

Anth 132/Rel 134: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol

Tuesday/Thursday 6:00pm-7:15pm
Eaton 333

Instructor: Angela C. Jenks
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Office: Room 203, 126 Curtis Street
Office Hours: Tuesday 4:00-5:00pm or by appointment

Course Description:

This class is an introduction to the anthropological study of myth, ritual, and symbolism. We will examine the various ways in which anthropologists have approached this topic, and will consider a number of central questions. What roles do myth, ritual, and symbol play in human experience and everyday life? Do they reflect or produce reality? How can they reinforce socio-political power structures while simultaneously providing options for resistance? We will begin with an overview of central debates in the anthropology of religion, and will explore these debates in several specific areas, including the symbolic construction of the human body and of sacred space, the role of mythmaking in contemporary life, healing rituals and practices, and contemporary issues of religious violence.

Assigned Texts:

- 1) Lambek, Michael. 2008. *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- 2) Myerhoff, Barbara G. *Peyote Hunt: The Sacred Journey of the Huichol Indians*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- 3) Additional readings posted on the course Blackboard site

Course Requirements:

1) Attendance and Participation (10% of grade)

The two class sessions per week are a primary source of information for the course. You are expected to attend, to have completed required readings ahead of time, and to participate in class discussions. Take notes during lectures and discussions, and be sure that you understand the main points that are covered, any examples that are used, and how they relate to assigned readings. Several films will be shown during class sessions and are also required. Take notes during films just as you would during a lecture or discussion. Be sure that you can identify the groups and issues covered in each film,

summarize its contents, and relate it to that week's theme. Changes to the class schedule may be made as necessary, but will be announced in advance.

All cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices should be turned off and put away during class.

2) In-Class Midterm Exam (20% of grade)

There will be one in-class midterm exam on October 21. Make-up exams will be given only in extraordinary (and well documented) situations. If you are having any problems with the exam scheduling, please let me know **before** the exam.

3) Short Essays/Fieldwork (30% of grade)

Four short (3-5 page typed, double spaced) essays will be required throughout the course. These essays are designed to give you an opportunity to apply the concepts we are covering in class to your own life and the world around you. Each essay will be worth 50 points, and your lowest grade will be dropped (for a total of 150 points). Since you can drop your lowest grade, **no make-up or late essays will be accepted.**

Further details will be handed out in class and posted on the Blackboard site.

4) Research Paper and Presentation (Paper: 30% of grade, Presentation: 10% of grade)

A final research paper of 12-15 pages is due on the last day of class, **Thursday, December 4**. You may choose any topic related to the study of myth, ritual, and symbol suggested by class readings or discussions. **Please respect deadlines.** Ten (10) points will be deducted from your grade for each day your final paper is late. If you cannot turn your paper in on time due to extreme circumstances, you **must** discuss this with me **before** the due date.

Your topic must be approved by the instructor—a 1 page proposal is due on **Tuesday, October 7**. This proposal should include the topic you plan to write about, the questions you will be examining, and any preliminary research you have completed. Include a bibliography listing potential sources.

In addition, you will give a **10 minute presentation** to the class on your topic at the end of the semester.

Course Schedule and Required Readings:

Week 1 Introduction to the Course and to Anthropology

Tues 9/2 No readings.

Thurs 9/4 Miner, Horace. *Body Ritual Among the Nacirema*. (BB)
Bohannan, Laura. *Shakespeare in the Bush* (BB)

Myerhoff, Barbara. *Peyote Hunt*, pg. 15-25.

Week 2 Overview of the Anthropology of Religion

Tues 9/9 Lambek, Michael. "General Introduction," pg. 1-17.
Tylor, Edward. "Religion in Primitive Culture," pg. 23-33.
Durkheim, Emile. "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life," pg. 34-47.
Geertz, Clifford. "Religion as a Cultural System," pg. 57-75.

Thurs 9/11 Ruel, Malcolm. "Christians as Believers," pg. 97-109.
Hufford, David. "Traditions of Disbelief" (BB)
Asad, Talal. "The Construction of Religion as an Anth Category," pg. 110-126.

Myerhoff, Barbara. *Peyote Hunt*, pg. 29-51.

Week 3 Symbols, Meaning, and Classification

Tues 9/16 Langer, Susanne K. "The Logic of Signs and Symbols," pg. 131-138.
Ortner, Sherry B. "On Key Symbols," pg. 151-159.
Douglas, Mary. "Land Animals, Pure and Impure," pg. 183-195.

