

## **REL3022: MYTH AND RITUAL**

09GC REL 3022 18 T 7/R 7-8 [1:55-2:45 / 1:55-3:50]

28Fo ANT 3930 18 T 7/R 7-8

AND 13/AND 13

### **I. Instructor**

Dr. Robin Wright, Department of Religion. Anderson Hall 107C.

### **II. Course Website**

Students are held responsible for all materials and related information posted on the course website.

### **III. Objectives of the course:**

This course examines the theories and methods in the anthropological and religious studies of myths, rituals, religious specialists, and religious movements. Examples will be primarily drawn from indigenous cultures of the Americas, but also from ancient Mediterranean cultures. Students can expect to learn how to interpret the symbolism and meanings of myths and rituals. We will discuss the place of myth and ritual in both traditional and non-traditional societies and the importance of both in mediating historical change.

### **IV. Readings and Modules:**

There are two books to purchase from the bookstore: *The Fire of the Jaguar*, by Terence S. Turner (HAU Books, Chicago, 2017); and *Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions*, by Catherine Bell (Kindle e-book, Oxford University Press, 1997). All other Readings are posted in the Modules section of the website.

### **V. Lecture and Reading Schedule:**

#### **Class Schedule:**

**08/23:** Introduction to the Course

**08/28:** Roy Rappaport, "The Sacred in Human Evolution"

**08/30:** Catherine Bell, *Ritual. Perspective and Dimensions*, Ch. 1, "Questions of Origin and Essence"; Tylor, "Religion in Primitive Culture"; Ackerman, "Frazer on Myth and Ritual"

**09/04:** C. Bell, *Ritual*. Ch. 2 "Questions of Social Function and Structure"; Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life"; Rappaport, "Ritual, Sanctity and Cybernetics";

**09/06:** Bell, *Ritual*, Chs. 2 "Questions..." Evans-Pritchard, "The Problem of Symbols"; Van Gennep, "Rites of Passage" (summary);

**09/11:** Bell, *Ritual*, Chs. 2 "Questions..." & 3 "Symbols, Syntax and Praxis"; V. Turner, "Liminality and Communitas";

**09/13:** Bell, *Ritual*, Ch. 3 "Symbols, Syntax and Praxis"; N. Munn, "Symbolism in a Ritual Context"; Geertz, "Deep Play. On the Balinese Cockfight" (in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 412-454)

**09/18:** Bell, Ch. 4, "Basic Genres of Ritual Action",

Film: [rite of passage] "The Sunrise Dance" (Apache girls' initiation rite)

**09/20:** Bell, Ch. 4, "Basic Genres of Ritual Action",

Films: [calendrical rite] "Tarahumara: Festival of the Easter Moon"(from northern Mexico); "Inti Raymi" (Inca Festival of the Sun); [non-calendric rite] "Ngune Elu. The day the moon menstruated"

**09/25:** Bell, "Basic Genres of Ritual Action";

Films: [exchange ritual] "Yakwa, Banquet of the Spirits" (from the Amazon); [sacrifice rituals] "Sun Dance" (Crow); [healing ritual] Searching for Parika" (Baniwa of the Amazon); [political ritual] "Bridewealth for a Goddess" (from Melanesia)

**09/27:** Bell, Ch. 7, "Ritual Change"; Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change" (in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Ch. 6)

Film: "The Kayapo"- 1 (the Amazon);

**10/02:** Bell, Ch. 7, "Ritual Change"; Wright & Hill, "History, Ritual and Myth"; Hill & Wright, "Historical Interpretations from an Amazonian Society"

Film: "The Kayapo: Out of the Forest";

**10/04:** Bell, Ch. 8, "Ritual Reification"

**10/09:** Myth and Ritual from the Ancient World – "Greek Myths. True Stories" with Robin Lane Fox (Curiosity Stream, 2 episodes)(30 day free trial subscription)

**10/11:** M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, Ch. 6, "Religion of the Hittites..." (esp. nos. 45-6); Ch. 10, "Zeus and the Greek Religion";

