

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



- Lascaux Cave Paintings

Professor: Linda A. Brown
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Office hours: Monday 2:00-3:30 pm or by appointment

Required materials:

1) Textbook

Fagan, Brian (1998). *From Black Land to Fifth Sun: The Science of Sacred Sites*. Helix Books, NY.

2) Supplementary required readings for course are posted on Blackboard.



- Engraving on Pottery Vessel, Moundville

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.



- Maya Sky-Band

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%

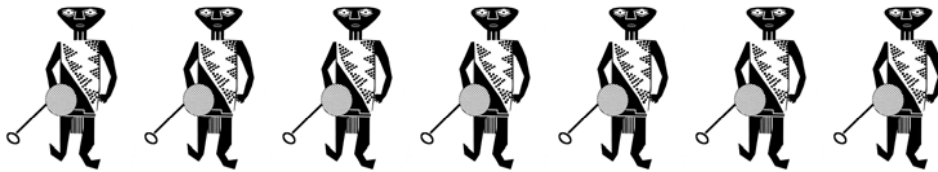
Evaluation and Grading: Graduate Students

- 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		



Painted Motif, Mimbres Bowl

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.

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



-Aztec Heart Extraction

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:

1. Mullen, Patrick (2000). Belief and the American Folk. *Journal of American Folklore* 113(448): 119-143.
2. Klass, Morton (1995). The Problem with the Supernatural. In *The Ordered Universe: Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion*. Boulder, Westview Press, pp. 25-33.
3. Renfrew, Colin (1994). The Archaeology of Religion. In *The Ancient Mind: Elements of Cognitive Archaeology*, edited by Colin Renfrew and Ezra Zubrow. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 47-54.
4. Fagan, Brian (1998). *From Black Land to Fifth Sun*. (Chapter 11 - A Shrine at Phylakopi.) pp. 251-269.
5. Fogelin, Lars (2007). The Archaeology of Religious Ritual. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36:55-71.
6. Brown, Linda and William Walker (2008). Prologue: Archaeology, Animism and Non-Human Agents. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 15(4): 297-299.

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:

1. Furst, Peter (1994). Introduction: An Overview of Shamanism, in *Shamanism in Central Asia and the Americas*, edited by G. Seaman and J. Day. Niwot: University of Colorado Press, pp. 1-28.
2. Kozak, David (2000). Shamanisms: Past and Present. In *Religion and Culture: An Anthropological Focus*, edited by Raymond Scupin. Prentice-Hall, Inc. NJ, pp. 106-121.
3. Whitley, David S., Ronald I. Dorn, Joseph M. Simon, Robert Rechtman, and Tamara K. Whitley (1999). Sally's Rockshelter and the Archaeology of the Vision Quest. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 9(2):221-247
4. Garfinkel, Alan (2006). Paradigm Shifts, Rock Art Studies and the "Coso Sheep Cult" of Eastern California. *North American Archaeologist* 27(3):203-244.

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:

1. Mithen, Steven (1996). *The Prehistory of Mind*. London, Thames and Hudson. (Read Chapter 4 – A New Proposal for the Mind's Evolution: pp. 61-72/Chapter 8 - Trying to Think Like a Neanderthal & Chapter 9 – The Big Bang of Human Culture: The Origins of Art and Religion: pp. 147-184.
2. Clottes, Jean (2005) What Did Ice Age Peoples Do in the Deep Caves? *Expedition* 47(3):20-24.

Part 4 - Cognitive Archaeology

Shamanism, Trance & Rock Art

Wednesday 2/18

Monday 2/23

Readings:

1. Fagan, Brian (1998). Dave Caves, Obscure Vision. In *From Black Land to Fifth Sun*, pp. 23-50. Fagan, Brian (1998). San Artists in Southern Africa. In *From Black Land to Fifth Sun*, pp. 51-69.

2. Lewis-Williams, J. David (2002) *A Cosmos in Stone: Interpreting Religion and Society Through Rock Art*. Walnut Creek, Altamira Press, pp. 163-190 and pp. 217-246. (Chapter 8 - Building)
3. Lewis-Williams, J.D. (2001). Southern African Shamanistic Rock Art in its Social Contexts. In *The Archaeology of Shamanism*, edited by Neil Price. New York, Routledge, pp.17-39.

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:

1. Scham, Sandra (2008). The World's First Temple. *Archaeology Magazine*, November/December Issue: 22-27.
2. Grossmand, Leore, Natalie Munro and Anna Belfer-Cohen (2008). A 12,000-Year-Old Shaman Burial from the Southern Levant (Israel). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*.
3. Fagan, Brian (1998). Fertility and Death. In *From Black Land to Fifth Sun*, pp. 70-99
4. Lewis-Williams, David and David Pearce (2005). Chapter 4 – Close Encounters with a Built Cosmos. In *Inside the Neolithic Mind*. Thames & Hudson, NY, pp. 88-148.
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:

1. Fagan, Brian (1998). The Moundbuilders of Eastern North America. In *From Black Land to Fifth Sun*, pp. 184-219.
2. Brown, J.A. (1997). The Archaeology of Ancient Religion in the Eastern Woodlands. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26:465-485.
3. Brown, J.A. (2003). The Cahokia Mound 72-Sub 1 Burials as Collective Representations. *The Wisconsin Archeologist* 84: 81-97.

Part 7 – The Chaco Phenomenon

An Indigenous Pilgrimage Center

Wednesday 4/1

Monday 4/6

Wednesday 4/8

Readings:

1. Fagan, Brian (1998). Two Livings: Agriculture and Religion. In *From Black Land to Fifth Sun*, pp. 166-183.
2. Malville, J. Mckim and Nancy J. Malville (2001). Pilgrimage and Periodic Festivals as Processes of Social Integration in Chaco Canyon. *Kiva* 66(3): 327-344.
3. Mobley-Tanaka, Jeannette (1997). Gender and Ritual Space during the Pithouse to Pueblo Transition: Subterranean Mealing Rooms in the North American Southwest. *American Antiquity* 62(3): 437-448.

Part 8 –Conjuring, Sorcery, Witchcraft

Charms, Sorcery, Hoodoo & Witches in the Americas & Europe

Monday 4/13

Wednesday 4/15

Monday 4/20

Readings:

1. Darling, J. Andrew. (1999) Mass Inhumations and the Execution of Witches in the American Southwest. *American Anthropologist* 100(3):732-752.
2. Leone, Mark P. and Gladys-Marie Fry (1999). Conjuring in the Big House: An Interpretation of African American Belief Systems Based on the Uses of Archaeology and Folklore Sources. *The Journal of American Folklore* 112(445):372-403
3. Orser Jr., Charles (2008). The Archaeology of African American Slave Religion in Antebellum South. In *Southern Crossroads: Perspectives on Religion and Culture*, W. Conser Jr. and R. Payne (eds.):39-62.
4. Ravilios, Kate. (2008). Witches of Cornwall: Macabre evidence of age-old spells surfaces in an archaeologist's front yard. *Archaeology Magazine* Nov-Dec: 42-45.
5. Hoggard, Brian (2004). *The Archaeology of Counter-Witchcraft and Popular Magic*. In *Beyond the Witch Trails: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe*, O. Davies (ed.): 167-186.

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

Monday 4/27

Wednesday 4/29 – Assignment #2 – Due in Class!

Readings:

1. Burger, Richard L. (1995). The Early Ceremonial Center of Chavín de Huántar. In, *Chavín and the Origins of Andean Civilization*. Thames and Hudson, NY, pp. 128-164.

Exam #2- TBA

