

CATALOG YEAR __08-09__

(Please use separate form for each add/change)

COLLEGE/SCHOOL/SECTION: Arts And SciencesCurrent Catalog Page(s) Affected: pp. 130, 275Course: Add: Delete: Change: Title: Myth, Magic and Religion SCH 3 Description x Prerequisite: none

If new, provide Course Prefix, Number, Title, SCH Value, Description, prerequisite, lecture/lab (hours if applicable) and **student learning outcomes**. If in current catalog, provide change and attach page with changes in red and provide a brief justification.

ANTH 4302 Myth, Magic and Religion

3 SCH

No prerequisites

Course Description

Why have humans populated their universe with unseen beings, imagined places, and supernatural powers? Why have they created elaborate rituals and mythic stories that must be believed in if human life is to prosper? Humans have been trying to find order and meaning in the universe for thousands of years, and their attempts to do so—belief in the supernatural, stories to explain the unknown, and all the types of the behaviors these manifest—are as diverse and creative as anything you can find in popular books and movies.

Unlike other disciplines, anthropologists tend to look at religious beliefs very broadly because we seek to identify general patterns in human behavior. Cultural anthropologists examine religious beliefs and practices as we find them in living communities around the world. We then compare them and seek patterns that explain those beliefs and practices as a response to the environment and to the need that humans have to connect with the cosmos.

Justification: This course have been offered for the last five years as a Special Topics course. This is often a required anthropology course in other schools and since it is so popular among students at TAMIU, it should be offered as a regular feature of the minor curriculum.

Lecture style

Learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the major elements of myth, magic, and religious beliefs and behaviors and be able to identify them cross culturally.
2. Demonstrate an appreciation of the ways in which culture, geography, history and economy shape an individual's (including your own) beliefs in the supernatural.

3. Demonstrate knowledge of the major theoretical approaches to understanding religious beliefs and behaviors.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the major theories and methods used in development and disaster studies and be able to apply them to new problems.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of the basic tenets of at least three of the major religions of the world and at least three indigenous religions.

Syllabus is attached.

Program: Add: _____ Change: _____ Attach new/changed Program of Study description and 4-year plan. If in current catalog, provide change and attach page with changes in red.

Minor: Add: _____ Delete: _____ Change: _____ Attach new/changed minor. If in current catalog, provide change and attach page with changes in red.

Faculty: Add: _____ Delete: _____ Change: _____ Attach new/changed faculty entry. If in current catalog, provide change and attach page with changes in red.

College Introductory Pages: Add information: _____ Change information: _____ Attach new/changed information. If in current catalog, provide change and attach page with changes in red.

Other: Add information: _____ Change information: _____ Attach new/changed information. If in current catalog, provide change and attach page with changes in red.

Approvals:	Signature	Date
Chair Department Curriculum Committee	_____	
Chair Department	_____	
Chair College Curriculum Committee	_____	
Dean	_____	

ANTH 4302
MYTH, MAGIC & RELIGION
Texas A&M International University

*Man can adapt himself somehow to anything his imagination
can cope with, but he cannot deal with Chaos.*

--Langer, quoted in Geertz 1973:99

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Course Description

Why have humans populated their universe with unseen beings, imagined places, and supernatural powers? Why have they created elaborate rituals and mythic stories that must be believed in if human life is to prosper? Humans have been trying to find order and meaning in the universe for thousands of years, and their attempts to do so—belief in the supernatural, stories to explain the unknown, and all the types of the behaviors these manifest—are as diverse and creative as anything you can find in popular books and movies.

Unlike other disciplines, anthropologists tend to look at religious beliefs very broadly because we seek to identify general patterns in human behavior. Cultural anthropologists examine religious beliefs and practices as we find them in living communities around the world. We then compare them and seek patterns that explain those beliefs and practices as a response to the environment and to the need that humans have to connect with the cosmos.

