THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF RITUAL & RELIGION
ANTHROPOLOGY 189.10
The George Washington University
Spring Semester 2009

Monday and Wednesday - 12:45-2:00 pm
Rome Hall Room 351

Professor: Linda A. Brown
Email: labrown@gwu.edu
Office: 2112 G Street #203
Cell phone: (202) 907-5523
Office hours: Monday 2:00-3:30 pm or by appointment

Required materials:
1) Textbook
   Books, NY.
2) Supplementary required readings for course are posted on Blackboard.

Course Overview
The physical evidence of ancient religious ritual – whether paintings and altars found deep in
 caves or carved figurines hidden in walls of households – provides us with tantalizing
 information about past peoples. Using case studies from various regions of the world, ranging
 from the prehistoric to the present, we will explore the role of archaeology in understanding
 religious behaviors. Ethnographic and archaeological examples will be used to critically evaluate
how archaeologists make inferences about ritual practices and the religious lives of past peoples. Special attention will be placed on understanding contemporary method and theory used in interpreting ancient religious rituals from archaeological remains.

Our focus this semester will be on “traditional,” “indigenous” or “popular” religions – not the major world religions or the formal religions of state-level societies. Mortuary ritual, a complete semester of material unto itself, will not constitute a major focal point (although we will examine mortuary remains in the context of other themes). Important topics to be covered include: the origins of symbolic behavior; sacred landscapes; shamanism; ancestor veneration; sorcery and witchcraft, among others.

Course Objectives

• To introduce you to the archaeological study of religious rituals
• To understand contemporary archaeological theory and methods used in interpreting religious ritual from material remains.

Reading Assignments

In addition to readings from your textbook, we will be reading additional articles and/or book chapters each week. All readings are posted to the course Blackboard website in digital forms. These readings are NOT optional!

Extra Credit

The only way you can get extra credit points in this class is by doing the readings. Every once in a while, I will ask you (without advanced warning) to ask a question you should know if you read the assigned article for the class. If you choose to answer the question and get the answer right, I will add one point of extra credit to one of your test scores. If you answer the question incorrectly, I will subtract one point from one of your test scores – so guessing will hurt you. If you have not read the article you will not be able to take advantage of these extra points.

Short Assignments

All students will complete two short (2-3 pages) assignments addressing specific questions. We will talk about the assignments in more detail during the semester.

Assignments are due IN CLASS on the due date. Any paper turned in after the due date & time will be penalized and subjected to grade reductions as described in this syllabus.
Penalty for Late Assignments
All assignments are due in class on the due date. Late assignments will be penalized as follows:

- Assignments turned in on the date due yet after class = minus 10% of total points possible for assignment
- Assignments turned the day after due date = minus 20% of total points possible for assignment
- Assignments turned in 2 days after due date = minus 30% of total points possible.
- For each day late an additional 10% will be subtracted from your score until reaching a score of 0% (ouch!)

Evaluation and Grading: Undergraduate Students
- Two exams (worth 35% each): 70%
- Two written assignments (worth 15% each): 30%

Evaluation and Grading: Graduate Students
- Two exams (worth 25% each): 50%
- Two written assignments (worth 10% each): 20%
- Final Paper: 30%

Grading
The standard university system will be used to assign letter grades to score totals as follows:

A = 92-100  A- = 90-91
B+ = 88-89  B = 82-87  B- = 80-81
C+ = 78-79  C = 72-77  C- = 70-71
D+ = 68-69  D = 62-67  D- = 60-61
F = 0-59

Exams
All students will take two exams. The exams will be based on all materials presented in class including lectures, readings, slides, discussions, and films as well as any information I may post to Blackboard.

Missed Exams
Make-up exams will be scheduled ONLY under extreme circumstances and if you have an official college excuse in writing (i.e., sports teams, health services). If you know that you will miss an exam, you must notify me in advance for rescheduling.

