

Religion and Power in the Past

ANTHROPOLOGY 2003 | Winter 2018

Mondays 8:30-10:20 a.m.
Thursdays 8:30-9:20 a.m.

Burke Science Building 119

Instructor:
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Office Hours:
Thursdays 10:00 a.m. -12:00
p.m., or by appointment
Chester New Hall (CNH) 515

In this course we will explore the intersection of religion and political power in the past. While these may seem like very different topics, they often interact in complex and fascinating ways. Studying these interactions from an anthropological perspective offers tremendous value for understanding how societies and cultures deal with changing ideological, political, economic, and environmental landscapes.

Five main themes will guide this course: (1) sacred places; (2) powerful people; (3) death; (4) warfare; and (5) the wider landscape (natural, built, the night sky, etc.) You will find that each of these themes frequently recur throughout the course. After beginning with some core concepts, we will cover each theme in greater detail. Finally, we will tie things together to show the many ways that religion and political power interact.

We will draw from a wide body of literature and an array of case studies to explore anthropological thoughts regarding religion, political power, and warfare. By the end of the course you will appreciate how these different social and cultural forces often interact.

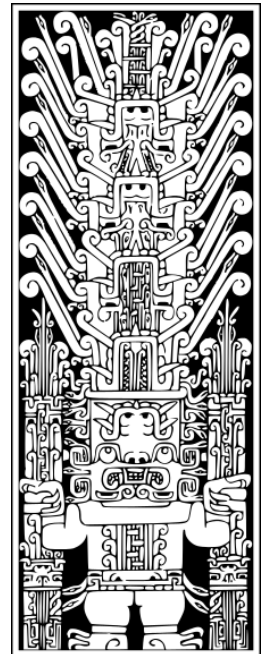
This course will follow a lecture format with opportunities for discussion and group activities. Lectures will include core concepts and illustrative case studies. In order to do your best in this course you are expected to attend every class **and** complete all the readings; reviewing slides alone will not provide you with the necessary background to succeed. In addition to attending lectures, you are expected to contribute to bi-weekly reading review discussions through Avenue to Learn (A2L). These discussions will offer you the chance to learn alongside your peers while gaining a better understanding of the articles and chapters that we read for class.

Learning Objectives:

This course has several learning objectives:

- Understand how diverse elements interact in past societies
- Learn core concepts in the anthropology of religion and political thought
- Gain an understanding of how archaeologists study complex aspects of the social and cultural past
- Develop and practice key academic skills (article comprehension, library research, dissemination of knowledge)
- Practice interpreting archaeological artifacts and site features

Avenue To Learn (A2L)—this course will use A2L to post lecture slides, submit assignments, return grades, make announcements, etc.



REQUIRED MATERIALS

A course reading pack is available in the McMaster campus bookstore. The majority of readings are reproduced in this course pack. Please purchase this course reader as soon as possible so that you can keep up with the readings.

Additional readings will be available online through the McMaster library journal database. We will cover how to access these in the first class. [Additional readings may be assigned as the course progresses.](#)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class and exam attendance/participation are **mandatory**. Grades are not reweighted if missed. All assignments must be submitted on Avenue To Learn (A2L). Paper copies will not be accepted.

Participation	Discussions on A2L—See Weekly Schedule	15%
Iconography Assignment	February 1 st (11:00 p.m.)	15%
Poster Topic & Bibliography	March 1 st (11:00 p.m.)	5%
Academic poster	April 2 nd (7:00 a.m.)	30%
Mid-term exam	Thursday February 15 th (in class)	15%
Final exam	April Exam Period	20%

Participation – We will hold bi-weekly discussions in Avenue To Learn. You are expected to contribute questions and discussions throughout the course. These discussions will make up your participation grade. Discussions on A2L will be useful because everyone will have the opportunity to ask questions, work together with your peers to discuss and understand course material, and seek clarification on various things. Your instructor will participate in these discussions.

