



Texas A&M
UNIVERSITY
Central Texas

RELS 4310
Myth and Ritual
Spring 2019

Class Location: Online
Instructor: Floyd Berry, PhD
Office: HH 204 S
Office Hours: (no office hours during current COVID surge)
Email: (prefer Canvas message) fberry@tamuct.edu
NOTE: If contacting instructor outside of Canvas, students must use their official TAMUCT emails.

1.0 Course Description

Examines the religious history, beliefs, and practices of societies based on ethnographic literature. Cross-listed with RELS 4310.

2.0 Accessing Canvas

This is a lecture course with online components in Canvas. The student accesses Canvas at <https://tamuct.onecampus.com/> and locates the “card” for the Canvas platform.

3.0 Course Objectives

1. Students will be able to discuss different types of religious phenomena, focusing primarily on small-scale societies.
2. Students will be able to discuss the role of shamans as religious practitioners.
3. Students will be able to analyze rites of passage and the concept of liminality.
3. Students will submit prose reactions to material and topics covered in class discussions.
4. Students will gain an appreciation for the variety of religious phenomena as an aspect of different cultures and environments, based on readings, commentaries, and class discussions.
5. Students will submit acceptable essays for mid-term and final exams. To be accepted, the student shall discuss all aspects of an essay question, using standard English prose and grammatical construction.

4.0 Textbook

4.1 Required for Course

Warms, R., Garber, J., & McGee, R. J. (Eds.).(2009). *Sacred realms: Readings in the anthropology of religion* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford.

4.2 List of Unrequired Reading

Armstrong, K. (2001). *Buddha*. New York: Penguin.

Armstrong, K. (2002). *Islam: A short history* (2nd ed.). New York: Modern Library.

- Armstrong, K. (2006). *Muhammad: A prophet for our time*. New York: Harper One.
- Berger, H. A. (1999). *A community of witches: Contemporary neo-paganism and witchcraft in the United States*. Columbia, SC: South Carolina.
- Berger, H. A., Leach, E. A., & Shaffer, L. S. (2003). *Voices from the pagan census: A national survey of witches and neo-pagans in the United States*. Columbia, SC: South Carolina.
- Bruce, S. (2017). *Secular beats spiritual: The westernization of the easternization of the West*. Oxford.
- Castaneda, C. (1968). *The teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui way of knowledge*. New York: Pocket.
- Castaneda, C. (1971). *A separate reality: Further conversations with Don Juan*. New York: Pocket.
- Castaneda, C. (1972). *Journey to Ixtlan: The lessons of Don Juan*. New York: Pocket.
- De Waal Malefijt, A. (1968). *Religion and culture: An introduction to anthropology of religion*. New York: MacMillan.
- Eliade, M. (1951/1964). *Shamanism: Archaic techniques of ecstasy* (W. R. Trask, Trans.). Princeton.
- Erickson, P. A., & Murphy, L. D. (2013). *A history of anthropological theory* (4th ed.). Toronto.
- Gaster, T. H. (Ed.). (1959). *The new golden bough: A new abridgment of the classic work by Sir James George Frazer*. New York: Mentor.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic.
- Harner, M. (1980). *The way of the shaman*. New York: Harper One.
- Harris, M. (1968). *The rise of anthropological theory*. New York: Columbia.
- Hutton, R. (1999). *The triumph of the moon: A history of modern pagan witchcraft*. Oxford.
- Hutton, R. (2017). *The witch: A history of fear, from ancient times to the present*. New Haven, CT: Yale.
- James, E. O. (1950). *The beginnings of religion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Johnson, P. (1987). *A history of the Jews*. New York: Harper.
- Lang, A. (1887). *Myth, ritual, and religion* (Vols. 1-2). N.p.: Perfect Library.
- Lessa, W. A., & Vogt, E. Z. (Eds.). (1979). *Reader in comparative religion: An anthropological approach*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1978). *Myth and meaning*. New York: Schocken.
- Malinowski, B. (1948). *Magic, science and religion and other essays*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor.
- McGee, R. J., & Warms, R. L. (2017). *Anthropological theory: An introductory history* (6th ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Morris, B. (2006). *Religion and anthropology: A critical introduction*. Cambridge.
- Price, N. (Ed.). (2001). *The archaeology of shamanism*. London: Routledge.
- Prothero, S. (2010). *God is not one: The eight rival religions that run the world – and why their differences matter*. New York: Harper One.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1952). *Structure and function in primitive society*. New York: Free Press.

