

**Anthropology 311/RS 361**  
**Anthropology of Religion**  
**Fall 2015**  
**Department of Anthropology**  
**M, W 4:00-5:30, HH 150**

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### **Course Description**

This course will introduce you to the anthropological study of religion and its key themes. Where religion is normally thought of as a spiritual process or a dogmatic set of beliefs and practices with clear and identifiable boundaries, in this course we examine religions in their social and political embeddedness. While we will consider the belief-centered approaches to religion, we will primarily attempt to understand “religions in practice,” as they are lived, embodied, felt, gendered, racialized, and politicized. Although our examples will be from a diversity of a number of religious traditions, the aim of this course is not so much to provide an extensive survey of religions in the world. Instead, we will use these examples to reflect critically on the meaning and usefulness of key terms such as “belief”, “religion,” “God,” “magic,” “modernity,” and “ritual.” We will learn about different anthropological approaches that have been used to understand a variety of practices, communities, texts, experiences, languages, and material cultures across the globe. We will discuss the kinds of questions anthropologists ask while studying religion, whether and how anthropology of religion differs from other disciplinary approaches, and how contact, conflict, and exchange among religions have shaped the world in which we live. In short, this course is meant to help you cultivate anthropological ways of thinking and studying religion.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand key anthropological concepts on religion and have the ability to apply them to diverse contexts
- Identify and analyze how religion shapes and is shaped by global communities and cultures
- Develop anthropologically-oriented critical reading, research, and thinking skills
- Observe and write analytically about religious aspects of culture with which you are familiar and critically engage many different kinds of sources (including textbooks, interviews, global news media, and more).
- Better understand the ethical connections between our own lives and those of others who are marginalized due to their religious affiliations.

## Required Texts

- John R. Bowen. Religions in Practice (2010) Pearson
- Lara Deeb: An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon. (2006) Princeton University Press
- There are also a few journal articles and book chapters that you will need to download from coursereserves <https://www.reserves.uwaterloo.ca/ares/ares.dll>
  - Argyrou, Vassos. 1993. The Strategic Use of Magic in Greek Cypriot Society. *American Ethnologist*. 20 (2):256-271
  - Bolyston, Tom. 2013. Food, Life, and Material Religion. In *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*. Eds. Michael Lambek and Janice Boddy. Wiley. Pp. 257-273.
  - Durkheim, Emile. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. In *Sociology of Religion: A Reader* Pp. 9-16. [recommended]
  - Evans-Pritchard, E. The Notion of Witchcraft explains Unfortunate Events. Pp. 18-32.
  - Harding, Susan. 1987. Convicted by the Holy Spirit The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion". *American Ethnologist* 14, 1: 167-181 [Recommended]
  - Kreinath, Jens. 2014. Virtual Encounters with Hizir and Other Muslim Saints: Dreaming and Healing at Local Pilgrimage Sites in Hatay. *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 2(1):25-66.
  - Oosterbaan, Martjin. 2009. Sonic Supremacy: Sound, Space and Charisma in a favela in Rio de Janeiro. *Critique of Anthropology* 29(1): 81-104.
  - Smith, Jonathan Z. 1998. Religion, Religions, Religious. In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Ed. Mark Taylor. Chicago University Press. Pp. 269-284 [recommended].

## Course Requirements and Assessment

Participation and Quizzes	10%
Presentation and Report	15%
Short Essays (10% each)	20%
Final Paper	25%
Final Exam	30%

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Total	100%
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### Participation (10%)

Each class will combine lecture and discussion elements. Many will include interactive student activities (discussions, presentations, in-class writing activities, group work, etc.) as well. None of these elements work unless you attend regularly and read the assigned materials. Please come to class ready to analyze and respond to the assigned readings, as well as to the contributions of your fellow students. Your active engagement in all of these exercises is essential. Please note that engagement includes attentive listening as much as speaking. Evaluation of participation will be based on the quality of what you contribute. Contributions to the discussion might involve introducing a topic, examining assumptions, assessing the source

and reliability of information and formulating new questions. They might also include statements of where you are confused or questions about the meaning of core concepts; questions about what the author is trying to communicate. Arriving late or departing early will affect your participation grade.