On discussion weeks (marked “A2L” on weekly schedule), the forum will be open from 12:00 a.m. on Sunday evening until 11:59 p.m. the following Friday. You must participate by contributing **at least one** post each week. A post includes asking a question (about lecture topics or weekly readings), answering another student’s question, or contributing to an ongoing discussion. Since this is a participation grade you **will not** be graded on the quality or grammar of your post. There will be a total of six discussions; you are allowed to miss **one**.

Iconography Assignment – You must search the scholarly literature to find an example of art found at an archaeological site and write a 300 word essay on how this piece of art relates to religion, political power, and/or warfare in the society who made it. This is due **February 1st (11:00 p.m.)**. The image you examine **must come from a peer-reviewed academic journal**. Magazines such as *National Geographic* are **NOT** acceptable. “Art” will be broadly interpreted and can include artifacts that have iconography on them (e.g. painted pottery), wall murals, figurines, etc. Your instructor will post a list of societies that you may draw from for this assignment.

Your essay should be supported by an additional 2-3 journal articles that discuss the society and its political system, religion, warfare practices, artistic traditions, etc. Your essay must include a works cited section (using APA format) that lists **all** of the articles that you used. Your assignment will be graded on your interpretation of the iconography and how well you show that your interpretation is supported by the articles that you cite. An assignment guide will be posted on A2L in January.

Poster Topic & Bibliography – Each student is required to submit a poster topic assignment on **March 1st (11:00 p.m.)**. Your topic must include a research question, a short description of your



planned topic (point-form or sentence format), **and** a bibliography containing **5-8** academic sources relevant for your poster (i.e. peer-reviewed journal articles or books from the McMaster library system, etc.) Please use APA format for your bibliography. The topic is open but your instructor will post topic ideas in an assignment guide. Your assignment should not exceed **1.5 pages single-spaced** (including bibliography).

This is an individual assignment; you must work on this assignment on your own. Your instructor will use these assignments to suggest groups for the final poster presentation.

Poster Presentations – Groups of 3-4 students will collaborate on an academic-style poster to be presented **in class on Monday April 2**. Your assignment **must be uploaded to A2L by 7:00 a.m.** and your group must be ready to present in class that same day. You should think of an academic poster as a short (300-500 word) research paper that is accompanied by a lot of visual information (photos, artifacts, tables, graphs, etc.) A successful poster **must** include a mixture of text and figures and achieve a balance of both so that you can present your research in an informative and well-designed way.

We will spend time in class discussing posters and presenting examples. **Note that** academic posters will be made on a computer (using software such as Microsoft PowerPoint) and will be presented on the projector at the front of class. Posters **are not** to be made out of bristol board and will not be printed.

Each group is responsible for designing and submitting a poster (**20%** the assignment grade) **and** presenting the poster and your research findings in class (**10%** of the assignment grade). Posters will be graded on content, style and grammar, bibliography and quality of the information, and on visual appeal and design. In-class presentations will be graded on content and quality of presentation. **Each member of the group will receive the same grade. It is up to each group to divide work in a way that is fair to everyone.**

Mid-term exam – 50 minutes, taken in class on **Thursday February 15th**. Material will cover **weeks 2-7**.

Final exam – 1.5 hours, taken during the **April 11-26** exam period. Material will cover the **entire course**.

Note: exams may contain multiple-choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank (including diagrams or maps), definitions, and short answer questions.

Assignment/Exam Grading

Assignments will be graded promptly and returned with comments through Avenue To Learn (A2L). Exam grades will be posted on A2L. Please note that only you will be able to see your grades on A2L.

Missed Exams & Late Assignments

Extensions for course assignments will only be granted under conditions of medical, family, or other extraordinary circumstances. Late assignments will be penalized at **2% per day** (including weekends). **Missed assignments will not be reweighted.** Extensions or exceptions to these rules can only be granted if you provide an appropriate note/letter from SAS or other university certification system (e.g. MSAF – see below). An arrangement can be made for a missed mid-term exam to be taken at a later date if you provide an appropriate note/letter from doctor, SAS, or Dean.



