Fiji) Katz, *The Straight Path*; L. Daly, *The Symbiosis of People and Plants* (2015), “Cassava Spirit and the Seeds of History”, pp. 145-189; Tod Swanson, “Singing to Estranged Lovers”, in *JSRNC*, pp. 36-65;

Video clip: on the meaning of Taro to native Hawaiians

Part 3: The Garden Fruits (pepper, strawberries), Flowers, and Seeds (squash, beans, corn)

Week 4: 01/23 – 01/27

Readings: Kimmerer, *BS*, “The Gift of Strawberries”, “Epiphany in the Beans” and “The Three Sisters”; R. Wright, 2009, “The Fruit of Knowledge and the Body of the Gods”, in *JSRNC*, 126-53, and 2013, ff.; Busso, “Taming THC”; Chris Wright, in *Religion, Medicine and Healing*; Schultes, Hoffman and Ratsch, pp. 92-101;

Part 4: The Leaves (tobacco)

Week 5: 01/30 – 02/03

Readings: A. Russell & E. Rahman, *The Master Plant. Tobacco in Lowland South America* (2015) part 2, pp. 89-154; L. Daly, *The Symbiosis of People and Plants* (2015), Chapter 7, “Unseen Spirits and the Piai’san’s Eye”, pp. 270-312;

Part 5: The Cacti

Week 6: 02/06 – 02/10

Readings: Native American Religion Treat, 2016, pp. 141-9; Schultes, “The Appeal of Peyote as a Medicine”; Schultes, Hofmann & Ratsch, pp. 166-71, 144-55;

Video: on the Huichol hunt for peyote

Part 6: The Fungi (mushrooms)

Week 7: 02/13 – 02/17

Readings: Schultes, Hofmann & Ratsch, pp. 156-63; Atlantic Monthly 2016;

Part 7: The Vines (ayahuasca)

Week 8: 02/20 – 02/24

Readings: Beyer (Part 2, Chapters 20 - 25);

Suggested: Richard Schultes & Robert Raffauf, *Vine of the Soul*, pp. 20-63; Lisa Madera, in *JSRNC*, pp. 66-98; articles in *Religion, Medicine and Healing*, by Langdon and Taylor.

Part 8: The Wild Tree-Fruits & Nuts

Week 9: 02/27 – 03/03

Readings: Hill, 2009, 99-125; Wright, 2009, pp. 125-53; 2005, and 2013 (on pariká); Kopenawa & Albert (on “yakwana”), 2014; Schultes, Hofmann & Ratsch, pp. 176-81, 116-23; Granier-Doyeux, “Native hallucinogenic drugs piptadenias (*Anadenanthera*)”

Video clips: “Searching for Pariká; *Xapiri*; BBC, on Taino rites of cohoba.

March 06 – 10: Spring Break (no classes)

Part 9: The Great Trees

Week 10: 03/13 – 03/17

Readings: Ceiba, sacred tree of the Maya; J. Hill, “The Celestial Umbilical Cord” in *JSRNC*, pp. 99-125; Wright, 2013, “The Universe as Great Tree”, pp. 168-92; Kimmerer, “People of Corn, People of Light,” *BS*

Part 10: Class Presentations

Week 11: 03/20 – 03/24

Week 12: 03/27 – 03/31

Week 13: 04/03 – 04/07

Week 14: 04/10 – 04/14

Course Wrap-up

Week 15: 04/17 – 04/19

Readings: McKenna, *Food of the Gods*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. A **20-minute oral presentation (30%)** on one of the sacred plants of the student's choice, how a given culture utilizes one or more plants in religious rituals. Questions to be answered in these presentations will be distributed for the students to follow.
2. A **research paper (30%)** on a topic of the student's choice related to one or more sacred plants either discussed in the course or not, plant-human interactions, theoretical or methodological issues.
3. **Two (2) brief Reflection Papers** (750 words in length) on any three of the films and documentaries we will be watching during the course (**each paper worth 15%**);
4. **Class participation (10%)**. Students are expected to attend all classes and complete assigned readings prior to each class meeting. Continued absence will not be tolerated; unexcused absence will be penalized: 2 grade points will be taken off the final grade for unexcused absence. More than 3 unexcused absences will lead to administrative withdrawal from the course; Pop-quizzes are part of class participation and will be administered whenever the Professor considers them necessary.

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. **Texting and all non-class related use of laptops, iPads, etc. are not allowed and will be penalized if done repeatedly.**

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.

Assignments Summary:

Date	Details
Sat Apr 22, 2017	Class Presentation due by 11:59pm
	Class Participation due by 11:59pm
	Final Paper due by 11:59pm
	Reflection Paper 1 due by 11:59pm
	Reflection Paper 2 due by 11:59pm

January 2017

Calendar						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 Previous month	26 Previous month	27 Previous month	28 Previous month	29 Previous month	30 Previous month	31 Previous month
1 Today	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1 Next month	2 Next month	3 Next month	4 Next month

Assignments are weighted by group:

Group	Weight
Assignments	0.0%
Total	0%