**At some point during each lecture, expect to be asked to write down your response to a content-related question in relation to the assigned reading for that lecture. The question may be in the fill-in-the blank or multiple-choice format and will most likely be a general question the theme or topic of the assigned chapter/article. This is to make sure that you do the readings before class time. Your overall performance in these exercises will count towards your participation mark.**

### **Presentation+Report (15%)**

To ensure focused discussions of the weekly readings, and to allow students to develop their presentation skills, students will be asked to make one class presentation. You should prepare to take charge of the class for a 10 minute period (max.) in order to present key themes and raise questions that emerge from that week's readings, to be followed by discussion.

Think about the following questions as you prepare your presentation:

1. What is the author trying to convey to his/her audience in this chapter?
2. What are the strengths of the argument or examples he or she is presenting?
3. (For journal articles: How do the arguments relate to or compare with the view of other authors you have read in the course or elsewhere?
4. What is confusing or unsatisfying about the reading?
5. Pose 2-3 discussion questions for the class to consider.
6. You may also introduce some relevant additional material you want us to consider in light of the reading. These could be from your own travel experiences; from popular culture, including print materials (e.g. political or entertainment magazines, newspapers), music, film clips, video selections of news or television programming, social media..etc (e.g. a newspaper article, item in the news, policy, etc.).

5% of your discussion leading grade will be on a report that is **due one week after you have made the presentation** to be posted in class discussion section at Learn. You are asked to summarize the main points of the presentation and the class discussions that arose from your presentation on that day. Presentations may involve more than one student but reports will be submitted individually.

### **Term Project: Religion in Everyday Life**

The major assignment for this course is a term-long project on the theme of "religion in everyday life." The project consists of two small-scale activities that will be the base for two short essays and one long essay that will combine and further analyze these activities in light of the course readings. The project overall has two main objectives:

- 1) To introduce students to ethnographic research methods in the study of religions.

- 2) To help students improve their ability to analyze primary sources of ethnographic data with the help of anthropological concepts and perspectives on religions.

In light of these objectives, students are asked to design and conduct a small-scale field research on a specific topic that fits the larger theme “religion in everyday life.” Here, our purpose is to understand religions as lived and connected to other realms of everyday life, that is, beyond the authoritative discourses of religious scholars and texts. Debates over which constitutes “true” or “correct” version of any religious tradition are irrelevant to this study. Our purpose is not theological or historical, but ethnographic. In that sense, students are asked to leave aside their own beliefs about religion (including atheism) and focus instead on what religion means today to the studied individuals and groups, and how it is lived, embodied, and materialized in relation to contemporary forces of modernity. . The specific topic will be decided on an individual basis drawing on the intellectual, personal, or political interests of each student and will need the instructor’s permission before the research starts. [They will be discussing the details of the project with the TA]

Short papers are to be approximately 1000 words (which is no more than 4 double spaced pages 12 Font, Times New Roman, one inch margins on all sides). They will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of the research conducted, the analysis of data gathered through the research, the level of engagement with the relevant course readings and discussions, and the quality of writing. All the assignments need to engage directly and intensively with the course readings to receive a passing grade In each short essay, you must engage with at least two course readings (different from the ones used in other assignments) and in the long essay you must engage with at least three course readings. The essays must be carefully written reflections and not first drafts or simple stream of consciousness essays. They should use the AAA style citation (see uploaded the AAA style guide at Learn). The content and structure of the argument as well as the writing (spelling, grammar, organization, etc.) will be graded (see the rubric for grades at Learn). Papers will be submitted to Dropbox as online copies by the required deadlines. See the guidelines at Dropbox for further details.

**IMPORTANT (Research Ethics):**

In order to conduct this study, you have to create an account and complete the online TCPS-2 Tutorial through <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome> and **submit the certificate you will receive to Dropbox by September 28**. Please note that often a few days passes between the first sign in and gaining access to the tutorials as it is managed by an external federal secretariat.