Weekly Readings

While this is a lecture-based course, readings are very important and we will make time each class to discuss the lecture and reading content. This is to help reinforce the course content and to address anything that is unclear. Each week there will be readings from the course pack and/or from journal articles. Required readings are listed in the weekly course schedule. Please read each chapter/article in its entirety. **Readings will be fair game for exams.**

MCMASTER STUDENT ABSENCE FORM (MSAF) POLICY

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Spring/Summer 2015.

If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean’s office.

- The MSAF should be used for medical and non-medical (personal) situations.
- Approval of the MSAF is automatic (i.e. no documentation required)
- Rules governing the MSAF are as follows:
 - The timeframe within which the MSAF is valid has been reduced from 5 days to 3 days.
 - The upper limit for when an MSAF can be submitted has been reduced from ‘less than 30%’ to ‘less than 25%’ of the course weight.
 - The ‘one MSAF per term’ limit is retained.
 - As per the policy, an automated email will be sent to the course instructor, who will determine the appropriate relief. Students must immediately follow up with their instructors. Failure to do so may negate their relief.
- Policy: The MSAF policy can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar under General Academic Regulations > Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work or here:

[http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=1698#Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work](http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=1698#Requests_for_Relief_for_Missed_Academic_Term_Work)

Academic Skills Counselling and Services for Students with Disabilities are available through the Student Accessibility Services (SAS)

Tel: 905-525-9140 x28652 Email: sas@mcmaster.ca Website: <http://sas.mcmaster.ca>

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>



The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one's own for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Your instructor reserves the right to submit course work to Turnitin.com to prevent or detect plagiarism. The class will be informed if this service is used. The use of Turnitin.com **is not** mandatory; if you do not wish for this service to be used you can submit a hard copy of any assignment. However, if plagiarism is suspected your instructor can still use other means (e.g. Google searches) to check for academic dishonesty.

The instructor & university reserve the right to modify elements of the Course during the term. The university may change the dates & deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice & communication with the students will be given with explanation & the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email & course websites weekly during the term & to note any changes.

USE OF COMPUTERS: Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link (Approved at the Faculty of Social Sciences meeting on Tues. May 25, 2010)

AODA

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact Marcia Furtado at 905-525-9140 extension 24423 or email furtam1@mcmaster.ca



WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Please note weekly readings. Most readings are in the course reading pack; underlined readings are available online. We will discuss how to access journal articles in the first class.

WEEK 1 January 4 th . <i>Readings:</i>	Introduction to Religion and Power in the Past. Course overview & syllabus review - Wacquant, <i>Practical Tops for Reading Sociology</i> .
WEEK 2 [A2L] January 8 th <i>Readings:</i>	What do we mean by religion and political power? Key concepts & historical perspectives. - Scupin, <i>The Anthropological Perspective on Religion</i>
January 11 th <i>Readings:</i>	Political power in the past. - Kurtz, <i>Political Power</i> . - Suzman, <u><i>How Neolithic farming sowed the seeds of modern inequality 10,000 years ago</i></u>
WEEK 3 January 15 th <i>Readings:</i>	Archaeological approaches How do archaeologists study religion and political power in the past? - Flannery, <i>Ground Plans of Archaic States</i>
January 18 th <i>Readings:</i>	Materialization and materiality. - DeMarrais, E., Castillo, L. J., & Earle, T., <i>Ideology, materialization, and power strategies</i>
WEEK 4 [A2L] January 22 nd <i>Readings:</i>	Many ways of perceiving Animism, shamanism, priests, and worship - Nelson, <i>What is a Shaman?</i> - <i>Animism: A Contemporary Perspective</i>
January 25 th <i>Readings:</i>	Sacred and secular: are dichotomies a useful concept? - Trigger, <i>Conceptions of the Supernatural</i>
WEEK 5 Iconography assignment due Thursday February 1st at 11:00 p.m. January 29 th <i>Readings:</i>	Origins of religious thought What is the earliest evidence for religious thought? - Watanabe & Smuts, <i>Explaining religion without explaining it away: Trust, truth, and the evolution of cooperation in Roy A. Rappaport's "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual"</i>
February 1 st <i>Readings:</i>	Film: Cave of Forgotten Dreams <i>TBA</i>
WEEK 6 [A2L] February 5 th <i>Readings:</i>	Sacred spaces, sacred places Gobekli Tepe: The world's first temple? Temples in the past. <i>TBA</i>
February 8 th <i>Readings:</i>	Çatalhöyük [Guest lecture by Dr. Tristan Carter] - Hodder, I., & Meskell, L. (2011). A "Curious and Sometimes a Trifle Macabre Artistry": Some Aspects of Symbolism in Neolithic Turkey. <i>Current Anthropology</i> , 52(2), 235-263. doi:10.1086/659250