NOTE: Please keep in mind that this class requires intellectual integrity and a willingness to explore, not only other belief systems, but also your own with an open mind. It demands respect for all sincere beliefs and respect for the scientific approach to the study of the supernatural, i.e. an approach that is objective and unsentimental.

Course Requirements

Text: *Anthropology of Religion*, by Richley Crapo

Witchcraft: The Old Religion by Leo Louis Martello

Participation: We will be doing a lot of discussion in this class and some occasional informal class activities, so come to class regularly, keep up with the readings, and participate in class discussions. This is a senior-level course so your active participation in class is expected and is a component of your overall grade.

Research paper: A 6-8-page research paper on an approved topic

Occasional field assignments: A few times during the semester you will collect and analyze information using anthropological fieldwork methods, which you will then submit in the form of field notes.

Exams: Two exams and a final, which will cover material from lectures, class discussions, and readings. Questions will be short-answer and discussion.

Your grade will be calculated from the following:

Class participation 10%

First exam 15%

Mid-term exam 25%

Research paper , 20%

Final exam 30%

Course Goals

You will have succeeded in this course when you are able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the major elements of myth, magic, and religious beliefs and behaviors and be able to identify them cross culturally.
2. Demonstrate an appreciation of the ways in which culture, geography, history and economy shape an individual's (including your own) beliefs in the supernatural.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the major theoretical approaches to understanding religious beliefs and behaviors.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the major theories and methods used in development and disaster studies and be able to apply them to new problems.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of the basic tenets of at least three of the major religions of the world and two indigenous religions.

The fine print

ASSIGNMENTS: All assignments must be submitted in order to receive a passing grade for the class. Late papers will be penalized by one grade-step (from B+ to B, etc.) for each day they are late, unless you have arranged with me for an extension well in advance of the due date.

ATTENDANCE: Missing five or more classes may result in a failing grade for the course. Remember that classroom participation counts towards your final grade, and you can't participate if you're not in class.

ABSENCES: If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed *from one of your classmates*. I will, of course, work with you if you have to miss a lot for an acceptable reason but, otherwise, you are on your own to find out what you missed.

VIDEOS: Anthropological films are one of the best ways to learn about other cultures—especially when you cannot actually go to study them in person. Keep in mind that these films are not being shown for your entertainment. Watch, listen, and take notes with the same degree of attention that you would give to an important lecture.

NOTE: If you find that you are having trouble in this class, come by my office and talk to me about it. If you can't make it during my office hours, we can arrange another time. Or email me if you would prefer. Or consider checking in with the Writing Center for tutoring help. Or drop by Student Counseling Services, located in the Student Center, for counseling of a more personal nature. Part of your tuition money each semester goes to these programs, which are designed specifically to help you do your best here. Get your money's worth out of them!

Tentative Course Schedule

Aug 25-27	Religion as a physical activity	
Sep 3-8	Religion as a mental activity: Buddhism	
Sep 10	Various approaches to understanding religion, the logic of Pascal's wager	Crapo 1
Sep 15-17	Common beliefs and behaviors of diverse religions	Crapo 2
Sep 22	The psychology of religion, scientific explanations for belief in the supernatural	Crapo 3
Sep 24-29	Myths and symbols	Crapo 4,5
Oct 1	Myths we live by	Crapo 6
Oct 1	Research topic proposal due	
Oct 6	FIRST EXAM	
Oct 8-15	Rituals	Crapo 7
Oct 20-22	Ancient religions, goddess worship	Handout
Oct 27-29	Demons and dark forces at play in the world (in honor of Halloween)	Crapo 8
Nov 3-5	Witchcraft	Martello
Nov 10-12	Cults, covens, churches, and rules	Martello
Nov 17	Adam, Eve and the Serpent	handout
Nov 19	SECOND EXAM	
Nov 24	Religion and politics	Crapo 9
Nov 26-29	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	
Dec 1	Research papers due	
Dec 1-3	Religion transcending	Crapo 10
Dec 7	Death and Rebirth: Winter solstice celebrations	
Dec _____	FINAL EXAM	