Thurs 9/18 **ESSAY 1 DUE: Observation of a Religious Service**
Wolf, Eric. "The Virgin of Guadalupe," pg. 160-166.
Geertz, Clifford. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (BB)
Bourdieu, Pierre. "A Magnified Image" from *Masculine Domination* (BB)

Myerhoff, Barbara. *Peyote Hunt*, pg. 73-111.

Week 4 The Body as Symbol

Tues 9/23 Hertz, Robert. "The Pre-eminence of the Right Hand" (BB)
Obeyesekere, Gananath. "Medusa's Hair," pg. 356-367.
Turner, Terence. "The Social Skin" (BB)

Thurs 9/25 Conklin, Beth. "Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society" (BB)
Bell, Kirsten. "Genital Cutting and Western Discourses on Sexuality" (BB)
Lester, Rebecca. "Female Bodies and the Touch of God" (BB)

Week 5 Sacred Space

Tues 9/30 Eliade, Mircea. "Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred" (BB)
"The Zuni and the Grand Canyon" and "The Emergence" (BB)
Zepp, Ira. "The Shopping Mall as Sacred Space" (BB)

Thurs 10/2 **ESSAY 2 DUE: Analysis of a Historical Site**
Myers, Fred. "The Dreaming: Time and Space" (BB)

Week 6 The Stories We Tell

Tues 10/7 **RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**
Leonard, Scott and Michael McClure, "The Study of Myth" (BB)
Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," pg. 168-175.
Levi-Strauss, Claude. "A Jivaro Version of *Totem and Taboo*," pg. 196-205.

Thurs 10/9 Dundes, Alan. "Earth-Diver: Creation of the Mythopoeic Male" (BB)
Campbell, Joseph (with Bill Moyers). "The Hero's Adventure" (BB)

Week 7 History, Memory, and Modern Mythmaking

Tues 10/14 Orenstein, Catherine. Excerpt from *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked* (BB)
Do Rozario, Rebecca-Anne. "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom" (BB)

Thurs 10/16 **ESSAY 3 DUE: Analysis of Myth with Personal Significance**
Shaw, Rosalind. "Memory, Modernity, and the Slave Trade in Sierra Leone" (BB)
Brunvand, Jan. Excerpt from *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* (BB)
Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "Minding The Body" (BB)

Week 8 Ritual

Tues 10/21 **MIDTERM EXAM**

Thurs 10/23 Rappaport, Roy. "Enactments of Meaning," pg. 410-428.
Myerhoff, Barbara. "Jewish Comes Up in You From the Roots," pg. 342-349.
Stallybrass and White. "The Politics and Poetics of Transgression," pg. 253-263.

Myerhoff, Barbara. *Peyote Hunt*, pg. 112-188.

Week 9 Rites of Passage

Tues 10/28 Turner, Victor. "Liminality and Communitas," 326-340.
Davis-Floyd, Robbie. "The Rituals of American Hospital Birth" (BB)

Thurs 10/30 **ESSAY 4 DUE: Description of a Rite of Passage**
Grimes, Ronald. Excerpt from *Deeply into the Bone* (BB)

Week 10 Magic, Shamanism and Healing

Tues 11/4 Tambiah, Stanley J. "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," pg. 311-325.
Boddy, Janice. "Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan," pg. 368-385.
Humphrey, Caroline. "Shamanic Practices and the State in N. Asia," pg. 519-532.

Thurs 11/6 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "The Effectiveness of Symbols." **(BB)**
Turner, Victor. "A Performance of Ihamba Analyzed." **(BB)**

Myerhoff, Barbara. *Peyote Hunt*, pg. 229-264.

Week 11 Ritual Violence

Tues 11/11 NO CLASS (Veteran's Day)

Thurs 11/13 Girard, Rene. Excerpt from *Violence and the Sacred*. **(BB)**
Hasan-Rokem, "Martyr vs. Martyr," pg. 590-596.
Lienhardt, Godfrey. "The Control of Experience: Symbolic Action," pg. 302-310.

Week 12 Power and Protest

Tues 11/18 Burrige, Kenelm. "New Heaven, New Earth," pg. 432-446.
Taussig, Michael. "The Genesis of Capitalism," pg. 447-463.
Comaroff and Comaroff. "The Colonization of Consciousness," pg. 464-478.
Ong, Aihwa. "The Production of Possession" **(BB)**

Thurs 11/20 NO CLASS (AAA)

Week 13 Presentations

Tues 11/25 Presentations

Thurs 11/27 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Week 14 Presentations

Tues 12/2 Presentations

Thurs 12/4 **FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS**
Presentations