

Religion, Myth, and Magic

ANTH 3505
Fall 2013

Dr. Susan Johnston
Phillips B156

Textbooks: Moro, Pamela A. (ed.). 2010. Magic, Witchcraft and Religion. Mayfield: Mountain View, CA. 9th Edition. ISBN 978-0-07-803494-7

Stoller, Paul and Cheryl Olkes. 1987. In Sorcery's Shadow. University of Chicago Press: Chicago. ISBN 0-2267-7543-7

Gilmore, Lee. 2010. Theater in a Crowded Fire. University of California Press: Berkeley. ISBN 978-0520260887

Shieffelin, Edward L. 2005. The Sorrow of the Lonely and the Burning of the Dancers. Palgrave Macmillan. 2nd edition. ISBN 1-4039-6606-0

* Indicates that this reading is on Blackboard

Reading:

August	28	Introduction
	30	What is religion? Moro: Eller; Lee
September	4	Religious specialists Moro: Turner (p. 143); M.F. Brown; Vitebsky
	6	Mythology Magoulick*
	11	Symbols Stevens*; Santino*
	13	Ritual: definition Moro: Turner (p. 90), Gluckman*
	18	Ritual: function Moro: Hutson; Gmelch; Farrer*
	20	<u>Sorrow of the Lonely</u> Ch. 1-3
	25	<u>Sorrow of the Lonely</u> Ch. 4-5
	27	<u>Sorrow of the Lonely</u>

		Ch. 6-8
October	2	<u>Sorrow of the Lonely</u> Ch. 9-10
	4	Death Moro: Metcalf; Barber*; Rosaldo*
	9	Cannibalism Moro: Conklin; Conklin* (yes, there are two Conklin readings!)
	11	Non-human agents Moro: Harris; K.M Brown; Freed & Freed*; Messenger*
	16	MID-TERM EXAM
	18	Magic and its practitioners Moro: McPherson; Hewlett et al; Detweiler*;
	23	<u>In Sorcery's Shadow</u> Prologue, Section 1 (Ch. 1-21)
	25	<u>In Sorcery's Shadow</u> Section 2, 3 (Ch. 22-32)
	30	<u>In Sorcery's Shadow</u> Section 4, 5 (Ch. 33-41)
November	1	New religious forms Moro: Luhrmann; Wallace*; Whitmore*
	6	<u>Theater in a Crowded Fire</u> Introduction, Ch. 1
	8	<u>Theater in a Crowded Fire</u> Ch. 2
		PAPER DUE
	13	<u>Theater in a Crowded Fire</u> Ch. 3
	15	<u>Theater in a Crowded Fire</u> Ch. 4, 6
	20	Religion and women Moro: Hoodfar; Gordon*; Obermeyer*
	22	Religion and politics

Moro: Juergensmeyer; Barkun*; Bromley & Shupe*

27-29	THANKSGIVING
4	The origins of religion? Henig*
6	Conclusions

References, Blackboard readings:

Barber, Paul. 2008 [1988]. The real vampire. Magic, Witchcraft and Religion. Arthur C. Lehmann, James Myers, and Pamela A. Moro (eds.). Mayfield: Mountain View, CA. 8th Edition.

Barkun, Michael. 1993. Reflections after Waco: millennialists and the state. The Christian Century 110(18): 596-600.

Bromley, David G. and Anson D. Shupe, Jr. 1979. The Tnevnoc Cult. Sociological Analysis, No. 4, Sects, Cults and Religious Movements. 40: 361-366.

Conklin, Beth A. 1995. "Thus Are Our Bodies, Thus Was Our Custom": Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society. American Ethnologist 22: 75-101.

Detweiler, Robert. 1975. Shifting perspectives on the Salem witches. The History Teacher 8(4): 596-610.

Farrer, Claire R. 1987. Singing for life: the Mescalero Apache girls' puberty ceremony. Betwixt and Between. Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster, and Meredith Little (eds.) Open Court: La Salle, IL.

Freed, Stanley A. and Ruth S. Freed. 1990. Taraka's Ghost. Natural History, October, 99:84-91.

