

Anthropology 543 – Cross-Cultural Study of Religion

Instructor	Alan Aycock, Ph.D.
Office	Golda Meir E-177
Phone	414.229.4319
Email	aycock@uwm.edu
Web	www.uwm.edu/~aycock
Office hours	see contact information below
Class place & time	SAB G28, Tuesday & Thursday, 12:30 – 1:45 p.m.

Official course description

Various approaches to the study of religion; religions of selected non-western societies. Prerequisite: junior standing and completion of Anthropology 102.

Texts

John Bowen, *Religions in Practice* (second edition), Allyn and Bacon, 2002. [Please note: the second edition is very different from the first, so you have to have the correct edition.]

Sarah Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community*, University of California Press, 2001.

Course objectives

- Review some classic theories in the anthropology of religion and have a look at some more recent theories;
- Examine methods used to study religions in different cultures;
- Identify important anthropological features of a range of religions, including Islamic and evangelical Christianity, where some of the most interesting work is now being done;
- Use a participant observation-based case study of neoPagan religion as a device to interpret many everyday religious practices in “our” own culture;
- Adopt an active learning approach – using a “hybrid” model – of teaching and learning.

To accomplish our goals, I have chosen a new edition of a text in which the author gives extended ethnographic examples from a variety of cultures, including quite a bit of his own fieldwork among the Islamic Gayo people of Sumatra, Indonesia. I have added an ethnography on neo-Pagan or New Age religion in which most of the author’s fieldwork was undertaken in the Midwest, some of it in Wisconsin. Finally, I have set up a course Web site and assignments that will allow us to integrate the text with the ethnography by using online assignments to explore the intersections of anthropological theory and practice.

Contacting the instructor

Probably the fastest and most effective way of getting in touch with me is via email (aycock@uwm.edu), since I will answer you within 12 hours at the maximum, and normally in less time than that. I am on campus from 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. every weekday in the Learning Technology Center, in Golda Meir E-177. You can simply drop in if you like, and I'll be glad to see you. However, I'm not always free, so you may wish to call ahead (229-4319) to find out if I'm immediately available, or whether we need to make an appointment for another time.

Nature of the course

This course is a sophisticated (500-level) introduction to the Anthropology of Religion. The course is both reading- and writing-intensive, and active class participation is required both face-to-face and online. The course is a "hybrid" course, which means that the "seat time" for this course is reduced: part of the regular class meetings will be in the classroom, while some will take place on the course Web site (the ratio of F2F meetings to online coursework is approximately 2:1). The purpose of a course organized in this fashion is to give you more time and flexibility for in-depth reading, reflection, and discussion of course topics.

Approach to religion

This course is typical of most anthropology of religion courses in the sense that it is analytical, not descriptive. That is to say, although we will be looking at many different examples of religion, our primary purpose is to understand them *analytically*, not simply to describe or compare them for curiosity's sake. Throughout this course we will maintain a *cultural relativist* stance toward religion, which means that we will not privilege any religion over any other. This course is not *confessional*, so you must set aside your own personal religious beliefs or practices, solely within the framework of this course, in order to understand other religions from the practitioners' own point of view.

Computer skills required

Please note that regular, routine use of a computer and an Internet connection is fundamental to your participation in the online portion of this course. The vast array of available online materials make the anthropology of religion especially rich, and the flexibility of working on the course Web site outside of class hours at your own pace, according to your own schedule, provides numerous opportunities for additional learning and class interaction.

Since this course has been designed to integrate online and face-to-face work, the online activities are not optional. **Thus, if you are not prepared or able to do the computer work required for this course, for whatever reason, you should not take the course.** As a rule of thumb, you should expect to login to the course Web site on a regular basis, approximately three times a week.

What computer skills do you require? You need to know how to use email and to maintain your Alpha/Panthermail email account (or a comparable private email account). You must be able to use a Web browser such as Netscape or Internet Explorer. You must be able to use a standard word processing package such as Word for Windows, and be able to save and manage your files. You must have access to the Web (not necessarily through the university; a private server will work just fine). Any special instructions or troubleshooting needed for this course will be provided by the instructor.