**10/16:** M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, Chs. 11 & 12;

**10/18:** Malinowski, "The Role of Myth in Life"; Levi-Strauss, "The Story of Asdiwal"

**10/23:** Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth";

**10/25:** Leonard & McClure, "The Study of Mythology"; Kroeber, "Unaesthetic Imaginings: Native American Myth as Speech Genre"; Kroeber, "Anthropological Roots of Ethnopoetics", pp. 3-28;

- 10/30:** Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism";
- 11/02:** T. Turner, "Cosmology, objectification, and animism in indigenous Amazonia", pp. 173-205;
- 11/06:** T. Turner, "The Fire of the Jaguar", Chs. 1-2, pp. 1-18;
- 11/08:** T. Turner, "The Fire of the Jaguar", Chs.3-4, pp. 19-54;
- 11/13:** T. Turner, "The Fire of the Jaguar", Ch. 5, pp. 55-92;
- 11/20:** T. Turner, "The Fire of the Jaguar", Ch. 6, pp. 93-108;
- 11/27:** T. Turner, "The Fire of the Jaguar", Chs. 7-8, pp. 109-46;
- 11/29:** Myth and Sacred Geography, Wright, "The *Kuwai* Religious Traditions of the Northern Arawak"
- 12/04:** Concluding Reflections

## **VI. Film Resources:**

Throughout the course, films will be used to illustrate the variety of ways in which ritual and myth embody the central values of a traditional society's religious traditions, its cosmology, cosmogony, relationality, and eschatology. How they do this is the focus of our exploration in this course.

Ritual and myth are sensitive to their historical context in such a way that both internal and external change are meaningfully incorporated into a society's central symbols and symbolic practices. Moreover, ritual and myth are understood to be a traditional society's way of controlling such change.

A list of films to be screened or recommended for viewing can be found in the Modules section, "Film Resources" tab.

## **VI. Expectations:**

*Our Responsibilities:* To present a solid review of the subject matter. The instructor is committed to helping you understand the material. If you have any questions regarding course materials, policies, grading, and technical problems, we highly encourage you to contact us ahead of time. You are encouraged to ask questions in class.

*Your Responsibilities:* To keep up with lectures, readings, films, and submit assignments on the due dates. The Course schedule can be found in the Modules under the Course Materials tab. You are expected to:

- Follow guidelines provided by the instructor.
  - Do the assigned readings and watch assigned films.
  - Come to class prepared to discuss the Readings.
  - Submit written assignments on the due date.
  - Submit assignments in the appropriate place under the Assignments tab on the website. It is possible to submit papers in hard copy, but it is preferable on the website.
- Follow the UF honor code (see below). Remember: All written portions of assignments are checked for plagiarism.

## **VII. Written Assignments**

Your final grade will be based on three short (700 wds) Reflection Papers on any of the films we will watch (prompt questions will be posted under the Assignments tab), and 2 longer papers (8-10 pages) - the first on a religious ritual/ceremony that interests you, and the second on a myth/sacred narrative that interests you. Topics will also be suggested during the course. In each case, you are expected to provide a description of the ritual/myth, based on the sources, and a short reflection on the theoretical/methodological approaches for understanding them.

## **VIII. Grading:**

Grade Scale:

A:  $\geq 94$  of X; A-:  $\geq 90$  of X; B+:  $\geq 87$  of X; B:  $\geq 83$  of X; B-:  $\geq 80$  of X; C+:  $\geq 77$  of X; C:  $\geq 73$  of X; C-:  $\geq 70$  of X; D+:  $\geq 67$  of X; D:  $\geq 63$  of X; D-:  $\geq 60$  of X; E: below 60.

## **IX. Special Treatment**

We do not offer any kind of special treatment, or adjust grades on an individual basis. If you are having problems with the course material or health related problems, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. Do not attempt to contact us at the end of the semester and expect us to solve any of the above problems. Incompletes are strongly discouraged and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.

## **X. Academic Honesty and the Honor Code**

Plagiarism or cheating: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition. Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action.

