ANTH 326.01: Religious Belief Systems

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course provides an in-depth introduction to anthropological approaches to the study of religion. We will trace the history of anthropological approaches, as well as examining contemporary issues and topics. We will examine the nature of religious practice with an emphasis on religious explanation, the nature of ritual, altered states, spiritual manipulation and divination. We will also examine the interconnections of religion with the rest of society, the nature and significance of religious change, and the impact of colonialism. Examples will be drawn from both Western and non-Western traditions, though primarily the latter.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
1. Students will gain an appreciation of the diversity and richness of human religions and belief systems.
2. Students will acquire an understanding of the ways in which anthropologists study and explain religions and current issues and approaches to the topic.
3. Students will increase their knowledge of the nature of religious belief systems and their relationships to the rest of society and culture.
4. Students will gain a familiarity with the literature and current research on the topic.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Course Evaluation:
Examinations - There will be a mid-term and a final exam. Both exams will consist of short answer questions and essay questions and each will be worth 100 points. The final exam will not be comprehensive. Each examination is worth 1/4 of your grade.
Research Papers - Each student must write an eight to ten (8-10) page research paper using at least six (6) sources other than the course texts on a topic of their choice relating to the subject of the class. You must submit your topic for approval by the instructor by the end of the third week of class (September 19). Papers will be evaluated on content, originality, organization, and style. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the page. All papers are due on Thursday, December 5. The paper is worth 1/4 of your grade. If you need assistance in starting your paper, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. See “Guide to Writing Assignments” below for details.
Discussion: - Discussion questions will be given out each week and a portion of class time will be set aside for class discussion. All students are expected to read all assigned materials and generally be ready to discuss them in class. Discussion counts for 1/4 of your grade
Graduate Students: Graduate students are required to write a fifteen to twenty (15-20) page research paper with at least 10 sources on a topic of their choice relating to the subject of the class. Those in the Anthropology Department must also attend a weekly discussion session to be arranged. Graduate students will be graded on individual academic performance.
Extra Credit: Students wishing to earn extra credit may write a 2-4 page critical review of one of the recommended books listed below. Other books may be considered with the consent of the instructor. Reviews are worth up to 10 points and only two (2) reviews can be accepted per student. See instructor for details. See “Guide to Writing Assignments” below for details.
ANTH 326: RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS

Late Work and Make-Ups: Students are expected to turn in all work on the scheduled due date listed in the syllabus. Make-ups will only be given in the case of unavoidable absences. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor as soon as possible in such cases and to arrange for a make-up. Late work is subject to a 1/3-letter grade penalty per day (exclusive of weekends and holidays). No late work will be accepted after the regularly scheduled final examine unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

Academic Honesty: The University of Montana expects its students to be academically honest, particularly in regard to plagiarism. “Plagiarism is the representing of another’s work as one’s own.” Both copyright laws and University policies are rigid as concerns plagiarism. Consult the “Academic Policies and Procedures” section of the current University catalog for details regarding penalties for plagiarism.

Access: This syllabus, along with reading assignments, study guides, overheads, announcements, etc., will be available on-line through the university library’s ERes (electronic reserve) system at: http://eres.lib.umt.edu. Look under the course number and instructor’s name to find this material. The password is: ANTH326.

Required Readings:


PROVISIONAL COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1 APPROACHES TO THE SACRED
READINGS: Bowen (ERes).
Sep 2

WEEK 2 RELIGION, MYTH, & WORLD VIEW
READINGS: Myth Ritual, Symbolism, & Taboo (ERes).
Sep 12 PAPER TOPICS DUE

WEEK 3 GODS, SPIRITS, & POWERS
READINGS: Lawson, Ch.
WEEK 4 SOULS, DEATH, AND THE AFTERLIFE
READINGS: Lawson, Ch.
WEEK 5 RELIGIOUS PRACTITIONERS
READINGS: Lawson, Ch.
WEEK 6 RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: RITUAL
READINGS: Lawson, Ch.
WEEK 7 RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: SPACE, SPEECH, PERSON, & TIME
READINGS: Klass & Weisgrau, Pt 2.
WEEK 8 RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: SPACE, SPEECH, PERSON, & TIME
READINGS: Klass & Weisgrau, Pt 2.
Oct 24 MIDTERM EXAMS
ANTH 326: RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS

WEEK 9  RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: ALTERED STATES
       READINGS: Klass & Weisgrau, Pt 3.
               Powers, Ch. .

WEEK 10  EXTENDING THE POWER: HEALING, MAGIC, AND DIVINATION
       READINGS: Klass & Weisgrau, Pt 3.
               Powers, Ch. .

Nov. 5    ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY

WEEK 11  EXTENDING THE POWER: WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY
       READINGS: Powers, Ch. .

WEEK 12  RELIGION AND THE STATE
       READINGS: Klass & Weisgrau, Pt 4.
               Earhart, Ch. .

Nov 28-30 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

WEEK 13  GREAT TRADITIONS AND LITTLE TRADITIONS
       READINGS: Klass & Weisgrau, Pt 4.
               Earhart, Ch. .

WEEK 14  RELIGIOUS CONTINUITY & CHANGE
       READINGS: Klass & Weisgrau, Pt 5.
               Earhart, Ch. .

Dec 5     PAPERS DUE

WEEK 15  RELIGION & COLONIALISM
       READINGS: Klass & Weisgrau, Pt 1.

Dec 17 (Tue) - 10:10pm  FINAL EXAM