

## **Anthropology 2R03: Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft - Summer 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Denis J. Bekkering

Email: [bekkerid@mcmaster.ca](mailto:bekkerid@mcmaster.ca)

Office Hours: 9:45-10:45 pm, Mondays, CNH 530

Days and Time of Classes: 6:30-9:30 pm, Mondays and Wednesdays

Class Location: Burke Science Building Room B136

### **Course Description:**

This course will explore two central questions: 1) How have humans conceived of and interacted with the supernatural?; 2) How can we better understand these beliefs and practices using critical lenses from a range of academic disciplines? The course title highlights three overarching conceptual categories – religion, magic, and witchcraft – which will be examined and evaluated. Other topics to be covered include mythology, symbols, ritual, altered states of consciousness, religious specialists, divination, souls, death, gods, and new religious movements. A wide range of examples will be discussed, from the activities of “small-scale” (Stein and Stein 2011: 3) societies which piqued the interest of early armchair anthropologists, to contemporary parody religions that push the boundaries of what might be considered religious.

### **Course Objectives:**

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Critically discuss the concepts of religion, magic, and witchcraft
- Knowledgeably relate the above overarching concepts to cultural phenomena such as myths and rituals
- Understand a range of academic approaches to human conceptions of, and practices associated with, the supernatural
- Conduct thorough written critical analyses of human understandings of, and relationships with, the supernatural

### **Course Format:**

Classes will involve a combination of lectures, group discussions, and multimedia presentations.

### **Course Texts:**

- Stein, R. and Stein, P. (2011). *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Toronto, Ontario: Pearson Canada. **This text is required.**
- Other primary and secondary material may periodically be uploaded to Avenue to Learn (<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>). Students will be informed when such material is posted.

## **Methods of Evaluation:**

**Midterm Exam – 25% - July 12, 2017**

**Research Paper Proposal – 5% - July 21, 2017 by 11:59 pm**

**Final Exam – 35% - August 2, 2017**

**Research Paper – 25% - August 8, 2017, by 11:59 pm**

**Participation – 10% - Ongoing**

- **Midterm Exam (25% - July 12, 2017):** The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice questions, and will test for your comprehension of lecture material and the assigned readings.
- **Final Exam (35% -August 2, 2017):** The final exam will consist of two short essays, in which you will critically analyse the material featured in two YouTube clips related to the course theme.
- **Research Paper (25% - August 8, 2017, by 11:59 pm).** Students are to submit a research paper (2000 words) that examines an original topic related to the course theme. This paper should demonstrate active critical engagement with lecture material and the course readings. The paper should also reference **at least three** scholarly sources not discussed in class.

Papers are to be submitted via a provided dropbox in Avenue to Learn by August 8, 2017, 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, and will thereafter become part of the site's database (to be used to detect future plagiarism). Should you not feel comfortable with this, you can speak with me **within the first two weeks of class** to make alternative arrangements for submission.

To be accepted, all papers **must** feature the following elements:

- a) Paper title
- b) Course number
- c) Your name
- d) Your student ID#
- e) Word count
- f) Page numbers
- g) Double spacing
- h) One-inch margins
- i) Black text
- j) 12-point font
- k) References page
- l) Consistent citations (any style)

- **Paper Proposal (5% – July 21, 2017, by 11:59 pm).** A brief paper proposal, consisting of a working thesis and two main points to be pursued, is to be emailed to me (bekkerid@mcmaster.ca) by July 21, 2017, 11:59 pm. This proposal is a **necessary prerequisite** to submitting the paper, and will allow me to offer you feedback.
- **Participation (10% - Ongoing):** I am a firm believer in the value of collaborative learning, and want you to be actively engaged in this course.

### **Topic/Reading Schedule:**

#### **Week 1:**

- June 19, 2017: Course Introduction; Introduction to the Study of Religion (Stein and Stein, Chapter 1)
- June 21, 2017: Mythology (Stein and Stein, Chapter 2)

#### **Week 2:**

- June 26, 2017: Symbols (Stein and Stein, Chapter 3)
- June 28, 2017: Ritual (Stein and Stein, Chapter 4)

#### **Week 3:**

- July 3, 2017: **No Class – Canada Day Holiday**
- July 5, 2017: Magic and Divination (Stein and Stein, Chapter 7)

#### **Week 4:**

- July 10, 2017: Religious Specialists (Stein and Stein, Chapter 6; film *Marjoe* (1972 – to be screened in class)
- July 12, 2017: Altered States of Consciousness (Stein and Stein, Chapter 5) - **Midterm Exam**

#### **Week 5:**

- July 17, 2017: Souls, Ghosts, and Death (Stein and Stein, Chapter 8)
- July 19, 2017: Gods and Spirits (Stein and Stein, Chapter 9)

**Research Paper Proposal due July 21, 2017, by 11:59 pm**

**Week 6:**

- July 24, 2017: Witchcraft (Stein and Stein, Chapter 10)
- July 26, 2017: The Search for New Meaning (Stein and Stein, Chapter 11)

**Week 7:**

- July 31, 2017: Parody Religions/Course Review
- August 2, 2017: **Final Exam**

**Research Paper due August 8, 2017, by 11:59 pm**

**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.**

### **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. **In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.**

## **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)

### **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)

### **AODA**

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