For the interview assignment, you have to receive a written consent from the interviewee after providing them the Instructor Introduction Letter (download from Dropbox). Please submit a hardcopy of the signed consent form on the day of submitting the related course material.

**Short Essay 1: Fieldnotes (due Oct 7, 10%, approximately 1000 words)**

This assignment will require you to conduct at least an hour-long observation in a setting relevant to your topic and/or research question. Your essay will be a report and analysis of your fieldnotes. See the guidelines at Learn for further details

## **Short Essay 2: Semi-Structured Interview (due November 2, 10 % approximately 1000 words)**

For this assignment, you are going to conduct a brief ethnographic interview (that will last about 15-20 minutes) with one individual of your choice who you think is relevant to your topic/research question. Your essay will be a report and analysis of the interview. You need to use at least two course readings in your analysis (each textbook chapter counts as one reading, and although you are free to use the readings that you used in your first essay, these readings will also not count towards the required number of readings for this assignment) See the guidelines at Learn for further details.

## **Final Research Paper (due December 4 25% about 1500-2000 words, NO LONGER THAN 8 PAGES 12 Font, Times New Roman, one inch margins on all sides):**

This assignment will be a comprehensive analysis of your topic that combines your data with your analysis of the course readings. Treat it as a research paper. For this particular assignment, you need to specify the conceptual framework/theme that you build your analysis on, formulate an argument based on your findings in the previous assignments, ground this argument through examples from your data and more significantly in the relevant course readings. You can use other material (popular and academic texts) to support your argument but for a passing grade, you need to engage with at least three chapters from both the ethnography and the textbook/or/assigned articles. See Guidelines for further information.

**Final Exam:** The exam will be cumulative and you will be responsible for everything that is covered in the readings, lectures, presentations, and discussions.

### **Grading**

In this course, you will be graded on **how** you think, not **what** you think. In other words, **you will not be graded on your beliefs, opinions, or the positions you advance.** You will be graded on how well you articulate your thoughts and positions, how closely you read the assigned texts, and how much your ability to think **critically and synthetically** about course themes develop throughout the semester.

### **Rubric**

**A** work far exceeds basic requirements. The work is of excellent quality.

**B** work exceeds basic requirements. The work is good or very good.

**C** work meets basic requirements. The work is satisfactory.

**D** work does not meet most of the basic assignment requirements. The work is poor but passing.

**F** work fails to meet most of the requirements of an assignment or of the course.

### **Late Work**

If you turn an assignment in late, your mark will be downgraded by 10%. You will be penalized 3% every additional day that it is late (including weekends). Feedback will not be provided on late papers.

### **Information on Plagiarism Detection**

Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. Students need to inform the instructor two weeks before the assignment is due that they do not wish to have their work submitted to Turnitin.

Alternatives for using Turnitin include:

- an annotated bibliography;
- a draft bibliography identifying and documenting all sources and submitted on a specified date before the due date for the assignment;
- a “scaffolded” assignment where the student submits an outline of their paper in advance and then at least one draft of the paper with their list of resources before the submission of the final paper with a bibliography

### **Electronic Device Policy**

Please resist the temptation to check email, Facebook, internet browsing during class.

### **Attendance Policy**

During classtime you are expected to be fully engaged in the class. This means that the only documents that you should have open on your phone/computer are 1) notes 2) readings 3) class powerpoints. Students who are caught on Facebook, texting, surfing the Web, et. al during class will automatically receive a zero for their participation.

All requests for alternate exam times or other accommodations must be made in writing at least one month before a scheduled assignment or exam. If you miss an exam/class you are still responsible for making up your missed work. You can get notes from a classmate and class powerpoints will be available on LEARN.

Please note that travel plans are NOT considered acceptable reasons for rescheduling an exam:  
<https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar/final-examinations/examination-regulations-and-related-matters>

### **Cross-listed courses**

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

### **Academic Integrity**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Please consult the tutorial on academic integrity for further information on citation, plagiarism, etc.: <http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/purchase.html>.

