
ANTHROPOLOGY 7: Magic, Witchcraft and Religion (L0003)

Dr. Pruitt, Laney College, Fall 2006

Thurs 1-4pm, Room F200

dpruitt@peralta.edu, 510-464-3173

Office: T506 Hours: Tu&Wed 4-5pm, Wed&Thur 11:30-12:30

Welcome to the anthropological study of religion. People everywhere answer the questions "who are we" and "how did we get here?" "What is the meaning of life?" In this course, we learn about the different ways people around the world answer these questions. This takes us on a journey through myth, ritual, magic, shamanic journeys, healing, and honoring spirits. We learn about people who believe in gods and goddesses, ghosts and witches, ancestor spirits, and mana. We find out about how different peoples seek control over their lives by drawing on their mystical powers.

Studying these matters from an anthropological perspective means that we will look at the relationship between religion and other aspects of social life. To do this, we will examine and compare the social organizations, political structures, economic systems and how they shape religious beliefs of different peoples, across the world and through time. We will explore questions such as: How does ritual help shape the individual and their view of the world? How should one deal with misfortune, sickness, uncertainty? What is the relationship between gender and religious roles in the society? By learning how culture shapes and gives meaning to our lives, we learn a deeper understanding and appreciation of human diversity, a better understanding of our own society, and we learn more about human potential. All of this serves us well in these increasingly complex and multicultural times.

Learning Objectives:

- An anthropological perspective for understanding and respect for different cultures.
- An understanding of the diverse cosmologies and religious practices in the world and how religious beliefs relate to other aspects of the society.
- A critical perspective on one's own culture.

Class meetings will consist of lectures, videos and discussions. Your attendance is necessary. Much occurs in class that is not covered in your readings. Videos will be shown in class only once and will not be available outside of the classroom. Because discussion is emphasized, preparation for each class is critical so that you can contribute and bring in your questions. We can learn a lot from each other. The more prepared you are, the more meaningful the class time will be for everyone. If you are usually quiet in discussions, make an effort to speak up. We can learn from you. If you usually talk a lot, make an effort to hold back sometimes to allow the space for others to find their voices.

Our objective in this course is to learn about people who live differently than you do. You will need to stretch beyond your own experience and try to relate to ways of life that are unfamiliar to you. Inherent in learning about other cultures is confrontation with differing value systems and cultural practices. We will sometimes deal with topics that some might consider sensitive or uncomfortable. Our goal is to learn to understand and respect how people of different cultures define their reality - how it is that what seems strange to "us" is perfectly normal to "them." Most students find this fascinating and gratifying.

This course earns transfer credits: CSU Area C; IGETC Area 4

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Reading: To be completed **prior** to the date on the syllabus. At times our discussions may lag behind this schedule. This is the nature of discussion oriented classes. However, keep up with the schedule. It remains your guide for where you need to be in the readings at any point in time. All readings are available at the Laney Bookstore and on reserve in the Laney library.

- Text: *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion*, 6th Edition, Lehmann & Myers, 2005. ISBN 0-07-286318-8 You are still responsible for the readings assigned referred to as MWR even if you use an older edition.
- *Course Reader*: collection of articles. Referred to as READER in course schedule.

Key Discussant: 25%

- You will be responsible for assisting class learning in three readings/topics. Your job is to be thoroughly familiar with the readings, provide a short summary of important points and questions, and be a special contributor to the class discussion. These cannot be made-up after your assigned date. See below for further instruction.

Tests: 75%

- There will be **three tests** consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions. Each test is worth **25%** of your grade.
- Tests will cover assigned readings, class lectures and discussions, and videos.
- A **study guide** is provided with key terms as well as questions about the material in each chapter that will help you think about what you are reading.
- Exams are not cumulative. They include only the material covered since the prior test.
- **Come prepared for tests #1, #2, #3 with scantron form #882-E and #2 pencils.** (Available in the Laney Bookstore) Scantron forms need to be in good condition in order to receive credit for the test. If the forms are creased and dirty the machine cannot read them. The machine also cannot read pen. You risk receiving a zero if you do not attend to these details.
- **Come prepared for Test # 4 with a blue book. (Available in the Laney bookstore)**
- Make-up tests: You are required to take the exams on their assigned dates. Should an unforeseen emergency or illness cause you to miss the exam **AND** you notify me by voice mail **before** the time of the exam, you may take it at the scheduled make-up time. **You must make arrangements with me to do so** and to find out where it will be held. This is a serious disadvantage to you so I strongly urge you to see to it that you make the official exam time. There is no possibility to make-up any class presentations nor class exercises.

Exam #1 or #2 Nov 14 or 15th

Grades are calculated on a standard 100 point scale:

90-100% = A

80-89% = B

70-79% = C

60-69% = D

< 60% = F

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LEARNING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Learning is challenging and requires everyone's cooperation. A positive learning environment is created by preparation, participation, and minimal distractions. Over the years of teaching at Laney I have learned that it is helpful to be explicit about what is required for creating a supportive learning community. For this reason, I have specific guidelines for my classes. Please do your part to support our success.