- Radin, P. (1937). *Primitive religion*. New York: Dover.
- Schama, S. (2013). *The story of the Jews: Finding the words, 1000 BC-1492 AD*. New York: Harper.
- Service, E. R. (1978). *Profiles in ethnology* (3rd ed.). New York: Harper Collins.
- Turner, V. (1967). *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell.
- Turner, N. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.
- Tylor, E. B. (1874). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art and customs* (2nd ed.; Vols. 1-2). New York: Henry Holt.
- Van Gennep, A. (1908/1960). *The rites of passage* (M. B. Vizedom & G. L. Caffee, Trans.). Chicago.
- Wallace, A. F. C. (1966). *Religion: An anthropological view*. New York: Random House.

5.0 Course Requirements

5.1 Exams (400 pts)

The student shall take two exams, a mid-term and a final. The exams are “take-home” exams in that the student has a few days to answer the questions that are presented. Students type on a Microsoft Word document and submit the exams by attaching them to an email (message in Canvas), sent to the instructor. Each exam is valued at 200 points. Students are encouraged to review their work before submission. The mid-term exam will receive comments from the instructor and will be returned to the student. The following rubric will guide the instructor:

Qualities & Criteria	Poor	Good	Excellent
Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of topics to be addressed • Information is correct • Coherency <p>(Weight: 70%)</p>	Not objective and poorly addresses the issues. Information is unnecessary or insufficient to discuss the issues.	Mostly objective and addresses most of the issues. Information is mostly necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues.	Objective and addresses all the issues. Information is necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues.
	(0-109 pts)	(110-131 pts)	(132-140 pts)
Quality of Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity • Grammar and English usage • Organization and coherence <p>(Weight: 30%)</p>	Poorly written and contains flagrant spelling and grammatical errors. Poorly organized, lacks clarity, and is incoherent.	Mostly well-written, without egregious spelling or grammatical errors. Organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways.	Well-written, without egregious spelling or grammatical errors. Well organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways.
	(0-40 pts)	(41-55 pts)	(56-60 pts)

A week before each exam, the instructor will provide students with two exam questions. This practice provides the student with a week's worth of preparation and composition.

NOTE: Upper-level students are expected to have adequate knowledge of the essentials of grammar, writing style, and essay organization in accordance with writing manuals. If the student does *not* have adequate knowledge in these areas, then the purchase and use of additional books are highly recommended. Failure to provide written work in accordance with the essentials of acceptable, English writing style will result in poor grades. Examples of non-standard English usage include, among other things, sentence fragments, run-ons, dangling modifiers, lack of agreement between pronouns and their antecedents or subjects and verbs, bulleted items, slashes, flagrant misuse of punctuation, slang or abbreviated expressions, "etc.," and excessive use of metaphorical language. In Modules, there is a Power Point on "Typical Problems with Essay Exams."

5.2 Class Participation (300 pts)

Students are expected to participate in online class discussions, indicating an understanding of the reading material and how to apply it. Students are to read assigned material before class. Students earn a point for each of two questions that are posted by the instructor. Thus, the student earns 0-2 points on each class day (total of 14 days), which corresponds to the following grade:

Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade
28	300	18-19	193	6-7	85
26-27	279	16-17	171	4-5	64
24-25	257	14-15	150	2-3	42
22-23	236	12-13	128	1	21
20-21	214	10-11	107	0	0

NOTE: Student's class participation grades are not computed until the end of the semester.

5.3 Academic Integrity Document

During the first week of class, the student is to read the section in the syllabus on Academic Integrity (§ 8.0) and the link provided in that section regarding plagiarism. The student must sign the document (also in Canvas, under Modules) pertaining to Academic Integrity and return it to the instructor. **NOTE: Students will not be allowed to continue in the course without notifying the instructor of their comprehension of this material (by signing the document and submitting it to the instructor).**

5.4 Reaction Comments (300 pts)

At the conclusion of each class (except when exams are taken), students will submit a Reaction Comment (RC), due before midnight. In Canvas, the student will send an email to the instructor, reacting to material discussed or experienced in class. A paragraph or two is sufficient. Students express their reactions to something discussed or experienced in class. The reaction may be emotional, cognitive, insightful, positive, negative, or neutral. **A mere summary of material discussed in class, however, is insufficient for credit.** Students should make some comments on assigned reading or discussion, coupled with their reactions. Students shall identify their email with the headings of RC1, RC2, etc., as indicated in the course calendar (§ 7.0). Using headings other than RC1, RC2, etc. may result in no credit. **Obviously, students must attend class before they can react to material presented or discussed in class.** RC's correspond to the following grades:

# of RC's	Grade	# of RC's	Grade
14	300	6	128
13	279	5	107
12	257	4	85
11	236	3	64
10	214	2	42
9	193	1	21
8	171	0	0
7	150	--	--

NOTE: Student's RC grades are not computed until the end of the semester.

