

Anthropology of Religion

ANT 4241, Spring 2005

M W F, 12:00pm to 12:50pm, Bldg 2 – Room 2063

Instructor: Gordon F.M. Rakita
Office: Portable 849a
e-mail: grakita@unf.edu
website: www.unf.edu/~grakita
Phone: 620-1658
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 pm

COURSE GOALS:

Anthropology is a cross-cultural, holistic, and bio-cultural endeavor and Anthropology's approach to religion and ritual is no different. This course is designed to provide an overview of the Anthropological perspective to religion, ritual, myth, and symbolic behavior. Throughout the semester, we will examine the form, structure, purpose, and meaning of religious systems and their associated ritual or ceremonial forms *from an Anthropological perspective*. As part of this examination we will become familiar with theoretical frameworks utilized within Anthropology to understand religion (generally) and ritual (specifically). Each of these theoretical frameworks will be placed within its historical context as well as related to concurrent developments in the history of the Anthropological discipline. Throughout the course, a number of modern, and ethnohistorically or archaeologically documented religious structures, ritual specialists, and ceremonies will be introduced that will allow us to explore the assumptions, and insights of the various frameworks utilized by Anthropologists.

This is not a course in world religions, theology, religious studies, or divinity. This is a course which will explore the Anthropological view of religious beliefs and practices. We will not be debating the truth of any particular orthodoxy or orthopraxy. Our goal will be to develop an Anthropological understanding of religion and ritual.

COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE:

This course is accompanied and supported by a Blackboard website. Each students officially enrolled in the course will have access to this site. You will be required to retrieve supplemental readings from the Blackboard site, so it is extremely important that you know how to access the Blackboard site and familiarize yourself with its content.

COURSE TEXTS:

Most of the required readings are drawn from two texts:

[The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft](#) by R.L. Stein & P.L. Stein, 2005, Pearson, Boston.

[A Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach](#), fourth edition, edited by W.A. Lessa & E.Z. Vogt, 1979, Harper Collins Publisher, New York.

Supplemental required readings (those not in the required texts) will be posted on the Blackboard site as Adobe PDF files. Make sure the computer you are using to access the readings has the free Adobe PDF reader installed. Some of the files are large, so it is recommended that you use a high bandwidth connection to retrieve them.

The readings are listed on the course schedule below and should be completed prior to the assigned due date (the Monday of the week for which they are assigned). Completing the required readings on time will significantly improve your chances of receiving a high grade in the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADE DETERMINANTS:

Grades will be based upon 2 reaction papers to the assigned readings, 2 peer reviews of a fellow student's reaction paper, 5 quizzes, participation in classroom discussions, and attendance.

Reaction & Peer Review Papers: Throughout the semester, each student will be expected to write two short reaction papers to the assigned readings. These papers should be approximately 800 words long and will respond, criticize, react to, or discuss the assigned readings for that week. Alternatively, students may make a connection between one reading and another or classroom discussions. It will not be acceptable for a student to write a summary of a reading or that they simply "disliked" or "like" a particular reading. Reaction papers should have a logical thesis and should conform to the highest standards of grammar and spelling, be typed (not hand-written),

and reference cited works appropriately. All enrolled students have been placed into one of six groups and the assignments are listed below. Reaction papers will be due from one of the groups for each week in the semester and these assignments are indicated in the course schedule below. *These reaction papers must be e-mailed to the professor by Sunday at midnight. Late papers will be docked and no papers will be accepted after noon on Monday.*

Each reaction paper will be posted by the professor to the course Blackboard site by Monday evening. All student should read these posted papers. Those students in the group assigned to write peer review papers for that week will be required to right a similar 800 word paper in response to one or more of these papers. Again, papers should present a thesis and support their viewpoint with relevant logical arguments, evidence, and or citations. *These peer review papers must be e-mailed to the Professor by Tuesday at midnight. Late papers will be docked and no papers will be accepted after noon on Wednesday.* Peer review papers will also be posted to the Blackboard site and along with the reaction papers will provide topics for classroom discussion and quizzes.

Please take note of when reaction and peer review papers are due from you and plan your reading and writing schedule accordingly.

