

Anthropology 2R03 – Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft  
Winter 2021  
Online

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**Office Hours:** Virtual office hours on Wednesdays from 11:00 – 12:00. Zoom link will be available on Avenue to Learn.

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## **Course Overview and Objectives**

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 have the opportunity to gain a critical awareness of religious experience across cultural contexts. Over the course of the semester, students will become familiar with the definitions and critiques of the categories of religion, magic, and witchcraft by anthropologists across the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the present, understanding that religious worlds are meaningful, vivid, and significant to those that inhabit them.

*Due to the delayed start of classes provided by the University, some details and deadlines regarding course content and assessments in the published course outline may be changed. Please check Avenue to Learn for the most up-to-date information for this course. The course outline on Avenue to Learn will supersede previously published outlines until published course outlines are updated.*

## **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 week, 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**

This is an asynchronous course. Content for each week, including lectures and films, will be uploaded to Avenue to Learn on Monday mornings and will follow the weekly schedule. Readings for each week are also provided below, as well as on Avenue to Learn under “Weekly Reading List” in Content, and listed under each week’s content along with the lecture and film for that week.

Assessments will be completed on Avenue in the case of the two exams, and handed in to Avenue (using Turnitin) in the case of the final reflection paper. See below for further details.

## **Course Evaluation – Overview**

<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Weight</i>
<i>Mid-Term Exam</i>	Feb 22-24	30 %
<i>Final Exam</i>	April 5-7	30 %
<i>Critical Writing Assignment</i>	April 14	40 %

## **Course Evaluation – Details**

- The Mid-Term Examination
  - will be 90 minutes in length, is open-book, and multiple-choice and true/false format. It will take place on Avenue, and you have a 90 minute window to complete the exam any time between Feb. 22 and 24<sup>th</sup> (Week 6). This exam will cover material from readings, lectures, and films from Week 1 – 5 inclusive. There will be no new material covered the week the exam takes place.
  
- The Final Examination
  - will be 90 minutes in length, is open-book, and multiple-choice and true/false format. It will take place on Avenue, and you have a 90 minute window to complete the exam any time between April 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> (Week 12). This exam will cover material from readings, lectures, and films from weeks 7-11. **The final exam is NOT cumulative.**
  
- The Critical Reflection Paper
  - 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 end of classes, April 14.
  
- Further information on the learning assessments will be provided in the first lecture, and on Avenue to Learn during Week 1.

## **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

**Week 1 (Week of January 11): Introduction and the Anthropological Study of Religion**

**Week 2 (Week of January 18): The Anthropological Study of Religion**

*Read:* Jack Eller “Studying Religion Anthropologically” (PDF ON AVENUE)

**Week 3 (Week of January 25): Myth, Symbolism, and Worldview**

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

**Week 4 (Week of February 1): Ritual and Religious Specialists**

*Read:* Victor Turner, “Religious Specialists” (PDF ON AVENUE) and Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*” (PDF ON AVENUE)

**Week 5 (Week of February 8): Altered States**

*Read:* I.M. Lewis “Trance and Possession” (PDF ON AVENUE)

***\*MID-TERM BREAK\****

**Week 6 (Week of February 22): MID-TERM EXAM – Due Feb 26<sup>th</sup>.**

**Week 7 (Week of March 1): Illness, Healing, and Religion**

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

**Week 8 (Week of March 8): Witchcraft, Sorcery, Divination, and Magic**

*Read:* 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 (Week of March 15): Death, Ancestors, Ghosts, and Souls**

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

**Week 10 (Week of March 22): Religion in North America**

*Read:* Sophie Bjork-James 2018 “Training the Porous Body: Evangelicals and the Ex-Gay Movement”  
*American Anthropologist* 120(4): 647-658.

**Week 11 (Week of March 29): Spirituality, Religion, and Appropriation**

*Read:* Evgenia Fotiou 2016 “The Globalization of Ayahuasca Shamanism and the Erasure of Indigenous Shamanism” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 27(2): 151-179

**Week 12 (Week of April 5): FINAL EXAM – Due April 7<sup>th</sup>**

**April 14: BOOK REVIEW DUE**

**Course Policies**

**Submission of Assignments**

The Mid-term and Final Exams are to be completed on Avenue to Learn. You will have 90 minutes to complete the exam once you begin, but can complete the exams any time between Feb. 22-24 for the Mid-Term, and April 5– 7 for the Final. Both are open book tests.

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

**Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
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**

Papers are to be submitted to the assignment dropbox in Avenue to Learn by April 14, 2021, 11:59 pm. 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.

If students are unable to make the examination dates, a make-up exam date can be scheduled **with official documentation**.

### **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, user names 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](http://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](http://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, user names 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](mailto: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”.

## **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.

