

Anthropology 121: Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft

West Los Angeles College, Fall 2013

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Please use the Private Message system to contact me regarding the course.

Course Description: Anthropology provides a holistic and comparative approach to the study of religious beliefs and practices in societies throughout the world. Through the historical and contemporary anthropological research, this course will explore the similarities and differences in cross-cultural religious expression, such as magic, witchcraft, myth, ritual, shamanism, ancestor worship, beliefs in demons, ghosts, and spirits, and other related social phenomena.

Student Learning Outcomes: This course will help students achieve the following institutional Student Learning Outcomes:

A. Critical Thinking: Analyze problems by differentiating fact from opinions, using evidence, and using sound reasoning to specify multiple solutions and their consequences. Students will apply critical thinking to investigate and interpret the influences of culture and environment upon human beings. Students will apply anthropological method and theory in written assignments.

G. Cultural Diversity: Respectfully engage with other cultures in an effort to understand them. Students will participate in activities designed to elicit discussion and understanding of cultural variation found among humans, particularly in their belief systems concerning the supernatural. Students will research and analyze various features of religious systems and present results in written assignments and informal class presentations.

Course Level SLO: Identify a ritual within the context of a religious service and interpret the role of that ritual within the context of the religion.

Reading: P. A. Moro (2013) *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, 9th edition. McGraw Hill, New York. (ISBN [978-0-07-803494-7](https://www.mhhe.com/9780078034947))

You must have this edition of the text for the course. The book is an edited volume. There are 47 articles (numbered 1-47 in the text's table of contents and at the top of each article) arranged into 9 chapters (with chapter introductions). Required for the class are the first 8 chapters (40 articles plus chapter introductions). The final chapter is not assigned but highly recommended.

Modules: Modules, accessed from the left hand menu of the class site, are the "classroom" or lecture component of this course. Read the corresponding module before the assigned textbook chapter (see course outline). Module material is designed to add to course readings.

Discussions: There are three categories of discussions available for student participation. All discussions can be accessed from the left hand menu in our class site. Click on "Discussion and Private Message" to see two 'Main' discussion categories "Required Class Discussion Essays" & "Questions" and one 'Other' category, "Student Lounge."

A. "Required Class Discussion Essays" is where students post essays on topics posed by the instructor covering materials from readings and modules. Due dates are listed on each topic in

the forum.

The topics and possible points are as follows:

Discussion	Topic	Points
D1	Study of Humanity	5
D2	Religious Stories	20
D3	Nacirema	20
D4	Clerics	20
D5	Drug Use	20
D6	Medicine	20
D7	Witchcraft	20
D8	Impact	10

To earn full essay points you must:

- 1) post a complete and thoughtful response to the initial question. These essays are the writing component for this class. They are to be written as academic essays. The goal is to make clear you understand the course literature. Always backup statements with data and ideas presented in modules and readings. Do not make broad general statements without backing up these statements from sources in the literature. If you use information from outside the course (not required) provide the full citation.
- 2) proof read your essay before posting. These are formal academic essays and need to be written as such. Always use capital letters where appropriate (e.g., "I")
- 3) for discussions that require two essays, a minimum of two postings are required. If only one posting is submitted the most you can earn is half the points for the discussion. First essays (response to the initial question) are due two days/48 hours prior to the locking of the topic.
- 4) have your response(s) in by the due date(s) -- the first essay is due 48 hours prior to the locking date (automatic deduction of 2 pts per day late), second essay is due no later than the locking date/time. Dates the topics lock are listed with each discussion. I strongly suggest posting well in advance of the due date in order to avoid loss of points from unforeseen problems including loss of internet connection, computer malfunctions, and illness. Discussion forums automatically lock at the date and time listed on the topic and submissions will not be accepted after this.

**You must post D1 by the due date or you will be dropped as a "no show".
If you do not submit contributions to discussions, you run the risk of being dropped for nonparticipation.**

B. "Questions" are for when you have a question or comment on the syllabus, material from the readings and/or the modules, or assignments. Use this forum to ask all class questions (with the exception of individual grade or other private matters, in which case use Private Message). This will allow others to benefit from the question as well as contribute responses.

C. "Student Lounge" provides you with a forum to "talk" amongst yourselves about course material. These are informal discussions between students about class topics.
The instructor reserves the right to eliminate inappropriate topics from this and other forums.

Tests: The eight objective tests (T1-T8) cover the readings from the first eight chapters of the required course textbook.

Tests are not timed. You can open tests and close them again as many times as you like until

you either submit/finish or the due date passes. All tests must be submitted/finished no later than the due date listed. Late is defined as any time after the due date/time (even 1 minute). NO EXCEPTIONS.

Test	Covers	Due dates are listed in Assignments, Tests and Surveys
T1	Ch. 1	
T2	Ch. 2	
T3	Ch. 3	
T4	Ch. 4	
T5	Ch. 5	
T6	Ch. 6	
T7	Ch. 7	
T8	Ch. 8	

Course Grade: Your course grade will be based on points earned from tests and required class discussions essays.

Tests	190	A 293 +
Discussion Essays	135	B 268-292
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Total Possible Class Points: 325		D 195-227
		F 194 and below

*'Incompletes' will only be given in extreme circumstances and with prior consultation with the instructor.

*No extra credit will be offered.

Please remember it is ultimately the student's responsibility to drop a course that you do not plan on completing.

*Last day to drop the class without a "W" is Friday, August 30.

*Last day to drop the class with a "W" is Friday, October 4.

Course Outline

This is a fast paced course; please keep up with readings, modules, discussion essays, and tests. Listed below is what is required for each week of the course. Work ahead whenever possible—there is a lot to accomplish in eight weeks.

Week 1

Module: [Getting Started](#)

Discussion Essay: [D1](#)

Module 1: Anthropology and the Study of Religion

Reading: [Chapter 1: The Anthropological Study of Religion](#)

Test: [T1](#)

Week 2

Module 2: Myth and Symbolism

Reading: Chapter 2: Myth, Symbolism, and Worldview

Discussion Essays: D2

Test: T2

Week 3

Module 3: Ritual

Reading: Chapter 3: Ritual

Discussion Essays: D3

Test: T3

Week 4

Module 4: Clerics

Reading: Chapters 4: Shamans, Priests, and Prophets

Discussion Essays: D4

Test: T4

Week 5

Module 5: Altered States

Reading: Chapter 5: Altered States of Consciousness and the Religious Use of Drugs

Discussion Essays: D5

Test: T5

Week 6

Module 6: Religion and Health

Reading: Chapter 6: Illness, Healing, and Religion

Discussion Essays: D6

Test: T6

Week 7

Module 7: Evil Magic

Reading: Chapter 7: Witchcraft, Sorcery, Divination, and Magic

Discussion Essays: D7

Test: T7

Week 8

Module 8: Power of the Dead

Reading: Chapter 8: Death, Ancestors, Ghosts, and Souls

Discussion Essay: D8

Test: T8

Accomodations

If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations, please contact the

Disabled Students Programs & Services (DSP&S) Office. The DSP&S Office provides special assistance in areas including: registration assistance specialized tutoring, academic and career guidance counseling, instructor liaison, special instruction and testing assistance. For more information go to the DSPS page at <http://www.wlac.edu/dsps/>.

Location

Student Services Building (SSB 320)

Telephone

(310) 287-4450

Department Email

dsps@wlac.edu