Gluckman, M. 1963 [1954]. Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa. In Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa. London: Cohen and West.

Gordon, Daniel. 1991. Female circumcision and genital operations in Egypt and the Sudan. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 5(1):3-14.

Henig, Robin Marantz. 2007. Darwin's God. New York Times, March 4, 2007.

Messenger, John. 1962. A Critical Reexamination of the Concept of Spirits: With Special Reference to Traditional Irish Folklore and Contemporary Irish Folk Culture. American Anthropologist 64: 367-73.

Obermeyer, Carla Makhlouf. 1999. Female Genital Surgeries: The Known, the Unknown, and the Unknowable, Medical Anthropology Quarterly 13(1):79-106.

Rosaldo, Renato. 2004 [1989]. Grief and a headhunter's rage. Death, Mourning, and Burial. Antonius C.G.M. Robben (ed). Blackwell: Malden, MA.

Santino, Jack. 1992. Yellow Ribbons and Seasonal Flags: The Folk Assemblage of War. *The Journal of American Folklore* 105: 19-33.

Stevens, Phillips. 2006. Symboling. *Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. H. James Birx, (ed.) Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Wallace, Anthony F. C. 2008 [1970]. Revitalization movements. *Magic, Witchcraft and Religion*. Arthur C. Lehmann, James Myers, and Pamela A. Moro (eds.). Mayfield: Mountain View, CA. 8th Edition.

Whitmore, John. 1995. Religious dimensions of the UFO abductee experience. *The Gods Have Landed: New Religions From Other Worlds*. James R. Lewis (ed.) State University of New York Press: Albany.

Learning Objectives

- * to get some idea of how religions fit into society and culture and what they mean to those whose religions they are;
- * to challenge your assumptions about what you think religion is;
- * to learn something about religions other than your own

Course Requirements:

This syllabus represents the basic framework of this class. However, **I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CHANGE IT IF IT BECOMES NECESSARY**. This would only happen if we get behind, or want to pursue a topic for more time than I have allowed for that topic. You will get plenty of warning if I do have to change the syllabus.

All of the reading listed in this syllabus is required. You are also responsible for anything which happens in class. It will make this class both more interesting and more useful for you if you will **PLEASE DO THE READING**. That will make it easier for you to enter discussions, which will be numerous in this class.

You must take both exams and turn in the paper in order to pass the course. There are two exams, one during the semester and the other during the final exam period. Each will cover the section of the course which precedes it; the second exam is not cumulative. Each exam is worth 35% of your grade.

FAILURE TO APPEAR AT AN EXAM WITHOUT LETTING ME KNOW IN ADVANCE, WILL GET YOU AN F ON THAT EXAM. If you must miss an exam, you will have until I hand back the graded exams to make it up. This is usually about a week. If this becomes necessary, please see me as soon as possible to arrange a time.

There is also a short paper for this course. The subject of this paper is to consider your own understanding of religion in relation to what you have read for this class. The paper topic is appended to the syllabus and is intended to be a "thought" paper which asks you to consider some of the examples of religious beliefs and ideas about which you have read in terms of your own experience with religion. It should be no shorter than 5 pages, and no longer than 10 pages. It will be worth 30% of your grade. It is due **IN CLASS** on

NOVEMBER 8. YOU MAY ONLY SUBMIT PAPERS BY E-MAIL IF YOU HAVE MADE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO DO SO. I am not a printing service. Last minute submissions by e-mail without such arrangements will not be accepted.

My office is Rm. 204 in 2112 G St. and you can reach me at extension is 4-6075. You can also reach me by e-mail at sjohnsto@gwu.edu. My office hours are Wednesday 1:30-3:30 and Friday 11-1. Wednesday 1:30-2:30 I will be in the basement of 2110 G St. (the main anthropology department); otherwise I will be in my office. You can also always reach me by email (including days when I'm not on campus).

Paper Assignment

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Anth 3505

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Your paper for this class should be a comparison of your own experience of religion with **two** of the examples of religion from the readings for the class. I would like you to answer the following questions in the paper:

1. Of all of the readings for the class, which presents a religious tradition that seems the most foreign to you? What, specifically, about it makes it seem that way?
2. Of all of the readings for the class, which presents a religious tradition that seems the most familiar to you? What, specifically, about it makes it seem that way?