<http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/stable/10.1086/659250>

WEEK 7February 12th*Readings:***Mid-Term Exam | Monuments and monumentality**

Massive structures and community building

- Baines, *Public Ceremonial Performance in Ancient Egypt: Exclusion and Integration*, pp. 261-302.

February 15th**Mid-term exam (50 minutes, in class)****WEEK 8**February 19th – February 25th**Reading week****WEEK 9**February 26th*Readings:***Death, bodies, and bodily ritual****Poster Topic & Bibliography due Thursday March 1st at 11:00 p.m.**

Those who came before: death and ancestors from a worldwide perspective

- *The Quick and the Dead: Relations across the Grave*
 - Hageman, *Where the ancestors live: Shrines and their meaning among the Late Classic Maya*

March 1st

What is an academic poster? [In-class session by library staff]

WEEK 10 [A2L]March 5th*Readings:***Powerful persons & powerful people**

How is political power enacted? How is political power resisted?

- Nelson, *Performing Power in Early China: Examples from the Shang Dynasty and the Hongshan Culture*

March 8th*Readings:*

Gender and power

- Nelson, *The Larger Community: Power and Prestige*.
 - Nelson, *Queens: Women Wielding Power*

WEEK 11March 12th*Readings:***Landscapes of ritual, landscapes of power**

The political landscape, the ritual landscape

- Moore, *The architecture of social control: theory, myth, and method*

March 15th*Readings:*

Powerful Things: Stone Sculpture and Landscape Animacy in the Lake Titicaca Basin [Guest lecture by Dr. Andy Roddick]

- Janusek, J. (2015). Tiwanaku urban origins: Distributed centers and animate landscapes. In N. Yoffee (Ed.), *The Cambridge World History* (The Cambridge World History, pp. 229-252). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CHO9781139035606.015

WEEK 12 [A2L]March 19th*Readings:***Religion, warfare, and political power**

What exactly is warfare? Are religious wars really about religion?

- Quilter, *Moche politics, religion, and warfare*.

March 22nd*Readings:*

Case study: the lack of warfare as evidence of political power?

TBA

WEEK 13March 26th*Readings:***The religious state**

Long live the king! Divine Right in Europe and beyond

- Krupp, *Shamans, Chiefs, and Sacred Kings*
 - De Maret, *Divine Kings*



March 29th Sacrifice: state control over life or a deeply personal ritual?
Readings:
- Benson, *Why Sacrifice?*
- Millaire, *Posts and Pots: Propitiatory Ritual at Huaca Santa Clara in the Virú Valley, Peru.*

WEEK 14 **Poster Presentations | Keeping the power on**

Poster Presentation due by 7:00 a.m. Monday April 2nd

April 2nd Poster Presentations (in-class)

No Readings

April 5th Legitimization of political power
Readings:
- Bronson, *Order, legitimacy, and wealth in ancient China*

WEEK 15 [A2L] **Some conclusions**

April 9th The role of monuments, landscapes, warfare, and ancestors in religion and political power.

Readings: *TBA*

FINAL EXAM PERIOD

Wednesday, April 11 to Thursday, April 26—Please do not plan travel during this time.

