

## CONTEMPORARY SHAMANISMS

**REL3938, RLG5937, ANT3930, ANG6930: AND101**

MWF7: 1:55 - 2:45

Prof. Robin M. Wright

Office Hours: M-W-F, 11:30 – 1:30

Anderson 107C

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**Objectives of Course:** This course examines the varieties of religious experience that have come under the rubric of ‘shamanism’ and ‘shaman’. The course will include contemporary shamanisms among indigenous peoples of Amazonia, outer Asia, and North America; urbanized, non-indigenous movements, especially core shamanism and the neo-shamanic movements; and prophet movements of the Americas directly connected to shamanic cosmologies.

Part I presents an overview of **shamanic spiritualities** found throughout the world, the processes of becoming a shaman, altered states of consciousness and shamanic transformations, the relations of shamans to the cosmos, the long-range historical development of shamanic consciousness, historical consciousness and spiritual agency of shamans.

The next four units focus on: II. **Amazonian and other South American shamanisms**; III. **Shamanisms of Outer Asia**; IV. **Native North American shamanisms**; V. **Core and Neo-shamanisms**. While there is overlap amongst all of these units, there are clear features that distinguish one from the other, in regard to knowledge and powers, relations among human and other-than-human beings (spirits and deities, especially), and shamans’ relations to history and historical consciousness, and the state.

Each unit will be amply illustrated and discussed through readings, audio-visual material, including from the Professor’s own research and experiences. In addition, the course’s Canvas website has a Module section on Resources that contains several bibliographies and a selection of other relevant readings.

**Course Readings:** The most important books from which the readings for the course will be drawn, are:

Michael Harner, *Cave and Cosmos. Shamanic Encounters with Another Reality*, 2013. North Atlantic Books (paperback, \$19.95, Amazon.com); [Required]

Davi Kopenawa & Bruce Albert. *The Falling Sky. Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. 2013. Harvard University Press. Kindle book. \$23.99 [Required]

Manduhai Buyandelger. *Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Memory, and Gender in Contemporary*

*Mongolia*. 2013. University of Chicago Press| Kindle eBook. \$19.25 [Required]

William Lyon. *Spirit Talkers. North American Indian Medicine Powers*. 2012. Prayer Efficacy Publishing. \$19.86 [Recommended]

Piers Vitebsky. *Shamanism*. 2001. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 2001.

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READINGS, FILMS AND EXAMS:**

01/08: course presentation and introduction to the readings;

### **UNIT I: "THE WORLD'S OLDEST SPIRITUAL TRADITION"**

01/10: Parameters of Shamanism - Definitional Questions.

York, "Shamanism – Traditional" & "Urban Shamanism", in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (hereafter *ERN*), v.2, pp. 1532-37 (on website);

Graham Harvey, "General Introduction", *Shamanism: A Reader* (2002), pp. 1-20 [pdf on website]

01/12: Parameters (cont.)

Vitebsky, Introduction and "The Shamanic Worldview", pp. 6-26; Regional Traditions" pp. 26-51

### **01/15: NO CLASS – Martin Luther King Day**

01/17: Becoming A Shaman.

Vitebsky, *Shamanism*, pp. 52-95;

01/19: The Shamans' Performance

Vitebsky, *Shamanism*, pp. 96-127

## **UNIT II: AMAZONIA AND OTHER SOUTH AMERICAN SHAMANISMS**

01/22: Amazonian Shamanism – an Overview

J. Overing, "Shaman as a Maker of Worlds": Nelson Goodman in the Amazon, *Man* (25), 602-19. Pdf on course website;

01/24: Becoming Other – Initiation to the Mysteries

"The Making of a Jaguar Shaman", from *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans* (pdf on course website)

01/26: Becoming Other – Acquiring the Shaman's Body

"The Biography of Mandu", unpublished ms., on course website;

Film: "Searching for Pariká"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbkQKvp\\_Fu8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbkQKvp_Fu8)