Reaction & Response Group Assignments:

Group A

BARNETT, J
GRAVES, M
JOYNER, K
RIVERA, W
SOULINTHAVONG, D

Group B

BRELAND, C
GROKULSKY, K
KAMAJIAN, A
ROWELL, C
WALTER, A

Group C

CREWS, C
HALL, S
PINCKNEY, A
RUSSELL, L
WARNOCK, A

Group D

DAVIE, L
HESS, M
QUEZADA, E
SCAROLA, M

Group E

DE LOACH, B
HOFFMAN, L
QUINN, C
SHEREMETA, S

Group F

FAIR, J
HOLDSTEIN, M
RICHARDSON, D
SMITH, L

Quizzes: 5 unannounced quizzes will be administered throughout the semester. These quizzes will consist of questions that students will need to respond to in a short essay. Students will be allowed to utilize their texts and notes during these quizzes.

Participation: Participation in classroom discussions and activities is strongly encouraged and will positively affect your grade. I will be periodically and systematically assessing each student's participation throughout the semester. Lack of participation will negatively affect your grade. I will strive to create a class atmosphere that is congenial, enjoyable, and relaxed. However, I expect all students to treat each other and me with courtesy and respect. All reasonable opinions regarding course materials will be acceptable for discussion and comment. No opinions or speech which discriminates against or is derogatory towards others on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, or disability will be tolerated. Students expressing such opinions will be asked to leave the classroom immediately. I reserve the right to re-direct or curtail discussions that diverge from the course goals or lecture topic. I am happy to answer questions about the day's topics during my lecture (though I may ask that you defer your question till a more appropriate part of the class period). You are also welcome to e-mail me questions.

Attendance: A great deal of the learning of this course occurs during classroom discussions. We will be discussing key Anthropological theories and issues relating to religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, attendance is required and I will be taking roll each class period. Unexcused absences will affect your final grade. If you must miss a class period I highly recommend you contact me as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to make sure you find out the information that you missed. I suggest you find a classmate at the beginning of the semester who is willing to share their notes with you if you do miss a class (and vice versa).

The final grading scheme is as follows:

<u>Criteria/Item</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Value per</u>	<u>Total value</u>
Reaction Papers	2	15% each	30%
Peer Reviews	2	15% each	30%
Quizzes	5	5% each	25%
Participation			10%
Attendance			<u>5%</u>
TOTAL			100%

Final course grades will be based upon the following categories: 100-93 (A), 92-90 (A-), 89-87 (B+), 86-83 (B), 82-80 (B-), 79-77 (C+), 76-70 (C), 69-60 (D), =59 (F).

I will not discuss individual grades via e-mail or the phone. You must see me in person to discuss the specifics of your grade.

The United States government, the University of North Florida, and I are all committed to guaranteeing a learning environment in which reasonable accommodations are made for individuals with disabilities. In accordance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1999, any students in need of assistance or alternative learning arrangements are encouraged to contact either me or the University's Disabled Resources Center (located in Building 10, Room 1201, 620-2769 Voice, 620-2969 TDD/TTY, 620-3874 FAX).

E-MAIL:

E-mail is often the best method for communicating with me and I encourage you to e-mail me whenever you may have a question, concern, or comment. E-mailing me is also an excellent way for you to make sure I remember something. (I will often ask students to e-mail me so that I have a tangible reminder of what I might need to do to assist them.) Please make sure you identify yourself (full name) and which of my courses you are taking. If I do not know who you are, then I can not assist you. Make sure your return e-mail address is correct and operational. If my reply bounces, I will not try again. Use proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, complete sentences, etc. If I can not understand your message, then I can not assist you. If you are writing an e-mail longer than a paragraph or two, then consider speaking to me in person. I respond to all e-mails as quickly as possible. In some cases this may take a day or two. Do not assume that I received your message unless you receive a reply back from me. Please do not forget that e-mail is a public form a communication. As such, I do not discuss the specifics of anyone's grades via e-mail.

CELL PHONES, PAGERS, & OTHER WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES: All such devices should be turned off during class periods. Students who require an exception to this rule may discuss the situation with me. Anyone caught using any of these items during an exam will be treated as if they are cheating.

