

# **ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION**

## **Course Syllabus**

Time and venue: Tuesday, 14.10, r. 1/309 and Thursday, 14.10, r. 1/120

Instructor: Dr. Emil Nasritdinov (Office hours: Wednesday and Thursday, 15.30-17.30) emilzn@gmail.com

### **Course abstract**

Religion has always been one of the most important topics in anthropology. Since the earliest expeditions, anthropologists have sought to understand the often-unusual religious practice they encountered. People's views of their origins, the supernatural, and a moral life are based on a set of shared ideas they learn as they grow up in a given society. Anthropologists call these shared ideas culture and see religion as a central part of people's culture. Within this course the students will look at themes that have guided the anthropology of religion throughout the centuries. It also aims to present, analyze and discuss various religious phenomena, such as rituals and sacred sites, witchcraft and sorcery, death and spirit possession. The aim of this course is to give students an idea of the anthropological approach toward religion. The course will concentrate on traditional religions and the non-formal practices of major religions.

### **Grading**

Attendance = 10%

Participation in class (10X2%) = 20%

Three online short assignments (3X5%) = 15%

Presentation about one world religion = 10%

Presentation on one theoretical perspective on religion = 10%

Research paper and presentation on religious perspective or religious practice in Kyrgyzstan = 20%

Paper = 15%

Presentation = 5%

Final exam = 15%

### **Attendance**

If you don't miss classes, you automatically receive 10% for attendance. For each class missed without a reason - you will lose 2% of your grade. If you miss 4 classes without a reason - you automatically receive X for the course. If you are sick you should inform our office manager before the class and then bring the note from your doctor. Without a call to the office manager and without a note, your absence will not be excused.

### **Participation**

Participation is the discussion of readings and participation in class exercises. There will be 10 seminar classes where we will discuss texts. Questions for readings will be posted online at the e-course system. For each class you will receive 2% if you participate and give evidence that you have read the text. If the majority of class is not prepared, we cancel the class and appoint a make-up class.

### **Three online assignments**

Every quarter of the term we will have short online assignments with 2-3 open ended questions to check upon your progress in the course.

### **Presentation about one world religion**

You can select one religion from any part of the world and make a presentation on it. You should cover its main postulates, worldviews, practices, rituals, symbols, social customs, geography, etc. There is plenty of literature in the AUCA library, so it must be a presentation based on the review of academic sources, not just copy/paste from the internet.

### **Presentation on one theoretical perspective on religion**

You will also make one presentation related to our weekly topics. I will provide with necessary texts/materials for that.

### **Research paper and presentation on religious perspective or religious practice in Kyrgyzstan**

During the semester you will conduct a research on any religious practice or on interesting question related to religion in Bishkek or in some other place in Kyrgyzstan (if you have time to travel). Your research must include interviews or observations as main methods. Try to be more creative in the choice of your topic, so that we don't repeat traditional "Role of women in Islam" kinds of titles. One way to do it is to make the research question more personal and explore issues, which might not be so blunt and straightforward, but more intricate. Research paper must be minimum 4 maximum 6 pages long. It should be submitted online according to the deadline and you will also make a presentation on it.

These are some suggestions for religions, which you can make your presentation on. If you want you can choose

1. Buddhism
2. Confucianism
3. Shinto
4. Lamaist Buddhism
5. Hinduism
6. Judaism
7. Roman Catholicism
8. Protestantism
9. Eastern Christianity
10. Islam

### **Final exam**

Final exam with three essay questions: two theoretical and one on world religions will be worth 15% (5% per question).

### **Reading materials**

The main textbook will be the course reader Anthropology of Religion: The Unity and Diversity of Religions, by Richley Crapo, Utah State University. You have to borrow a course reader at the department and return it back when the course is finished. You will not be given a final grade until you return the reader. So, don't lose it or you will have to make another copy. Other sources include: 556 16 95 37

Hicks, D (2002) Ritual and belief, McGraw-Hill publishing

Bowen, J. (1998) Religions in Practice: an Approach to the Anthropology of Religion, Allyn and Bacon

Bowie, F. (2006) The Anthropology of Religion: Introduction, Blackwell Publishing

Lambek, M. (2008) A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion, Blackwell Publishing

Winzeler, R. (2008) Anthropology and Religion, Altamira Press

### **Grading scale**

100-96 = A

95-91 = A-

90-86 = B+

85-81 = B

80-76 = B-

75-71 = C+

70-66 = C

65-61 = C-

60-56 = D+

55-51 = D

50-46 = D-

45 and lower = F

### **Schedule for student presentations (choose appropriate for you):**

Thu, Sep 8 – world religion

Thu, Sep 22 – theoretical perspective

Sat, Sep 24 – world religion

Thu, Sep 29 – theoretical perspective

Thu, Oct 6 – world religion

Thu, Oct 13 – theoretical perspective

Thu, Nov 3 – world religion

Sat, Nov 5 – theoretical perspective

Thu, Nov 10 – world religion

Sat, Nov 26 – theoretical perspective

## Schedule of classes

Week 1	
Tue, Aug 23	Course introduction
Thu, Aug 25	Anthropology and religion (lecture)
Week 2	
Tue, Aug 30	Elements and theories of religion (lecture)
Thu, Sep 1	Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.1)
Week 3	
Tue, Sep 6	Diversity and Unity of world religions (lecture)
Thu, Sep 8	Student presentation (world religion) + Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.2)
Week 4	
Tue, Sep 13	No class
Thu, Sep 15	No class
Week 5	
Tue, Sep 20	Psychology of religion (lecture)
Thu, Sep 22	Student presentation (theor. persp) + Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.3) <b>Due date for research proposal</b>
Sat, Sep 24	Make-up: Religious myths and symbols (lecture)
Sat, Sep 24	Make-up: Student presentation (world religion) + Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.4)
Week 6	
Tue, Sep 27	Religion as expressive culture (lecture)
Thu, Sep 29	Student presentation (theor. persp) + Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.5) + <b>Online assignment #1</b>
Week 7	
Tue, Oct 4	Language and religion (lecture)
Thu, Oct 6	Student presentation (world religion) + Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.6)
Week 8	
Tue, Oct 11	Religious ritual (lecture)
Thu, Oct 13	Student presentations (theor. persp) + Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.7)
Week 9	
Oct 17-21 – Fall break – No classes	
Week 10	
Tue, Oct 25	No classes
Thu, Oct 27	No classes + <b>Online assignment #2</b>
Week 10	
Tue, Nov 1	Religious social organization (lecture)
Thu, Nov 3	Student presentation (world religion) + Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.8)
Sat, Nov 5	Make-up: Religion and society
Sat, Nov 5	Make-up: Student presentation (theor. persp) + Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.9)
Week 11	
Tue, Nov 8	Religious adaptation and change
Thu, Nov 10	Student presentation (world religion)+ Discussion of reading (Crapo, Ch.10)
Week 12	
Tue, Nov 15	Religion in Central Asia (lecture)
Thu, Nov 17	No class <b>Online assignment #3</b>
Week 13	
Tue, Nov 22	Religion in Central Asia (lecture)
Thu, Nov 24	Thanksgiving Day – No classes <b>Due date for research paper submission</b>
Sat, Nov 26	Make-up: Student presentation (theor. persp) + Discussion of readings (to be distributed)
Week 14	
Tue, Nov 29	Student research presentations
Thu, Dec 1	Student research presentations
Week 15	
Mon, Dec 6	Review for exam
Wed, Dec 8	<b>Final Exam</b>