6.0 Grading Matrix and Conversion

6.1 Matrix

	Points
Exams (2 @ 200)	400
Class Participation	300
Reaction Comments	300
Academic Integrity Document	-----
Total:	1000

6.2 Conversion to Course Letter Grade

Points	%	Grade
900 – 1000	90 – 100	A
800 – 899	80 – 89	B
700 – 799	70 – 79	C
600 – 699	60 – 69	D
0 – 599	0 – 59	F

7.0 Course Calendar¹

Date	Topic	Readings ²	Assignments Due
1–18 through 1–21	Syllabus Academic Integrity	Syllabus Academic Integrity/ plagiarism readings (§ 8.0 of syllabus)	RC1 due before midnight on 1–21 Academic Integrity acknowledgement due before midnight on 1–21
1–24 though 1–28	Introduction Religious origins	pp x–xvii pp 6–13, 28–32	RC2 due before midnight on 1–28
1–31 through 2–4	Charisma and possession	pp 35–55	RC3 due before midnight on 2–4
2–7 through 2–11	Funerals	pp 55–66	RC4 due before midnight on 2–11
2–14 through 2–18	Water temples	pp 69–90	RC5 due before midnight on 2–18
2–21 through 2–25	Sacred groves	pp 90–100	RC6 due before midnight on 2–25
2–28 through 3–4	Tribal dieties and syncretism	pp 104–117	RC7 due before midnight on 3–4
3–7 through 3–11	Controlling djinns	pp 121–129	RC8 due before midnight on 3–11
3–14 through 3–18	Spring break		
3–21 through 3–25	Mid-term exam		Mid-term exam due before midnight on 3–25
3–28 through 4–1	Shamanism, prophecy, and female power	pp 132–165	RC9 due before midnight on 4–1
4–4 through 4–8	Rites of passage and liminality	pp 167–193	RC10 due before midnight on 4–8

4–11 through 4–15	Altered States and hallucinogens	pp 204–217	RC11 due before midnight on 4–15
4–18 through 4–22	Killing infants and the aged, suttee, and healing	pp 271–284, 301–313	RC12 due before midnight on 4–22
4–25 through 4–29	Bewitching and terrorism	pp 321–326, 376–386, 404– 411	RC13 due before midnight on 4–29
5–2 through 5–6	New religions and Wicca	pp 389–404	RC14 due before midnight on 5–6
5–9 through 5–13	Final Exam		Final exam due before midnight on 5–13

¹ Events are subject to minor revision (see § 14.0).

² pp = pages, in textbook

8.0 Academic Integrity

TAMUCT expects all students to maintain high standards of personal and scholarly conduct. Students guilty of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, self-plagiarism (“recycling”), or collusion. The instructor shall initiate action for each case of academic dishonesty and report it to the Associate Director of Student Conduct. Zero points will be assigned for any course product that violates academic honesty. The student should access this link for more information: <https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html>.

9.0 Disability Support

If students believe that this course may present barriers to learning due to a disability, they must contact Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831 in Warrior Hall, Ste. 212. For more information, students may visit their website at <https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html>. Any information that the student provides is private and confidential and will be treated as such. The instructor cannot accommodate students’ disabilities unless they first communicate with Access and Inclusion.

10.0 Diversity in the Classroom

Respect for cultural and human biological diversity are core concepts within the social sciences. In this course, each voice in the classroom has value in contributing to class discussion. The student should respect the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by one’s fellow students and instructor, and refrain from derogatory comments about other individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. In this course we welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, disabilities, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, geographical locations,

languages, military experiences, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences.

11.0 Classroom Etiquette

Students shall show respect to other students and to the instructor in all communications, whether verbal or in writing (e.g., online). For example, arguing, complaining, and challenging that is not based on readings, rationality, and the course objectives are a violation of classroom etiquette.

12.0 Writing Center

The University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students. The UWC is located in Warrior Hall, Rm 416. One may contact Dr. Bruce Bowles at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu for more information.

13.0 Late Work

As a rule, make-up work for the two exams will not be accepted. The mid-term exam may be accepted late, but with a 20-point deduction for each day late. *In no instance will a make-up for the mid-term exam be given after two weeks from the original exam date.* To be considered as a prospect for making up the mid-term exam, the student must contact the instructor within 24 hours of having missed the exam for purposes of making it up. The final course grade will be posted within a few days of the final exam; therefore, *no incompletes will be awarded for this course.* If students foresee that they will be unable to complete the course, then they should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

14.0 Modification of the Syllabus

This syllabus may be revised in minor ways at the discretion of the instructor. The student is responsible for noting any changes in the syllabus. More than likely, a change in the syllabus will pertain to typos or events in the course calendar (§ 7.0). If modified, a revised course calendar will be posted on Canvas and will replace § 7.0 of the syllabus.

15.0 Contact with the Instructor

The student should contact the instructor via the message feature of Canvas about any topic or issue that pertains to the course.

16.0 Announcements

The student is responsible for checking Canvas on a near-daily basis for ongoing announcements or messages pertaining to the course.