

Anthropology 1823, Section 900, Fall 2007
Tuesday/Thursday 6:00 – 7:15 PM

Religion in Everyday Life
N0202A Sarkey's Energy Center

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Introduction: This course will examine the role of religion in people's lives from an anthropological perspective. This is not a broad survey of major world religions. Nor does the course attempt to evaluate religions or religious practices and beliefs as right or wrong, good or bad. We will use cross-cultural studies, as well as your own experience, to examine the structure of religions and how religions impact their followers and their lives throughout the world.

Required texts:

- Warms, Richard, James Garber, and Jon McGee. (2004) *Sacred Realms: Essays in Religion, Belief, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Karen McCarthy (2001) *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. (Revised and expanded edition.) Berkeley: University of California Press.

Course Requirements:

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| 1) 3 exams (100 points each) | 300 pts |
| 2) 1 out-of-class writing assignment | 80 pts |
| 3) 12 in-class assignments (5 points each) | 60 pts |
| 4) 1 online quiz on academic misconduct | 10 pts |
| <hr/> Total | 450 pts |

1) The exams are closed-note, closed-book, and are not cumulative. They will consist mostly of short answer questions and essays, with a smattering of fill-in-the-blank/true-false. The lectures and material covered by each exam are indicated in the schedule below. The final exam is simply another exam; it is not cumulative.

Please note that make-up exams will be given only when (a) there are exceptional circumstances preventing you from taking the exam on the scheduled day (e.g., a serious illness, death of a family member), (b) you can provide written proof of the exceptional circumstances (e.g., a note from a physician), and (c) you notify me of the situation prior to the time of the exam. Outside of these circumstances, you will receive a zero for a missed exam. Make-up exams are not granted for dental appointments, flat tires, etc.

2) The out-of-class writing assignment is to be sole-authored, that is, written by you and you alone. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on November 20, and will be based on *Mama Lola*. Further details will be given later, well in advance of the due date.

3) The in-class assignments are essentially an indirect measure of attendance. Each assignment is worth ten points. Often they will consist of a short write-up following a discussion of that week's readings. In-class assignments cannot be made up if missed, except for officially excused absences. Although 12 in-class assignments will be graded, 13 will be taken up. In other words, one of the in-class assignments will be dropped from your grade. Thus everybody can miss one without penalty.

4) The online quiz on academic misconduct is simply a short quiz, available on Desire2Learn, that verifies that you are informed about academic misconduct, cheating, etc. You can retake the test until you get a perfect score.

There will be no extra credit. Your total point score, divided by the highest score achieved in the class, will determine your final grade. So for example if the highest score in the class is 444 points, your grade will be (your score)/444.

Other Requirements and Expectations:

- 1) Log in to Desire2Learn (D2L, <http://learn.ou.edu>) as soon as possible, and familiarize yourself with the site. You can always obtain a copy of this syllabus on D2L. Announcements, class notes, etc., will be posted on the site, and you are expected to check D2L on regularly.
- 2) You should read all assigned material **before** class meets. There is a substantial reading load for this course, and if you fall behind it will entail a large amount of work to catch up. The readings will form the basis of the class discussions and in-class assignments; additionally, each exam will contain questions based on material covered only in the readings.
- 3) You are expected to come to class and participate in class discussions. Attendance is graded indirectly, through the in-class assignments. Class participation is not explicitly graded, but it is expected that you will contribute to the discussions to the best of your ability. Lecture materials and videos presented during class time will form an important component of the exams; missing this material will disadvantage you. Lastly, the Faculty Handbook notes that “When absences seriously affect a student’s class work, the instructor will report this fact to the Admissions and Records Office, where the information will be directed to the dean concerned.”
- 4) You are expected to take notes in class. The lecture notes used in class will be made available on Desire2Learn (usually within 24 hours after class). However, the overheads are often sketchy and incomplete, and I always explain material verbally in class that is not written down on the slides. This oral material is important, and will be included on the exams. Based on experience from previous semesters, students who rely solely on the overheads rather than taking notes in class receive lower grades on exams.
- 5) Please act respectfully and courteously toward the rest of the class, including the instructor. This means not reading newspapers during class, not talking on your cell phone or text messaging (cell phones and pagers should be **turned off** during class), not engaging in conversations with your classmates unless told to do so, and so forth. I reserve the option of deducting points for persistent disrespectful behavior.
- 6) Academic misconduct—cheating and plagiarism—will be treated as a serious offense. Cheating includes the use of notes or other materials during exams and discussion of exam questions with other students during the exam period. Plagiarism includes the presentation of the work or ideas of others as your own. You are expected to know and understand university policy regarding academic misconduct (see <http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity>). Academic misconduct may result in severe penalties, including a zero on the assignment in question, as well as further sanctions from the provost such as censure, suspension, or expulsion.
- 7) All students in this class are expected to sign the Honor Pledge on all assignments (homework, short write-ups, and exams). The Honor Pledge reads: “*On my honor, I affirm that I have neither given nor received inappropriate aid in the completion of this exercise.*” Please write or type the pledge, and sign it, for every assignment you turn in. Any assignment turned in without the signed pledge will not be accepted or graded. More information on the Honor Pledge is available at <http://www.ou.edu/honorcouncil/statement.pdf>.
- 8) The University of Oklahoma is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course. The Office of Disability Services is located in Goddard Health Center,

Suite 166, phone 405/325-3852 or TDD only 405/325-4173. Students whose first language is not English should discuss any concerns or needs with me as soon as possible.

