GROSSMONT COLLEGE

Official Course Outline

ANTHROPOLOGY 122 - ANTHROPOLOGY OF MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT, AND RELIGION

1. Course Number Course Title Semester Units Semester Hours

ANTH 122 Anthropology of Magic, 3 3 hours of lecture: 48-54 hours

Witchcraft, and Religion 96-108 outside-of-class hours

144-162 total hours

2. Prerequisites

None

Corequisite

None

Recommended Preparation

None

3. Catalog Description

This course examines magic and religion from a cross-cultural perspective. Emphasis is placed on understanding supernatural beliefs, practices, and rituals in their social contexts including societies in Africa, Oceania, the Americas, Asia, and elsewhere. Anthropological theories of magic and religion are explored.

4. Course Objectives

The student will:

a. Describe anthropological theories of belief systems, magic, and religion.

b. Generate ethnographic examples of different supernatural systems.

c. Explain the purposes and functions of supernatural systems.

d. Identify and differentiate the worldviews, rituals, and types of spiritual practitioners of various societies.

e. Assess the relationship among supernatural systems and other social aspects such as politics, economy, kinship, and gender norms.

f. Critically reflect on films and readings.

5. Instructional Facilities

Standard classroom equipped with multimedia technology.

6. Special Materials Required of Student

None

7. Course Content

a. Introduction to the field of anthropology and culture concept

1) Anthropology and the four fields

2) Culture concept

3) Cultural relativism

b. Anthropological theories of magic and religion

1) Functional theories

2) Sociological theories

3) Interpretive theories

4) Evolutionary theories

ANTHROPOLOGY 122 - ANTHROPOLOGY OF MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT, AND RELIGION Page 2

7. Course Content (continued)

c. Anthropological methodological approaches to magic and religion

1). Holistic approach

2) Participant-observation fieldwork

3) Interview and life history

d. Mythology and worldview

1) Ethos and worldview

2) Nature of myths

3) Oral narratives

4) Analysis and themes of mythology

5) Ethnographic examples from selected societies

e. Symbols

1) Types of sacred symbols

i. Sacred objects

ii. Sacred dress and body ornamentation

iii. Sacred time and place

iv. Sacred music and dance

2) Meanings of sacred symbols

3) Ethnographic examples

f. Gods and spirits

1) Animistic spirits

2) Polytheism

3) Monotheism

4) Atheism

g. Supernatural practitioners: shamans, healers, prophets, priests

1) Types of practitioners

2) Transformation of practitioners

3) Altered states of consciousness (trance and possession)

4) Ethnographic examples from selected societies

h. Ritual

1) Types and occasions of rituals

i. Rites of passage

ii. Pilgrimage

iii. Healing rituals

iv. Ritual prohibitions (taboo)

2) Analysis of ritual

3) Ethnographic examples from selected societies

i. Death

1) Afterlife

2) Funerary rites

3) Ancestral spirits

4) Ethnographic examples from selected societies

j. Search for meaning

1) Cargo cults

2) Wicca

3) Revitalization movements

4) Syncretism

5) Fundamentalism

6) Religious conflict and peace

7) Ethnographic examples from selected societies

8. Method of Instruction

a. Lecture

b. Group discussions

c. Multimedia presentations, such as videos and films

d. Guest speakers

e. In-class activities

ANTHROPOLOGY 122 – ANTHROPOLOGY OF MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT, AND RELIGION Page 3

9. Methods of Evaluating Student Performance

a. A minimum of one midterm exam

b. Final exam with objective and written components

c. Written assignments that may include: 2-3 page reflection papers on the readings, videos, or films; 8-10 page research paper that may, for example, explore a specific supernatural system or compare/contrast the belief systems of two societies.

d. Group projects that may include an oral presentation on a religious cultural practice such shamanism or a pilgrimage, and its significance for a particular society.

10. Outside Class Assignments

a. Reading assignments from the textbook and supplementary articles.

b. Written assignments such as reflection papers or research papers that may, for example, explore a specific supernatural system or compare/contrast the belief systems of two societies.

c. Written analysis of a film or video.

d. Preparation for group projects that may include an oral presentation on a religious cultural practice such shamanism or a pilgrimage, and its significance for a particular society.

11. Texts

a. Required Text(s):

(1) Stein, Rebecca and Philip Stein. *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*. 4th ed. New York: Routledge. 2017.

(2) Moro, Pamela and James E. Myers. *Magic, Witchcraft and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*. 9th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013.

b. Supplementary texts and workbooks:

None.

Addendum: Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, our students will be able to do the following:

a. Explain supernatural systems using anthropological theories and approaches.

b. Describe the core cultural components of magical and/or religious systems.

c. Analyze the relationship between supernatural systems and other aspects of culture.

Date approved by the Governing Board: December 12, 2017