

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: "sglazier@unl.edu"

Required texts: Jack David Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion: Culture to the Ultimate*; Stephen D. Glazier (editor), *Anthropology of Religion: A Handbook*; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; John Neihardt *Black Elk Speaks*; Lindsay Hale, *Hearing the Mermaid's Song: the Umbanda Religion in Rio de Janeiro*, and "A Shout" in Glazier's *Spiritual Baptist Music of Trinidad* (available at www.smithsonian.gov).

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

<i>Session Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assigned Readings</i>
Monday, January 9	Introduction	Birckhead in Glazier pp. 19-84.

Recommended:

Edward Burnett Tyler, "Animism", *Primitive Culture*, Vol. 1 (John Murray, 1871), pp. 383 ff. (in Stevens)

James G. Frazer, "Sympathetic Magic," *The Golden Bough*, 3rd. edition (1911–15), pp. 52–119. (in Stevens)

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)

Monday, January 24 Approaching Religion Eller, pp. 1-28.
Glazier in Glazier, pp. 1-15.

Video: "The Holy Ghost People"

Recommended:

Lewis R. Rambo, 'Anthropology and the Study of Conversion', in Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier (eds.), *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 211–22.

Ralph W. Hood and W. Paul Williamson, *Them That Believe: The Power and Meaning of the Christian Serpent-Handling Tradition* (U. California Press, 2008, pp. 132-156).

Mary Lee Daugherty, 'Serpent Handling as Sacrament', *Theology Today*, 1976, 33, 3, 232–43 (in Stevens).

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 :

Galina Lindquist and Simon M. Coleman. "Introduction" to Against Belief? Special issue. *Social Analysis* 52 (2008): 1-18.

Malcolm Ruel, "Christians as Believers", in John Davis (ed.), *Religious Organization and Religious Experience* (Academic Press, 1982), pp. 9–31 (in Stevens)

Stephen D. Glazier, 'Demanding Spirits and Reluctant Devotees: Belief and Unbelief in the Trinidadian Orisa Movement', *Social Analysis*, 52 (2008): 19–38 (in Stevens).

Edith L. B. Turner "Fear of Religious Emotion Versus The Need for Research that Encompasses the Fullest Experiences." (pp. 109-118) in Glazier and Flowerday, *Selected Readings in the Anthropology of Religion*.

Monday, February 7	Religions in Practice	Eller, pp. 109-132
		Alexander in Glazier
		pp. 139-160.
		Duntley in Glazier
		pp. 257-275.

Recommended:

Roy A. Rappaport, "Truth and Order" *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 344-370 (on reserve).

Marvin Harris, 'The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle', CA, 1966, 7, 1 (in Stevens).

Monday, February 14	Magic and Healing	Eller, pp. 54-81.
		Katz, pp. 34-140
		Winkelman in Glazier
		pp. 393-428.
	Video: "Ngoma Therapy"	Townsend in Glazier
		pp. 429-469

Recommended:

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

Dow, James "Universal Aspects of Symbolic Healing." *American Anthropologist* 88 (1986): 56-69.

Janice Boddy, "Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan: The Cultural Therapeutics of Possession and Trance", *American Ethnologist*, 1988, 15, 1, 4–27

Monday, February 21 Witchcraft Eller, pp. 134-159.
Brown in Glazier
pp. 121-136

Recommended:

Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Magic, Science, and Religion' [1925], *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Macmillan, 1948), pp. 25–35 (in Stevens).

E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events', *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (Clarendon Press, 1937), pp. 63–83.

Susan Greenwood, *The Anthropology of Magic* (Berg, 2009), pp. 97-109.

Monday, Feb 28 Sacrifice Eller, pp. 38-66.
Video: "Legacy of the Spirits" Guenther in Glazier
pp. 161-190

Recommended:

Robertson Smith, "Sacrifice," Lecture VIII from *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1889), pp. 251–71 (in Stevens).

David H. Brown, *Santeria Enthroned: Art, Ritual and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (University of Chicago Press, 2003).

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:

Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion* (2nd edition, Blackwell, 2008), pp. 34-47 (good overview of Mary Douglas)

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

Recommended:

Rodney Needham, 'Synthetic Images', *Primordial Characters* (University Press of Virginia, 1988), pp. 23-50 (in Stevens)

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)

Pascal Boyer and Brian Bergstrom, "Evolutionary Perspectives on Religion", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2008, 37, 111–30.

Michael Winkelman and John R. Baker. *Supernatural as Natural: A Biocultural Approach to Religion*. Prentice Hall, pp. 118-43.

Monday, April 11 Religion and Change Neihardt, *Black Elk*, pp. 1-176.

Eller, pp. 160-186.

Recommended:

Raymond DeMallie, *The Sixth Grandfather* (what complicates Black Elk's story!), 1-26.

Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*, pp. 84-121 (University of California Press, 2004, on reserve).

A. F. C. Wallace, 'Revitalization Movements', *Culture and Personality*, 2nd edn. (Random House, 1970), pp. 188–99 (in Stevens).

Peter M. Worsley, "Cargo Cults," *Scientific American*, 1959, 200, 117–28

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:

Mahmood Mamdani, 'Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism', *American Anthropologist*, 2002, 104, 3, 766–75.

Monday, April 25	Anthropological Perspectives on American Religions	Eller, 275-330. Wagner in Glazier pp. 85-136
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Recommended:

Rebecca Sachs Norris, "Converting to What? Embodied Culture and the Adoption of New Beliefs." (pp. 171-181). *in* Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier (editors), *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003, on reserve).

May 2	Final Examination
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