

CULTURE AND RELIGION: Anthropology 234W
Beach Hall 404
TH 1:00-4:00

Faculty: Prof. Richard Sosis
Office Hrs: W 1:30-3:00, Th 4:00-5:00
and by appointment
Office: Beach Hall 406
(6-4264; richard.sosis@uconn.edu)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide an introduction to the anthropological study of religion. We will explore the variety of issues such as ritual, magic, superstition, and taboo that anthropologists have addressed in the study of religion. We will also discuss anthropological approaches to the origins of religion and morality.

CLASS FORMAT

Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, and sometimes both. Even during classes entirely devoted to lectures, questions and discussion are encouraged. The general tone of all discussions should be supportive of a free exchange of ideas.

GRADES

Writing assignments

There will be 2 assigned papers. Students will have two weeks to work on each paper. In other words, paper topics/questions will be given exactly two weeks prior to the due date.

- 8-10 pages long (do not exceed page limit without permission from instructor)
 - each paper is worth 30% of final grade
- Paper 1: Due on **February 26**
Paper 2: Due on **April 29**

How to submit papers

All papers must have:

- 12 pt. font
- double spacing
- 1 inch margins (left, right, top, bottom)

In addition to a typed hard copy, all papers must be submitted via email as an attached Microsoft Word document. If either the hard copy or the electronic copy of any paper is late the grade on the paper will be lowered by one full grade (e.g., from a B- to a C-).

Class participation

Class participation will make up 40% of the final grade. Students will receive 2 class participation grades throughout the semester, each worth 20% of the final grade. This means that all students are *required* to read all assigned readings *before* the class, and must be *prepared to discuss* them in class. Preparation for discussion implies both note-taking and time allocated to synthesizing the material. Students should expect to be called on and to evidence preparation for discussion. It is assumed that students will attend class, as it is impossible to participate if absent. Unannounced quizzes on the assigned readings may occur during any class. Grades on these quizzes will be included in the class participation grade. Students will receive class participation grades on March 4 and at the end of the semester.

Readings

All readings will be available via ECR. In addition to journal articles and book chapters you will be assigned two books which are available at the UConn Co-op:

- Peyote Hunt by Barbara Myerhoff
- The Island of Menstruating Men by Ian Hogbin

COURSE TOPICS

Week 1: January 22 - *Introduction to the Anthropology of Religion; What is Religion?*

Week 2: January 29 - *Non-Human Ritual*

Reading: *Ritual and the Ethology of Communicating*, W. John Smith
Virtuous Nature, Marc Bekoff

Week 3: February 5 - *Function of Ritual*

Reading: *The Obvious Aspects of Ritual*, Roy Rappaport

Week 4: February 12 - *Initiation Rites*

Reading: *Liminality and Communitas*, Victor Turner
Ritual Violence among the Ilahita Arapesh, Donald Tuzin

Week 5: February 19 - *Belief and Ecology*

Reading: *Rational Mastery by Man of his Surroundings*, Bronislaw Malinowski
Sorcerers, Ghosts, and Polluting Women, Shirley Lindenbaum

Week 6: February 26 - *Magic* (FIRST PAPER DUE)

Week 7: March 4 – *Myths and Spirits*

Reading: *The Island of Menstruating Men* (first half), Ian Hogbin

Week 8: Spring Break

Week 9: March 18 – *Pollution and Taboo*

Reading: *The Island of Menstruating Men* (second half), Ian Hogbin

Week 10: March 25 - *Shamanism and Healing*

Reading: *A Healing Ritual*, Marjorie Shostak
Shamanic Healing: Human Evolution and the Origin of Religion, James McClennon

Week 11: April 1 - *Religious Symbolism*

Reading: *Peyote Hunt* (first half), Barbara Myerhoff

Week 12: April 8 - *Religious Symbolism*

Reading: *Peyote Hunt* (second half), Barbara Myerhoff

Week 13: April 15 - *Cults*

Reading: *Apocalypse at Jonestown*, John Hall
Reflections after Waco: Millennialists and the State, Michael Barkun
Recruitment and Commitment, Charles Petranek

Week 14: April 22 - *Myth and the Evolution of Religion*

Reading: *The Story Telling Animal*, Michael Shermer

Week 15: April 29 - *Revitalization Movements* (SECOND PAPER DUE)

Reading: *Revitalization Movements*, Anthony Wallace
The Ghost Dance Religion, Alice Beck Kehoe
Cargo Cults, Peter Worsley