- 9) Students who need to miss a class because of a religious holiday, a university-sponsored activity (e.g., a scholarly competition, fine arts performances, an academic field trip) or a legally required activity (e.g., emergency military service, jury duty), should contact me in advance regarding their absence from class.
- 10) If you prefer to use a non-OU address for your e-mail: please either check your OU address regularly, or set your OU address to autoforward mail to your preferred address, so that you can receive important announcements and last-minute information.
- 11) A note on the timing of the final exam: this schedule is set by the University, and is beyond my power to change. Please do not ask me if you can take the final exam ahead early so you can leave town.
“An examination may be rescheduled for an individual student only in emergencies such as the illness of the student, a serious illness or death in the immediate family or an unavoidable academic conflict of compelling importance. For such a conflict to be considered as grounds for rescheduling a final examination, the activity must be directly related to the student’s academic work in the University.”
(<http://www.ou.edu/bulletins/01catalog/HTML/policies.htm>)

Schedule and Readings

- **All readings are from the Warms et al. reader, unless specifically noted as being chapters of *Mama Lola*.**

Aug 21, 23: Introduction to the anthropology of religion

- “Introduction: What is religion?” (x-xvi)
- Miner: “Body ritual among the Nacirema” (209-216)

Aug 28, 30: The origin of religion

- McClenon: “How religion began: Human evolution and the origin of religion” (3-10)
- Harris: “Mother cow” (68-74)

Sept 04, 06: Religion and healing

- Putsch: “Ghost illness: A cross-cultural experience with the expression of a non-Western tradition in clinical practice” (311-321)
- Al Krenawi: “Explanations of mental health symptoms by the Bedouin-Arabs of the Negev” (327-332)

Sept 11, 13: Magic and shamanism

- Malinowski: “Rational mastery by man of his surroundings” (16-20)
- Gmelch: “Baseball magic” (203-208)

Sept 18, 20: Witchcraft and sorcery

- Rodor: “Magic, medicine, and metaphysics in Nigeria” (298-300)
- Tobin and Friedman: “Spirits, shamans, and nightmare death: Survivor stress in a Hmong refugee” (341-347)
- Johnson: “Parallels between recollections of repressed childhood sex abuse, kidnappings by space aliens, and the 1692 Salem witch hunts” (335-340)

Sept 25: Exam #1

- Covers all lectures and readings from August 21 – September 20

Sept 27: Religion as part of social life

- Mama Lola: Introduction, Ch’s 1-2 (1-78)

Oct 02, 04: Ritual and liminality

- Turner: “Betwixt and between: The liminal period in rites of passage” (177-184)
- Mama Lola: Ch’s 3-4 (79-140)

Oct 09, 11: Religious specialists

- Kendall: “Korean shamans and the spirit of capitalism” (142-153)
- Mama Lola: Ch’s 5-6 (141-202)

Oct 16, 18: Sacrifice and religious rules

- Cervantes: “The devil and the saints in the conquest of Mexico” (129-133)
- Mama Lola: Ch’s 7-8 (203-258)

Oct 23, 25: Death, spirits and ancestors

- Conklin: “Thus are our bodies, thus was our custom: Mortuary cannibalism in an Amazonian society” (263-280)
- Mama Lola: Ch’s 9-10 (259-310)

Oct 30: Exam #2

- Covers all lectures and readings from September 27 – October 25

Nov 01, 06: Drugs and inducing religious states

- Davis: “Hallucinogenic plants and their use in traditional societies” (214-216)
- Mama Lola: Ch’s 11-12 (311-381)

Nov 08, 13: Religious language and sacred speech

- Gruenwald: “God the ‘stone/rock’: Myth, idolatry, and the cultic fetishism in ancient Israel” (101-112)
- Kroeber: “Unaesthetic imaginings: Native American myth as speech genre” (86-93)

Nov 15, 20: Saints, visions and prophets

- Dein: “Lubavitch: A contemporary messianic movement” (404-412)
- Cruikshank: “Claiming legitimacy prophecy narratives from Northern Aboriginal women” (154-164)
- ***Out-of-class writing assignment due on Nov 20!***

Nov 22: Thanksgiving holiday - ***no class***

Nov 27: Gender roles in the religious life

- Leonard: “Female circumcision in Southern Chad: Origins, meaning, and current practice” (196-203)
- Scarboro and Luck: “The goddess and power: Witchcraft and religion in America” (373-379)

Nov 29, Dec 04: Religion in the modern nation state

- Juergensmeyer: “Christian violence in America” (379-385)
- Wallace: “Revitalization movements” (364-372)

December 06: FINAL EXAM (in class at the regular class time)

- Covers all lectures and readings from November 01 – December 04