

**DOUGLAS COLLEGE**  
**Anthropology 1130-001**  
**Anthropology of Religion**

**Winter 2009, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30a-12:20p (NW 1606)**

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*I am available at other times by appointment. You may also contact me at any time at the email address listed above.*

### **Aims and Objectives**

This course introduces students to the anthropological study of religion. Topics covered include the anthropological perspective for the study of religion, theories of religion, mythology, symbols, rituals, magic, healing, and contemporary expressions of religious practices. Examples of religious practices will be drawn from around the world and presented using lectures, films, and slide presentations.

We will be using Haitian Vodou as a case study. We will read an ethnography of Vodou and use it to understand concepts related to the study of religion and to explore anthropology's role in this academic endeavour.

I invite you to be open to the possibility that different people understand and conceive of the world differently. We will ask if religion is a universal way of coping with unexplained events and misfortune; we will wonder how religion reinforces social control within groups of people.

### **Other Course Resources**

[www.tadmilwraith.com](http://www.tadmilwraith.com) – This is my website. A page on the website is devoted to this class. You can keep up with the lecture schedule there, find additional copies of handouts, and review slides presented in class. Other resources related to your studies are posted on the website too. This includes a list of ethnographies and web links that might help you in your research.

[www.anthroblog.tadmilwraith.com](http://www.anthroblog.tadmilwraith.com) – This is my blog. I discuss issues related to anthropology, studying anthropology, and my other interests here. Much of the blog deals with aboriginal rights in British Columbia but other topics related to our course will be discussed when relevant. Feel free to browse at your leisure and, should you feel inclined, you are able to comment on what I write about on the blog.

### **Textbooks**

Stein, Rebecca L. and Stein, Philip L. 2005. *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*. Toronto: Pearson Ed. (You may use either the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.)

Davis, Wade. 1985. *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. New York: Simon and Schuster. (Any edition is fine.)

## Course Requirements

- i) Readings: Students are expected to complete required readings before class.
- ii) Tests and Exams: There are two midterm exams and a final quiz in this class.
- iii) Written Assignments: There are two written assignments for this course. The first is the analysis of a ritual which you observe. The second assignment is the analysis of a myth. Both assignments will be discussed in class and handouts will be provided.

## Evaluation

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Analysis of a Ritual	February 17	25%
Analysis of a Myth	April 2	25%
Midterm I	February 5	20%
Midterm II	March 19	20%
Final Quiz	April 9	10%

## Respectful Learning Environment

Students are expected to adhere to all College policies regarding respectful conduct in all aspects of this course.

Please Note: Creating a respectful learning environment also includes the appropriate use of laptops and other kinds of electronics in class. Be aware that anyone sitting behind you can see what you are doing on your laptop – and it can be VERY distracting.

If you feel you must watch movies, do email, text, etc. during class, then please get yourself a privacy screen for your laptop's monitor. Better yet: save those activities for another time.

## Attendance

As material discussed in class will differ from the text material, attending class is important. Regular attendance and participation in class-room discussion is part of your grade. If you miss a class, it is strongly recommended that you talk to the instructor and obtain the notes from another student.

## Policy on Missed Tests

**You must contact the instructor before an examination if an emergency prevents you from attending.** Make up tests will only be administered if the student provides a **legitimate and pressing** reason for missing the test. **Otherwise a grade of 0 will be assigned for the test.**

**Let me put this another way: it is always in your best interest to talk with me if you have an issue before an assignment is due or a test is scheduled. I am in a much better position to help you before the due dates than I am after them.**

## Late Assignments

Penalties will be assessed for late assignments. Details will be made clear on assignment handouts. No

assignments will be accepted after the last day of our class (April 9, 2009) or as otherwise noted in assignment handouts.

### **Plagiarism (Academic Dishonesty) Policy**

Plagiarism is defined as a student “submitting the words, ideas, images or data of another person as his or her own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, research project or assignment in a course or program of study”. **Plagiarism amounts to cheating: it is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with as such in this course. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment and you will be subject to College disciplinary measures.**

### **Language Competency Policy**

Students are advised that this is a **language intensive course**. Much of the material covered relies upon students possessing a good grasp of English grammar and syntax. It is **strongly recommended** that students have completed English 124 (Writing Skills) or possess its equivalent level for reading and writing English **prior** to taking this course. Students who do not possess a “post-secondary” level of reading and writing competence in English will not be able to complete this course successfully. Students for whom English is a second language are **strongly** advised to ensure that their level of English proficiency is adequate before taking this course.

### **Lecture Outline and Reading Assignments**

The course will follow the general outline of the textbook and will use films, slide presentations and discussion groups in order to complement the materials presented in the book. Questions to guide your reading will be distributed in class.

Notes: SS = Stein and Stein

(Chapters refer to SS 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition; if you are using the 1<sup>st</sup> edition, you will need to adjust your reading schedule to match the table of contents in the first edition of that book.)

Davis = Wade Davis, *Serpent and the Rainbow*

#### *I. The Anthropological Perspective and Theoretical Orientation*

Introduction, Theoretical Background *and* What Is Religion? (January 6, 8, 13)

- SS Chapters 1, 8
- Davis Chapter 1

#### *II. Pervasive Topics in the Study of Religion*

Ritual (January 15, 20, 22)

- SS Chapter 4
- Davis Chapters 2, 3

Mythology (January 27, 29, February 3)

- SS Chapter 2
- Davis Chapter 4

**February 5: Midterm I (during class time)**

**Note: Winter Break: February 10 – No Class  
(Please Keep Up With Your Reading and Read Davis Chp 5, 6)**

Symbols and Magic (February 12, 17)

- SS Chapter 3, 7
- Davis Chapters 7, 8
- **Assignment 1 Due on February 17**

Practitioners and Altered States of Consciousness (February 19, 24)

- SS Chapter 5, 6
- Davis Chapter 9

Healing and Death (February 26, March 3)

- SS Chapter 8
- Davis Chapter 10

Witchcraft (March 5, 10, 12)

- SS Chapter 10
- Davis Chapter 11

### *III. Contemporary Expressions of Religion*

Syncretism and Religious Movements – Changing Practices (March 17)

- SS Chapter 11
- Davis Chapter 12

**March 19: Midterm II (during class time)**

Vodou and Davis Discussions (March 24, 26, 31, April 2)

- **Assignment 2 Due on April 2**

Applied Anthropology and Sacred Sites (if time) (April 7)

**April 9: Final Quiz (during class time)**