<http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/knowhowtocitesources.html>

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid

committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4](#).

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#).

Other sources of information for students

[Academic integrity](#) (Arts) [Academic Integrity Office](#) (uWaterloo)

### Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

**Note for students with disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services office](#), located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term. It is your responsibility to discuss any disabilities or other extenuating circumstances with your instructors at the beginning of the semester.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and/or assignments over the course of the term in order to better guide the learning process.

### Course Outline

<p><b>Sep 14</b></p>	<p><b>What is religion? And Why does it Matter?</b></p> <p>Introduction The scheduling of presentations</p>
<p>Sep 16</p>	<p>Bowen Introduction (p. 1-10)</p> <p>Recommended: Jonathan Z. Smith Religion, Religions, Religious</p>
<p><b>Sep 21</b></p>	<p><b>The Problem of Definitions</b></p> <p>Bowen The Twin Transformations of Religion Recommended: Durkheim and Marx</p>
<p>Sep 23</p>	<p>Bowen Domains and Boundaries of Religion</p>

<b>Sep 28</b>	<b>Rituals, Healing and Suffering</b> <b>RESEARCH ETHICS TCPS-2 certificate DUE!</b> Bowen Chapter 4 Rituals of Transition <b>Film:</b> Mecca Diaries
Sep 30	Jens Kreinath. Virtual Encounters with Hizir and Other Muslim Saints
<b>Oct 5</b>	<b>Magic and Witchcraft</b> Bowen Chapter 6 Sorcery, Witchcraft and Modernity <b>Film:</b> World of Witchcraft or Witches in Exile
Oct 7	<b>FIELDNOTE ASSIGNMENT DUE 4pm!</b> Argyrou- The Strategic Use of Magic in Greek-Cypriot Society Evans-Pritchard: The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events
<b>Oct 12</b>	THANKSGIVING NO CLASS!
Oct 14	<b>Sacrifice, Power, and Conflict</b> ? Religion and Sports?? OR Bowen Chapter 7 Worship, Hierarchy, Conflict: Focus on Hinduism
<b>Oct 19</b>	<b>Boundaries and Material Religion</b> Bowen Chapter 10 Boundaries and Selves in Orthodox Judaism
Oct 21	Tom Boylston- Food, Life, and Material Religion in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity
<b>Oct 26</b>	<b>Language, Text, and Technology</b> Bowen Chapter 11: Speech and Grace in Protestantism Recommended: Harding- Convicted by the Holy Spirit Film: No Rest for the Wicked
Oct 28	Oosterbaan-Sonic Supremacy
<b>Nov 2</b>	<b>INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT DUE 4pm!</b> <b>Questions of Modernity</b> Bowen Chapter 15 Virtual Religion
Nov 4	Chapter 15 Secularisms and Religions in Modern States
<b>Nov 9</b>	An Enchanted Modern Introduction-Pious and/as/is Modern (pg. 3-41)
Nov 11	An Enchanted Modern Chapter 1-Al-Dahiyya: Sight, Sound, Season (pg. 42-66)
<b>Nov 16</b>	An Enchanted Modern Chapter 2- From Marginalization to Institutionalization (pg. 67-95)
Nov 18	NO READING! The Screening of the Movie: New Muslim Cool

<b>Nov 23</b>	An Enchanted Modern Chapter 3-The Visibility of Religion in Everyday Life (pg. 99-128)
Nov 25	An Enchanted Modern Chapter 4- Ashura: Authentication and Sacrifice (pg. 129-164)
<b>Nov 30</b>	An Enchanted Modern Chapter 5- Community Commitment pg. (165-203)
Dec 2	An Enchanted Modern Chapter 6- Public Piety as Women's Jihad (p. 204-219) and Chapter 7- The Pious Modern Ideal and Its Gaps (pg. 220-232)
<b>Dec 4</b>	<b>Final Essay</b> Due 11:30 pm
<b>TBD</b>	Final Exam