OFFICE HOURS: My office hours are listed above. If you need to meet with me and can not meet during these times, please contact me. I am happy to arrange a time to meet that is convenient for both of us. Please take advantage of my office hours to come see me and discuss questions or concerns you might have. It is sometimes necessary for me to cancel my scheduled office hours. If so, I will do my best to make sure I make this announcement in class. If I am not in my office during scheduled office hours, or am busy with other students, please e-mail me so that I can arrange a time for us to meet. Your time is valuable and your questions and concerns are important to me. I am committed to making sure I am available to offer any help that I can. *If you wish to discuss the specifics of your grade, you must meet with me personally. I will not discuss your grades with you via e-mail or the phone.*

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: The current student handbook contains a detailed discussion of the University's policy on academic misconduct. Violations of academic integrity include; cheating, fabrication or falsification of information or documents, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic misconduct. Any student found engaging in academic misconduct (as defined by the University of North Florida) will be subject to severe disciplinary action. Students may be subject to any and all of the following; academic counseling, reprimand, a failing grade for the assignment that involved the misconduct, a failing grade for the course, and referral of the behavior to the Departmental Chair or appropriate Dean. The student handbook outlines procedures for students wishing to appeal academic decisions.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week	Start Date	Topic	Reaction Paper	Peer Response	Required Readings (to be completed by Start Date)		
					Stein & Stein Reading	Lessa & Vogt Reading	Blackboard Posted Readings
Week 1	January 5	Introduction			Chapter 1		
Week 2	January 10	Religion (Generally)	A	D		Section 2 Introduction Tylor (p. 9) Durkheim (p. 27) Homans (p. 57) Parsons (p. 62) Geertz (p. 78)	Pals (on Durkheim)
Week 3	January 17 <i>(No class on Mon.)</i>	Myths	B	E	Chapter 2	Section 4 Introduction Kluckhohn (p. 66) Lessa (p. 169) Dundes (p. 174) Levi-Strauss (p. 185) Willis (p. 197) Gossen (p. 207)	
Week 4	January 24	Ritual (Generally)	C	F	Chapter 4	Section 5 Introduction Leach (p. 229) Horton (p. 243) Rappaport (p. 254) Rosaldo (p. 266) Lowie (p. 285) Wilson (p. 288) Slotkin (p. 296)	
Week 5	January 31	Rites of Passage	D	A		Turner (p. 234)	Metcalf & Huntington
Week 6	February 7	Liminality	E	B			Rakita Turner
Week 7	February 14 <i>(No class on Wed.)</i>	Secular Ritual	F	C			Goody Myerhoff & Moore Kertzer Bell (x2)
Week 8	February 21	Sacred Symbols	A	F	Chapter 3	Section 3 Introduction Ortner (p. 92) Myerhoff (p. 105) Wolf (p. 112) Gossen (p.116) Rosaldo & Atkinson (p. 129) Leach (p. 221) Levi-Straus (p. 318)	
Week 9	February 28	Religious Specialists	B	A	Chapter 5	Section 6 Introduction Bogoras (p. 302) Rasmussen (p. 308) Needham (p. 311) Shweder (p. 327)	

Week	Start Date	Topic	Reaction Paper	Peer Response	Required Readings (to be completed by Start Date)		
					Stein & Stein Reading	Lessa & Vogt Reading	Blackboard Posted Readings
Week 10	March 7	Magic & Witchcraft	C	E	Chapters 6 & 9	Section 7 Introduction Malinowski (p. 37) Titiev (p. 334) Frazier (p. 337) Tambiah (p. 352) Evans-Pritchard (p. 362) Cannon (p. 367) Turner (p. 373) Moore (p. 376)	
Week 11	March 14	Cosmology	D	C	Chapter 7	Section 8 Introduction Opler (p. 382) Brain (p. 393) Freedman (p. 400) Bunzel (p. 409)	
Week 12	March 21 (No class)						
Week 13	March 28 (No class on Wed. or Fri.)						
Week 14	April 4	The Supernatural	E	D	Chapter 8	Geertz (p. 444)	Weber McIntosh
Week 15	April 11	Morality	F	B		Kroeber (p. 19) Kroeber (p. 24) Radcliffe-Brown (p. 46) Levi-Strauss (p. 141) Douglas (p. 149) Leach (p. 153)	Freud
Week 16	April 18	Religious Change			Chapter 10	Section 1 Introduction Section 9 Introduction Linton (p. 415) Wallace (p. 421) Hill (p. 430) Cochrane (p. 433) Hobsbawm (p. 440)	Bellah Geertz