You may choose among all of the readings, including both the books and the articles in Lehmann and Myers. The idea is to discuss one reading that is similar and one that is different, not the similarities and differences in two readings. There are only two rules about which readings you may choose:

1. You may not choose a reading about your own religious tradition as the familiar one. If you have a particular religious affiliation, it's no fair picking a reading about it and then saying that this is the one that is the most familiar! You must stay outside your own tradition, whatever it may be, for both readings.
2. You must choose a reading that was assigned for this class. If you are strongly compelled to use one of the other readings from Moro that was not assigned, you may make a case to me personally, **at least three weeks before the paper is due.**
3. You should focus on the readings with ethnographic content and avoid the more secular readings (e.g. baseball magic or yellow ribbon symbolism) and the more theoretical ones (e.g. the general discussion of revitalization movements or religious specialists). That means you should be talking about the specific beliefs and practices of a particular culture and not, for example, the general characteristics of shamanism. Otherwise, all of the ethnographic readings are fair game. If you use one of the readings where there is a lot of information on the non-religious aspects of the society, (e.g. the Kaluli), make sure that you focus on the religious aspects of their culture and not the more secular ones.

You are not required to use any materials outside of these readings, but if you do, PLEASE PROVIDE ME WITH THE FULL CITATION INFORMATION. Remember, the rule is that anything that isn't common knowledge (or, in this paper, one of the two articles you are analyzing) must be cited. If the information is something you learned from some religious context, then note that, i.e. "As I was taught in Sunday school..."

While I want you to have as much latitude for creativity as possible, your paper should include, in no particular order, the following elements:

- You should discuss how you think about religion. This may include your own personal religious beliefs, or it could be a more general discussion of how you think religion fits into society. You may use the formal definition of religion that I gave you **ONLY** if it conforms to what you already thought about religion before taking this course. What I'm interested in is how your own personal experience has made you think about religion.
- This need not necessarily be about the better known religious contexts in our society. You may bring science into your discussion, or other kinds of religious experience that we might not have talked about in

class. The only criterion is that you make it work in terms of how you are approaching religion for this paper.

- You should do a fairly close and detailed analysis of the readings you have chosen in terms of how they fit or don't fit into what you think about religion. Here, I'm interested in specifics-- what exactly is it about these two readings that makes the religions seem familiar or foreign? Is it behaviors, or ideology, or what?
- Value judgments are permissible, if used **VERY** carefully. I'm not interested in hearing about whether or not you consider other cultures valuable. However, if you chose a particular reading as being foreign to you because it contains elements which you have been taught are not appropriate, or are personally repugnant, or whatever, that's okay. Statements like "I was taught that eating people was not acceptable so it grosses me out" are fine; "people who eat people are just plain disgusting" or "these people are so primitive" are not. In fact, you should avoid the word "primitive" altogether!
- You should have a few points of comparison for each example. Spending four pages talking about yourself and then a paragraph on each example isn't what I have in mind. You should spend about the same amount of time discussing your own ideas as you do each example.
- You should make the specific comparisons explicit. Don't just describe the two cultures' practices and then assume I know what you think is similar or not. Different people use different examples differently. For example, while it may be obvious to you why the *gisaro* is foreign, you need to spell it out for me.
- Grammar and organization count! While I don't expect you be writing prize-winning prose, your grade will go down if there are a large number of typos, grammatical errors, lapses in logic, etc.

The paper should be double-spaced, no shorter than five pages, and no longer than seven. And please remember-- I have been using computers longer than most of you have been alive. I know all about large typefaces and large margins. Please give me some credit for intelligence. Given the nature of the paper, it is also perfectly acceptable to write informally and in the first person.

If you want to discuss any details about this paper with me, please come to my office hours. Also, I would be happy to read a draft version of your paper, and make comments on it before you turn the final version in. If you want to write a draft, please give it to me no later than ten days before the paper is due.

The final paper is due **November 8, in class**.

Addendum: In case it needs to be said, anything you write remains private, between you and me!