

ANTH-122: MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT, AND RELIGION

Effective Term

Fall 2025

CC Approval

01/21/2025

AS Approval

02/13/2025

BOT Approval

02/20/2025

COCI Approval

04/16/2025

SECTION A - Course Data Elements

CB04 Credit Status

Credit - Degree Applicable

Discipline

Minimum Qualifications	And/Or
Anthropology (Master's Degree)	

Subject Code

ANTH - Anthropology

Course Number

122

Department

Anthropology (ANTH)

Division

Arts and Humanities (ARAH)

Full Course Title

Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion

Short Title

Magic, Witchcraft, & Religion

CB03 TOP Code

2202.00 - Anthropology

CB08 Basic Skills Status

NBS - Not Basic Skills

CB09 SAM Code

E - Non-Occupational

Rationale

Updating as part of regular review cycle.

SECTION B - Course Description

Catalog Course Description

This course offers a cross-cultural study of magic, ritual, myth, ancestor worship, and witchcraft using the theories and methods of anthropology. Emphasis is on understanding the role of belief and ritual within a given cultural context, as well as broader comparisons to derive insight into the general functions of belief and ritual in human life.

SECTION C - Conditions on Enrollment

Open Entry/Open Exit

No

Repeatability

Not Repeatable

Grading Options

Letter Grade or Pass/No Pass

Allow Audit

Yes

Requisites

Advisory Prerequisite(s)

Completion of ENGL-C1000 or equivalent with a minimum grade of C.

SECTION D - Course Standards

Is this course variable unit?

No

Units

3

Lecture Hours

54.00

Outside of Class Hours

108

Total Contact Hours

54

Total Student Hours

162

Distance Education Approval

Is this course offered through Distance Education?

Yes

Online Delivery Methods

DE Modalities	Permanent or Emergency Only?
Hybrid	Permanent
Entirely Online	Permanent
Online with Proctored Exams	Permanent

SECTION E - Course Content

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:	
1.	Assess anthropological approaches to data gathering and the analysis of ceremonial, magical, and supernatural practices and beliefs.
2.	Analyze the sociocultural contexts of magic, witchcraft, and ritual practices using an anthropological perspective.

Course Objectives

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:	
1.	Appraise the global range of religious, ritualized, and magical practices and beliefs through time.
2.	Analyze the sociocultural context of religious and magical beliefs and practices.
3.	Assess the importance of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism in the context of religious and ritual pluralism.
4.	Assess anthropological approaches to data gathering and the analysis of ceremonial, magical and supernatural practices and beliefs.
5.	Evaluate the diverse forms and functions of contemporary magic, ritual and belief systems.

Course Content

1. Introduction to anthropology and the anthropological study of belief;
2. Overview of comparative cultural approach to be used throughout the course;
3. Basic concepts and approaches in cultural anthropology;
4. Introduction to history of schools of thought in anthropology pertaining to analysis of ritual, magic and ideational systems (for example: evolutionism, diffusionism, cultural materialism, psychological anthropology, functionalism, structuralism, constructivist and phenomenological approaches);
5. Types of religious and magical practitioners (for example: shamans, priests, mediums, witches, etc.);
6. Cross-cultural examination of rites of passage focusing on birth, marriage ceremonies, death, and puberty;
7. The role of drugs, healing plants, music, art, trance, dance, and possession states in magic, ritual, and witchcraft practices;
8. Messianic cults and revitalization movements (such as Handsome Lake, the Ghost Dance, and Cargo cults);
9. Traditional healing and healers with an examination of "sent sickness," sorcery, shamanism and witchcraft;
10. Relationship between ritual and myth including the role of the hero, the trickster, the villain, etc.; Relationship between religion, magic, and socioeconomic hierarchy;
11. Survey of selected contemporary issues relevant to the course content (for example: conflict in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and modern revitalization movements).

Methods of Instruction

Methods of Instruction

Types	Examples of learning activities
Activity	Using Quizlet, Blooket, or similar to review important concepts from the textbooks.
Critique	A written critique about the portrayals of witchcraft in popular media.
Discussion	Discuss the role of colonizing forces and local autonomy in the construction of "religion under the table" in Afro-Caribbean cultures.
Field Trips	A trip to the Tulocay cemetery to analyze the symbolism and beliefs expressed through cemetery and mortuary artifacts (gravestones, mausoleums, etc.)
Group Work	A group presentation or project that analyzes the history of a Pagan holiday and how it is practiced today.
Individualized Instruction	A scheduled "1-on-1" meeting with the instructor as a required piece of a larger project.
Lecture	A Socratic-type lecture about the work of Victor and Edith Turner in symbolic anthropology.
Visiting Lecturers	A community guest speaker/practitioner who participates in a panel for students about their spiritual practices.

