

RELIGION, MAGIC, AND WITCHCRAFT Winter 2022

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Lecture: Thursdays, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

Office: CNH 515

Office Hours: Fridays 11:00-12:00

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Course Description

This course will examine the concepts of religion, magic, and witchcraft from an anthropological perspective. By examining a variety of topics related to these concepts through readings and digital resources, students will understand that religious worlds are meaningful, vivid, and significant to those that inhabit them.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- gain a critical awareness of religious experience across cultural contexts
- become familiar with the definitions and critiques of the categories of religion, magic, and witchcraft by anthropologists across the 20th century and into the present,

Required Materials and Texts

All materials are available through McMaster Library or as pdfs on Avenue to Learn. You can look up which readings are assigned for each week on Avenue under “Content” for each class, under “Weekly Reading List” on Avenue under Content, or find it below. Instructions on how to look up library resources online will be provided in the first lecture and on Avenue.

THERE IS NO TEXTBOOK FOR THIS COURSE

Class Format

The first class of this course will be online and asynchronous. The lecture will be posted on Avenue along with the week’s material.

For week 2 (January 20) and onward we will meet Thursday evenings from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. Attendance will be taken and your participation grade will be based on your presence in class. You may miss 1 class of your choice (except the Mid-Term Exam on Feb. 17th), for a total of 10%.

All reading materials and media for each week will be posted on Avenue under “Content.” Lecture slides will be posted following the class.

The Mid-Term Exam will be held during class time on February 17th, and the Final Exam will be scheduled through the university with the date and time to be announced. The critical writing assignment will be handed in to an assignment dropbox on Avenue (using Turnitin). See below for further details.

Course Evaluation

<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Weight</i>
<i>Online Discussion Forums</i>	Feb 3, Mar 10, Mar 31	30% (10% each)
<i>Final Exam</i>	TBD	40 %
<i>Critical Writing Assignment</i>	April 7	30 %

Course Evaluation – Details

Online Discussion Forum (3x10% each = 30%) Feb 3, Mar 10, Mar 31

- For the online discussion forums, the class will be divided into groups of 6-8. For each of the three forums held throughout the semester (see course schedule for dates), a discussion question based on the films and media watched in lecture will be posed. Students will have the opportunity to respond to the question directly, as well as to the responses provided by fellow group members. Grading will be based on the detailed rubric posted on Avenue, and all forums will take place on Avenue.

Critical Reflection Paper (30%) Due April 7

- Based on the topics listed below, you will reflect on how course materials relate to these contemporary religious issues in North America. Using an anthropological and ethnographical lens, you will show how the issues reflect topics and discussions covered in this course. Drawing on source material from Netflix episodes and documentaries, news stories, and the media, you will show how the topic relates to three main themes from the course (for example, religious specialists, illness and healing, altered states, etc.)
- Here is the list of topics to choose from:
 - COVID-19, Public Health measures, and Religious rights to gather
 - The increasing popularity of Astrology
 - The rise and fall of NXIVM
 - Appropriation of healing practices
- This paper will be 5 pages, double-spaced, 12 point Calibri or Times New Roman, with 2 cm margins, a title page (not included in the page length), and bibliography.
- Papers are to be submitted to Avenue (via Turnitin) by the beginning of class, **April 7th at 7:00 p.m.**

Final Exam (40%), Date TBD

- This exam will be 120 minutes in length and multiple-choice and true/false format. It will be scheduled through the Registrar and written during the Winter exam period – date TBD. This exam will cover material from readings, lectures, and films from the course.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 13)

Topic: Introduction and The Anthropological Study of Religion

Readings: Jack Eller "Studying Religion Anthropologically" (PDF ON AVENUE)

Notes: NO IN CLASS MEETING – This will be a recorded lecture available on Avenue

Week 2 (January 20)

Topic: Myth, Symbolism, and Worldview

Readings: Eric Wolf 1958 "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol" *The Journal of American Folklore* 71(279): 34-39

Week 3 (January 27)

Topic: Ritual

Readings: Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*" (PDF ON AVENUE)

Week 4 (February 3)

Topic: Religious Specialists

Readings: Victor Turner, "Religious Specialists" (PDF ON AVENUE)

Notes: **Online Discussion Forum 1**

Week 5 (February 10)

Topic: Altered States

Readings: I.M. Lewis "Trance and Possession" (PDF ON AVENUE)

Week 6 (February 17)

Topic: Illness, Healing, and Religion

Readings: George Foster 1976 "Disease Etiologies in Non-Western Medical Systems" *American Anthropologist* 78(4): 773-781.

Week 7 (February 24) – READING WEEK

Week 8 (March 3)

Topic: Magic and Witchcraft

Readings: Aderemi Suleiman Ajala and EN Ediomu-ubong 2010 "'It's my stepmother': Witchcraft, Social Relations, and Health Security in Ibibio, South-South Nigeria." *Anthropos* (105): 455-470.

Week 9 (March 10)

Topic: Magic and Witchcraft

Media: Interview with Sabina Magliocco on Witchcraft as Political Resistance (link on Avenue)

Notes: *Online Discussion Forum 2*

Week 10 (March 17)

Topic: Death, Ancestors, Ghosts, and Souls

Readings: Beth Conklin 1995 "‘Thus our Bodies, Thus was our Custom’: Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society" *American Ethnologist* 22(1): 75-101.

Week 11 (March 24)

Topic: Death, Ancestors, Ghosts, and Souls

Readings: Margaret Lock 1996 "Death in Technological Time: Locating the End of Meaningful Life" *Medical Anthropological Quarterly* 10(4): 575-600.

Week 12 (March 31)

Topic: Religion and Spirituality

Media: Podcast - "Politics and Conspirituality" (Link available on Avenue under March 31st Content)

Notes: *Online Discussion Forum 3*

Week 13 (April 7)

Topic: Religion, Modernity, and Change

Media: Podcast - "Decolonizing Religious Studies" (Link available on Avenue under April 7 Content)

Notes: *Critical Reflection Paper Due*

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

The online discussion forums will take place on Avenue. The discussion question will be available Mondays before the due date, and will close at the beginning of class the day they are due.

The Critical Writing assignment will be uploaded onto the dropbox on Avenue to Learn and evaluated using Turnitin.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-

MARK	GRADE
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Assignments are to be completed and submitted to Avenue on the day and time they are due. Late papers without an acceptable excuse (e.g. a medical issue accompanied by proper documentation) will not be accepted. Papers submitted via the Avenue to Learn dropbox will be evaluated for originality using Turnitin.com.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Students who will be absent from class or expect to miss work for any reason should notify me prior to the class time or deadline. Extensions may be granted for illness, provided students discuss this with me at least one day before the deadline. 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." If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact the Associate Dean's office. Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work Note that if an MSAF is used for an assignment, there will be no grade redistribution. In the case of a missed deadline for the assignment, a new deadline will be allotted.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, usernames for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

University Policies

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.

Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class.
2. Return of materials to students during office hours.
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail.
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

Course Modification

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

ADVISORY STATEMENTS

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour 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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, usernames for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**. It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): 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”:
<https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=44&navoid=9020#requests-for-relief-for-missed-academic-term-work>

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar’s Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors. The recording of

lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