Painted Motif, Mimbres Bowl
Plagiarism Policy
Plagiarism is taking someone else’s ideas, words, or work and representing those ideas, words, or works as your own. This includes 1) buying papers on-line, 2) copying another student's work, and 3) lifting sentences from web pages or printed matter without proper citation. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, consult the student handbook or ask me. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course.

As per the GWU Code of Academic Integrity, the lightest penalty for a first-time plagiarism is failure of the assignment – the lightest penalty for a second time offence is failure of the course.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

• If you can not take an examine or submit a graded assignment on a particular day due to your religious beliefs, please advise me during the first two weeks of class so we can make alternative arrangements.

• If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities please let me know during the first two weeks of class so we can arrange for the appropriate academic accommodations.

• If you decide for any reason not to finish this class, you must drop the course through administrative procedures. If you stop coming to class and do not officially drop the course, I will be forced to fail you in the course (not fun). If you do drop the course, please let me know or I will worry about you.

• I will only grant an Incomplete in this course for incredibly serious reasons (death and/or dire illness) and you will need the appropriate documentation.
Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

This is a general road-map for the semester – however, like all preconceived plans it may change once I see the pace and interests of the class

Introduction to the Course - Monday 1/12

Part 1 – Issues and Definitions

Anthropological & Archaeological Approaches: Ritual, Religion & the Supernatural
Wednesday 1/14
Monday 1/19 – No Class – Martin Luther King Day
Wednesday 1/21
Monday 1/26

Readings:

Assignment #1: Document and discuss the conceptual and material aspects of a contemporary personal or household religious ritual practice that could leave evidence in an archaeological record. Due: Monday — 09 February – In Class

Part 2 – Shamanism & the Use of Ethnographic Analogy

Shamanic Worldviews, Hunting Magic, Sacred Landscapes
Wednesday 1/28
Monday 2/2
Readings:

**Part 3 - Origins of Symbolic Behavior**

The “Big Bang” in the Upper Paleolithic/Interpreting Paleolithic “Art”
*Wednesday 2/4*
*Monday 2/9 – Assignment #1 - Due in Class!*
*Wednesday 2/11*
*Monday 2/16 – President’s Day – No Class*

Readings:

**Part 4 - Cognitive Archaeology**

Shamanism, Trance & Rock Art
*Wednesday 2/18*
*Monday 2/23*

Readings:


Part 5 – Religion & the Transition to Agriculture

The Earliest Temple, a Shaman Burial and the Emergence of Ancestors

Wednesday 2/25
Monday 3/2
Wednesday 3/4

Readings:


5. Fagan, Brian (1998). In From Black Land to Fifth Sun, pp. 115-165 (Chapter 6 - Avebury: Landscapes of the Ancestors and Chapter 7 - Stonehenge and the Idea)

Cool Case Study: Bog People – Ritual or Punishment? You decide!

Monday 3/9

Go to the following website for background information
http://www.ipcc.ie/infobogbodies.html

Exam #1 - Wednesday 3/11

Monday 3/16 – No Class - Spring Break
Wednesday 3/18 – No Class - Spring Break
Part 6 – Sacred Landscapes in North America

Moundbuilders and the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex
Monday 3/23
Wednesday 3/25
Monday 3/30

Readings:


Part 7 – The Chaco Phenomenon

An Indigenous Pilgrimage Center
Wednesday 4/1
Monday 4/6
Wednesday 4/8

Readings:


Part 8 – Conjuring, Sorcery, Witchcraft

Charms, Sorcery, Hoodoo & Witches in the Americas & Europe
Monday 4/13
Wednesday 4/15
Monday 4/20
Readings:


Assignment #2: Document and analyze a specific “magic” item in contemporary use. Due: Wednesday—4/29—In Class

*Wednesday 4/22 – No Class – SAA Meetings – Work on Assignment #2*

**Part 9 – Chavín Ceremonial Center**

Jaguars, Caymans and Anacondas in the Andes
*Mondat 4/27*
*Wednesday 4/29 – Assignment #2 – Due in Class!*

Readings:


Exam #2- TBA