Anthropology of Belief and Belief Systems

ANTH 472/872

Stephen D. Glazier

Course overview: A cross-cultural examination of the structure, form, and functions of religious belief. Special attention will be given to the relationships between belief systems and social, political, and economic organizations. Tribal religions, world religions, and contemporary religious movements (e.g. neo-shamanism, Wicca, and so on) will be considered.

Course objectives: 1) To become familiar with basic concepts and methods utilized by anthropologists in the study of religion; 2) By looking at religion in other societies and cultures, to gain a better perspective on religion within one's own society; and 3) To gain a better understanding and appreciation of the diversity of human beliefs and practices as they relate to issues of human survival.

Evaluation: Students will be responsible for readings, video presentations, lecture material, and class discussions. 2/3 (66.6%) of the final grade will be based on two essay examinations (a mid-term and a final). 1/3 (33.3%) will be based on a class presentation or term paper.

Grading scale: 91-100 = A; 88-90 = B+; 81-87 = B; 78-80 = C+; 71-77 = C; 68-70 = D+; 61-67 = D; 60- = F.

Office hours: Regular office hours are on Monday afternoons and before and after class. Of course, he will be available at other times and by appointment. Please call 308-237-4537 (answering machine) or e-mail at: "soglazier@unl.edu"


A number of the recommended readings are contained in Anthropology of Religion, edited by Phillips M. Stevens Jr. (Routledge, 2011). The rest are on reserve.

COURSE OUTLINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, January 9</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Birckhead in Glazier pp. 19-84.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended:


Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System (pp. 87-125) in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (on reserve)

James M. Donovan "Defining Religion" (pp. 61-98) in Stephen D. Glazier and Charles A. Flowerday, *Selected Readings in the Anthropology of Religion* (on reserve)


Video: "The Holy Ghost People"

Recommended:


Monday, January 31 Religions as Belief Systems? Lett in Glazier

pp. 139-160.

Pandian in Glazier

pp. 505-516.

Eller, pp. 29-53;

pp. 247-273.

Recommended:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday, February 7</th>
<th>Religions in Practice</th>
<th>Eller, pp. 109-132</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alexander in Glazier pp. 139-160.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Duntley in Glazier pp. 257-275.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday, February 14</th>
<th>Magic and Healing</th>
<th>Eller, pp. 54-81.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Katz, pp. 34-140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Winkelman in Glazier pp. 393-428.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video: &quot;Ngoma Therapy&quot;</td>
<td>Townsend in Glazier pp. 429-469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended:

Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic" in *Structural Anthropology* (on reserve).


Brown in Glazier

pp. 121-136

Recommended:


Video: "Legacy of the Spirits"  Guenther in Glazier

pp. 161-190

Recommended:


Lindsay Hale, Hearing the Mermaid’s Song: The Umbanda Religion in Rio de Janeiro (University of New Mexico Press, 2009), pp. 134-154.

Monday, March 7  Mid-term Exam

Monday, March 14  Purity and Danger  Eller, pp. 82-107.

Recommended:

Monday, March 28    Images and Boundaries    Douglas, Chapters 5 + 6

Recommended:


John P. Homiak, "Images of the Sacred, Embodiments of the Other: Representing Religious Experience on Film and Video" (pp. 165-222) in Glazier and Flowerday, *Selected Readings in the Anthropology of Religion* (on reserve).

Monday, April 4    Religious Ritual and Cognition    Guthrie in Glazier

pp. 489-504.

Laughlin in Glazier

pp. 471-488.

"Spiritual Baptist Music"

Recommended:

E. Thomas Lawson "Agency and Religious Agency in Cognitive Perspective" (pp. 99-106) in Glazier and Flowerday, *Selected Readings in the Anthropology of Religion* (on reserve)


Eller, pp. 160-186.

Recommended:


Monday, April 18  Great and Little Traditions  Starrett in Glazier
                pp. 279-303.

Video: "Way of the Sufi"  Lewis in Glazier
                pp. 319-368.

Eller, pp. 188-246.

Mahmood in Glazier
                pp. 305-318

Recommended:


                American Religions  Wagner in Glazier
                pp. 85-136

Recommended:


May 2  Final Examination