01/29: Becoming Other – Acquiring The Shaman's Gaze

Kopenawa & Albert, "Part I. Becoming Other", pp. 17-33

01/31: Becoming Other – Acquiring The Shaman's Gaze

Kopenawa & Albert, "Part I. Becoming Other", pp. 34-74

02/02: Becoming Other – Acquiring The Shaman's Gaze

Kopenawa & Albert, "Part I. Becoming Other", pp. 75-112

02/05: Becoming Other – Acquiring The Shaman's Gaze

Kopenawa & Albert, "Part I. Becoming Other", pp. 113-144

02/07: Becoming Other – The Shaman's Performance

"Xapiri" - B. Albert, 2012 · Experimental film/Documentary · 54 mins

<https://archive.org/details/xapiri>

02/09: Spiritual Ecology of the Shamans

Kopenawa & Albert, "The Spirit of the Forest", & "The Shamans' Death" pp. 381-411

02/12: Symbolic Efficacy of a Shaman's Performance

Langdon, E Jean, “The Symbolic Efficacy of Rituals: From Ritual to Performance” in Wright, RM, ed. *Religion, Medicine and Healing*, 2016. Kendallhunt. [pdf on website]

### **UNIT III: SHAMANISM OF OUTER ASIA**

02/12: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender, and Agency

Buyandelger, Introduction

02/14: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, ONE. Mobile Histories

02/16: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, TWO. Technologies of Forgetting

02/19: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, THREE, Genealogies of Misfortune

02/21: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, FOUR. Thriving and Silenced Stories

02/23: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, FOUR. Thriving and Silenced Stories

02/26: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, FIVE. Ironies...

02/28: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, FIVE. Ironies...

03/02: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, SIX. Persuasion and Power

### **03/03-10: SPRING BREAK**

03/12: Shamans’ Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, SEVEN. Incomplete Lives

03/14: Shamans' Historical Consciousness, Gender and Agency

Buyandelger, SEVEN. Incomplete Lives

Video, "In Pursuit of the Siberian Shaman", Kanopy Streaming, 2014

## **03/16: UNIT IV: NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN MEDICINE POWERS<sup>1</sup>**

Lyon, Introduction

03/19: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 1

03/21: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 2

03/23: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 3

03/26: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 4

03/28: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 5

03/30: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 6

04/02: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 7

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<sup>1</sup> This Unit will utilize diverse clips on Native North American spiritual specialists and their functions in ceremonies. Charles Eastman's "The Soul of the Indian"; "Black Elk Speaks"; and others.

04/04: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 8

04/06: Native North American Medicine Powers

Lyon, Chapter 9

## **UNIT V: Core and Neo-Shamanism**

04/09: Background

Michael York, “Castaneda, Carlos...”, ERN, v. 1, 272-3;

04/11: Core vs. Neo Shamanism

Joan Townsend, “Core Shamanism and Neo-Shamanism” (pdf on website);

04/13: *Way of The Shaman*- Introduction to Harner’s work (from FSS video archives)

Kocku von Stuckrad, “Harner, Michael – and the Foundation for Shamanic Studies,  
*ERN*, v. 1, 743-4;

04/16: *Cave and Cosmos*, M. Harner

<https://www.shamanism.org/way-of-the-shaman/documentary.php>

Chapters 1-3

04/18: *Cave and Cosmos*, M. Harner

Chapters 4-6

04/20: *Cave and Cosmos*, M. Harner

Chapters 7-9

04/23: *Cave and Cosmos*, M. Harner

Chapters 10-12

## **04/25: CONCLUSION OF THE COURSE**

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- (1) Besides the general introduction, there are four (4) other Units in the course. Each of the Units is worth 20 points. Each student will write a paper (5-7 pp.) about the **ENTIRE UNIT**. (Total for 4 Units = 80 points)
- (2) A Reflection Paper on one of the films (3-5 pp.) to be aired during the semester (10 points).
- (3) Class participation (10 points)

Your grade will be based on the sum total of the above assignments.

### Grade Scale:

A: 94 - 100

A-: 90 - 93

B+: 87 - 89

B: 83 - 86

B-: 80 - 82

C+: 77 - 79

C: 73 - 76

C-: 70 - 72

D+: 67 - 69

D: 63 - 66

D-: 60 - 62

E: below 60

Note: A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For UF's policies on grade points and grading, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

## **REGULATIONS OF THE COURSE:**

1. 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 (through a footnote, for instance). 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.  
See

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm><http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm> for more information on UF policies.

2. 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.
3. Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom. Please turn phones and pagers off during class. Texting and all non-class related use of laptops, iPads, etc. are not allowed and will be penalized if done repeatedly.
4. Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.