Instructor-Initiated Online Contact Types

- Announcements/Bulletin Boards
- Chat Rooms
- Discussion Boards
- E-mail Communication
- Telephone Conversations
- Video or Teleconferencing

Student-Initiated Online Contact Types

- Chat Rooms
- Discussions
- Group Work

Course design is accessible

Yes

Methods of Evaluation**Methods of Evaluation**

Types	Examples of classroom assessments
Exams/Tests	Objective examinations that may be a combination of multiple choice, fill-in, maps, identification, vocabulary, etc.
Quizzes	Quizzes focus on class lectures, films, readings, and supplemental material. Quizzes may be composed of short answer, multiple choice, and word identifications, etc. For example: a. A map quiz to gauge knowledge of geographic areas studied. b. A team-based, multiple choice vocabulary quiz designed in Quizlet.
Projects	Fieldwork research projects may demonstrate the student's skills in research methods, experimentation, data collection, analysis and writing.
Essays/Papers	Focus on reviewing and assessing an anthropologist's contribution to our understanding of magic, witchcraft, and/or religion, documenting the people studied, research methods used, and the importance of cultural knowledge in addressing these phenomena.
Oral Presentations	In-class discussions demonstrate the student's interest in the course, understanding of the materials, as well as critical thinking and verbal skills. For example: a. A guided discussion on the various forms of zombification around the world. b. A student-led discussion on the role of prayer in contemporary religious practice.
Other	Field Trips - Guided field trips that provide a real-life example of the practices discussed in lecture may be offered. For example: a. A guided field trip to Tulocay Cemetery to assess graveyard symbology. b. A guided field trip to the Mexico Museum in San Francisco for their annual Ofrenda and Day of the Dead celebrations.
Homework	Homework may include listening to podcasts, watching videos, and reading supplementary material.

Assignments**Reading Assignments**

Reading assignments may include selections from textbooks, research studies, news articles, materials handed out in class (or online for online/hybrid courses), and other relevant supplemental materials as needed.

For example:

1. Read the first chapter (pp. 3-23) of Emily Martin's *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Be prepared to discuss the research methods and population used by Martin in her research.
2. Read the Introduction (pp. 1-19) of "Cry of the Eagle: Encounters with a Cree Healer." Be prepared to discuss the aspects of the introduction that are emic and etic.
3. Read Chapter 3, paying special attention to the cultural variations of *communitas* according to Victor Turner and George Gmelch? What groups do they study to show that *communitas* exists outside of the traditional church environment?

Writing Assignments

Written assignments require critical thinking about course content and may address the readings, lectures, and related course activities (discussions, fieldwork, videos, etc.)

For example:

1. Write a ten-page comparative essay about preventative versus curative healing systems and practices in the Caribbean region. Discuss the underlying social, political, and cultural factors that influence the maintenance and efficacy (or inefficacy) of these systems.
2. In a three-page paper, argue for or against the following statement: "Understanding the concept of *ontology* is essential for understanding spirit possession among the Ndembu."
3. An annotated bibliography assignment that explores one aspect of the supernatural in greater depth.

Other Assignments

Other relevant assignments at the discretion of the instructor.

SECTION F - Textbooks and Instructional Materials

Material Type

Textbook

Author

Moro, P. and Meyers, J.

Title

Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural

Edition/Version

9

Publisher

McGraw-Hill

Year

2012

Rationale

This is a classic textbook in this field.

ISBN #

9780078034947

Material Type

Textbook

Author

Stein, R.L., Stein, P.L., Kracht, B., and Snipes, M.M.

Title

The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft

Edition/Version

5

Publisher

Routledge

Year

2024

ISBN #

9781032572994

Material Type

Textbook

Author

Fadiman, Anne

Title

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures

Edition/Version

1

Publisher

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux

Year

2012

Rationale

This is a classic ethnography used in this field.

ISBN #

9780374533403

Material Type

Textbook

Author

McCarthy Brown, Karen

Title

Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn (expanded edition)

Edition/Version

3

Publisher

University of California Press

Year

2011

Rationale

This is a classic ethnography in this field.

ISBN #

9780520268104

Material Type

Textbook

Author

Davies, Owen

Title

The Oxford History of Witchcraft and Magic

Publisher

Oxford University Press

Year

2023

ISBN #

9780192884053

Course Codes (Admin Only)

ASSIST Update

No

CB00 State ID

CCC000525314

CB10 Cooperative Work Experience Status

N - Is Not Part of a Cooperative Work Experience Education Program

CB11 Course Classification Status

Y - Credit Course

CB13 Special Class Status

N - The Course is Not an Approved Special Class

CB23 Funding Agency Category

Y - Not Applicable (Funding Not Used)

CB24 Program Course Status

Program Applicable

Allow Pass/No Pass

Yes

Only Pass/No Pass

No