

Anthropology 2R03 – Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft
Spring 2019
Mondays and Wednesdays 6:30 – 9:30
CNH B107

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Plett

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. CNH 515

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, digital resources, and discussion, 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 20th century and into the present, understanding that religious worlds are meaningful, vivid, and significant to those that inhabit them.

Required texts:

***ONE* of the following:**

Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America. Sabina Magliocco. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

OR

The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age. Michael F. Brown. Harvard University Press, 1997.

Learning Assessments:

Your grade will be evaluated based on the following:

Midterm Exam (May 29)	30%
Final Exam (June 19)	40%
Critical Book Review (June 24)	30%

- The Mid-Term Examination will be 60 minutes in length, and multiple-choice and true/false format. It will take place during class time, followed by a lecture. Both exams

will cover material from readings, lectures, and films, and the Mid-Term exam will cover material from May 6 – May 27.

- The Final Exam will be 120 minutes in length, and multiple-choice and true/false format. It will take place during class time, and will cover material from the entire semester, with a focus on material (lectures, readings, films) from the second half of the course.
- If students are unable to make the examination dates, a make-up exam date can be scheduled **with official documentation**.
- The critical book review will be based on **ONE** of two books: *Witching Culture* **OR** *The Channeling Zone*. To help you save money, they will be on reserve at the library, or you can purchase online (look for used versions!). The book review will be 1500 – 1700 words in length, due at the end of the semester. They should include a summary of the book's arguments, and discuss how they relate to and/or illustrate topics covered in class. Further instructions on how to write a book review will be provided on Avenue.

Papers are to be submitted to a dropbox in Avenue to Learn by June 24, 2019, 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.

- **Further information on the learning assessments will be provided in class.**

Topic and Reading Schedule

Note: Unless indicated that a pdf is available on avenue, all articles can be accessed through McMaster libraries.

May 6: Introduction and the Anthropological Study of Religion

Read: Jack Eller "Studying Religion Anthropologically" (ON AVENUE)

May 8: NO CLASS

May 13: 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

Kirin Narayan and Urmila Devi Sood "Across the Seven Seas: A Hindu Woman's Sacred Narratives" (ON AVENUE)

May 15: Ritual

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

Thomas Csordas "A Handmaid's Tale: The Rhetoric of Personhood in American and Japanese Healing of Abortions" (ON AVENUE)

May 22: Religious Specialists

Read: Michael Fobes Brown 1988 "Shamanism and Its Discontents" *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 2(2): 102-120.

May 27: Altered States

Read: Scott Hutson 2000 "The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subculture" *Anthropological Quarterly* 73(1): 35-49.

May 29: MID-TERM EXAM – 1 Hour During Regular Class Time

June 3: Illness, Healing, and Religion

Read: Susan Kenyon 1995 "Zar as Modernization in Contemporary Sudan" *Anthropological Quarterly* 68(2): 107-120.

June 5: Witchcraft, Sorcery, Divination, and Magic

Read: Felicity Thomas 2007 "'Our Families are Killing Us': HIV/AIDS, Witchcraft, and Social Tensions in the Caprivi Region, Namibia" *Anthropology and Medicine* 14(3): 279-291.

Naomi McPherson 1991 "Sorcery and Concepts of Deviance Among the Kabana, West New Britain" *Anthropologica* 33(1-2): 127-43.

June 10: 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.

June 12: Religion in a Changing World

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

June 17: Religion in a Changing World

Read: Mark Juergensmeyer 2000 "Responding to Religious Terrorism" *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 1(1): 27-33.

June 19: FINAL EXAM – 2 Hours During Regular Class Time

June 24: BOOK REVIEW DUE

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.

Course Guidelines

1. Late policy:

Please **contact me** if you are unable to submit an assignment on time. I can negotiate assignment deadlines in extenuating circumstances, however, **if you do not contact me well in advance of the assignment being due, late assignments will not be graded.** Late assignments will accrue a 10% penalty per day.

2. Email:

Please ask detailed questions about course material and assignments in person. Please contact me through McMaster mail with matters pertaining to class.

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 emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

3. Laptop Policy:

If you choose to take notes on your laptop, **please be respectful of the instructor and your classmates, and do not engage in non-class-related activities on your computer.**

You will be asked to cease laptop use if it is apparent that your computer is a source of distraction.

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, [Academic Integrity](#)

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. (*Insert specific course information, e.g., style guide*)
2. Improper collaboration in group work. (*Insert specific course information*)
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

(If applicable) In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

MSAF

- 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 Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

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.