What you can count on from me:

1. To be here every class (barring serious illness) on time, to begin class promptly, to be prepared, and to present a well organized class, interesting and worthwhile course.
2. I will be available during posted office hours and by appointment for any questions. I enjoy meeting and helping students and encourage you to take advantage of this time. I am known to go out of my way to help students who are giving their best effort.
3. You will receive a detailed syllabus that spells out what is expected of you academically and a detailed schedule for the course so that you can plan accordingly. No surprises here :)
4. Tests will be returned the week following the test.

Overall policies:

1. **If you miss class**, it is up to you to get the information you missed from someone who was here. After you have reviewed notes from the class, you can meet with me if you have any questions concerning the material. Please don't ask me if you "missed anything important." Of course you did!
2. Any written assignments that are turned in after their due date will be marked down one letter grade for each day that it is late. I will not accept any assignments more than three days after the due date.
3. No talking during exams or you will receive a zero for that test.
4. Cheating and plagiarism are grounds for failing the course. Make sure you understand how to avoid plagiarism.
5. Extra credit is at my discretion and if available will apply to everyone. It will not sub for exams.

What is expected of you:

1. Your presence, on time, ready to work when class begins promptly at the designated hour. If you are late, wait outside until I can pause the discussion and invite you to join us.
2. Make comments and questions to the entire class - not in private conversations with neighbors.
3. Respect the opinions and experiences of others. Listen attentively and accept them as valid. Disagreements are allowed. Personal attacks are not.
4. Turn off all cell phones and other such electronic devices before entering the classroom.
5. No food in the classroom.
6. No eating (campus policy), sleeping, reading non-course related material, carrying on side conversations, or otherwise distracting the rest of us from our work.
7. Please plan ahead so that you do not have to leave the classroom during class time. No departures during exams.
8. To prevent disturbing others, please do not pack to leave before class is dismissed.
9. Heavy perfumes and colognes can cause serious problems for people with allergies and learning disabilities. Please refrain from wearing them to class.

Taking this course indicates agreement with these policies. Willful disregard for any of these policies qualifies for dismissal from the class.

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KEY DISCUSSANT GUIDELINES

Type a **1 page** summary of the reading using the following questions as guidelines.

Bring 5 copies for your team mates.

1. List three main points from the reading:
2. Provide a one-paragraph synopsis / abstract of the reading.
(synopsis= A brief outline or general view; an abstract or a summary)
3. What did you find particularly interesting about the reading?
4. List any other readings, films, etc. related to the topic that you think we should know about.
5. List any questions you had about the readings including any terms that need clarification after you looked them up in a dictionary.

SAMPLE TEST QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice

Anthropologists have shown that religious practices and beliefs vary in part as a result of:

- a. the personalities of the commoners of the society.
- b. the nature of the social structure of the society.
- c. the race of the people in the society.
- d. the status of women in the society.

Short Essay (1 - 2 paragraphs)

Briefly describe the importance of redundancy in myth according to Leach.

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HELPFUL RESOURCES IN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

- **Laney Computer Resources:**

Laney Library - <http://laney.peralta.edu/library>

James Oliver Community Writing Center - E257

Technology Center - F180 Check their schedule at <http://laney.peralta.edu>, under Instructional Programs/Technology Center

- **Laney Library** - Visit your librarian. Take a research workshop.

 - **Reference books:**

 - Dictionary of Anthropology GN11 D48 1986

 - Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology GN307 W56 1991

 - Dictionary of Concepts in Physical Anthropology GN50.3 S74 1991

 - Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology GN307 E52 1996

 - Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology GN307 E55 1996

 - Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mankind GN307 I44 1989

- **Anthropology Library - UC Berkeley**, Kroeber Hall, 2nd floor (Bancroft and College)

- Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology, UC Berkeley, Kroeber Hall, ground floor

- A few of the many valuable **internet sites:**

 - Cultural Survival www.cs.org

 - Smithsonian Institute www.si.edu

 - Native Web www.nativeweb.org

 - Third World Network twinside.org

 - Nativeculture.com www.nativeculture.com

 - National Museum of the American Indian www.nmai.si.edu

- **Information on evaluating internet resources:**

 - www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/critical/index.htm

 - <http://milton.mse.jhu.edu/research/education/practical.html>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of using the ideas or words of another as one's own without giving credit to the source. In American society it is considered stealing and unethical, carrying heavy penalties. In this course it will result in zero for the assignment and possibly failing the course. Serious instances will be turned over to the Dean for discipline.

Do not copy someone else's work and turn it in as your own. Furthermore, anytime you borrow sentences, phrases, paragraphs, or a general train of thought, you must acknowledge the source. While plagiarism may be an intentional act to avoid doing work, it is often the result of carelessness or ignorance. **Knowing how to avoid plagiarism is your responsibility.**

For help with how to properly acknowledge the source of ideas or text from another writer go to the Laney College Library website: <http://www.peralta.cc.ca.us/laney/laney-opacs/default.htm> and click on Library Guides for help with citations and references.

It is always good to err on the side of over-acknowledgement. Be generous with recognition and help your reader know where to go for more information on that idea you found so interesting.