Purpose of Assignments

The assignments in this course are designed to achieve several goals:

- Make sure that everyone has done the reading before coming to class and attends class ready to do their share of the face-to-face work
- Ensure that everyone participates in face-to-face class discussion and understands what is going on
- Help integrate the general textbook (Bowen) with the ethnography (Pike) so that we can appreciate how the anthropology of religion functions in practice as well as in theory
- Create an online community for this course that complements and extends our face-to-face community

Types of Assignments

There are three kinds of assignments in this course, keyed to each of the purposes listed above:

Entrance assignments require that you *word-process* several paragraphs, prior to entering the class each day, on a topic related to your reading for that day. You will submit your entering assignment in hardcopy in person as you enter the classroom.

Exit assignments require that you write several sentences which you will hand in, *handwritten* in hardcopy, as you leave the class each day, on a topic that arises from our discussion during that class.

Online postings require that you (1) post to the online discussion forum on a topic that shows your appreciation of the relationship between our text (Bowen) and our ethnography (Pike); (2) respond to someone else's posting; (3) participate in the class discussion – “debriefing” – that immediately follows each of the main online postings during the course.

Please note that although there is no overall final face-to-face exam for this course, the final online posting must be submitted no later than the date and time officially assigned for our final exam.

Point Value of Assignments

Type of assignment	Required/total	Points	Total points
Introductory online assignment	1/1	5 points	5
Entrance assignments	10/14	4 points apiece	40
Exit assignments	10/14	2 points apiece	20
Online postings	5/5	8 points apiece	<u>40</u>
Total points overall:			105

Grading scale

Percentage	Letter grade
93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
0-59	F

Policies of the Department of Anthropology University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Participation by Students with Disabilities

If you need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Accommodation for Religious Observances

Students will be allowed to complete examinations or other requirements that are missed because of a religious observance (from UWM Faculty Document #1853 amended). Please let your instructor know about such absences as soon as possible, and preferably before the day(s) missed.

Academic Misconduct

The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. A more detailed description of Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures may be found in Regents Policy Statements, UWS Chapter 14 and UWM Faculty Document #1686.

Complaint Procedures

Students may direct complaints to the Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences (College of Letters & Sciences). If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences (College of Letters & Sciences), or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy.

Grade Appeal Procedures

A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the Department and College. These procedures are available in writing from the Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences (College of Letters & Sciences). A more detailed description of the Grade Appeal Policy may be found in UWM Selected Academic and Administrative Policies, Policy #S-28 and UWM Faculty Documents #1243.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the University. It subverts the mission of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. The University will not tolerate behavior between or among members of the University community which creates an unacceptable working environment. A more detailed description of Sexual Harassment Policy may be found in UWM Selected Academic and Administrative Policies, Policy #S-36.1 and UWM Faculty Document #1605.

Other UWM Policies that Affect the Conduct of a Course

Attendance.

The Department expects students to attend class regularly, but any specific attendance requirements are established by the instructor and made clear to the class during the first week of class. Students are responsible for getting notes or assignments for any classes they may have missed. Instructors may have additional requirements for exams that may be missed.

Incompletes.

A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of the semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above. A more detailed description of the Incomplete Policy may be found in UWM Selected Academic and Administrative Policies, Policy #S-31 and UWM Faculty Documents #1558 and #1602. Also, a description of this policy may be found in the UWM Schedule of Classes.

Final Examinations.

All final examinations will be given during the time assigned in the final examination schedule (published in the Schedule of Classes). The time of a final examination for an individual or a class may be changed only with the prior approval of the Dean.

Safety.

In some class settings (e.g., classes with labs or field trips), the instructor will present safety guidelines and procedures. These procedures must be followed carefully to insure your safety and the safety of your fellow classmates. Failure to follow safety procedures may result in disciplinary action.

Financial Obligation.

The submission of your registration form and your subsequent assignment to class obligates you to pay the fee-tuition for those classes or to withdraw your registration in writing no later than the date specified in the Schedule of Classes. It is important to both you and the University that you make payment on time. Please note that some classes in the Department have special course fees, and every student in the class is required to pay this fee. A complete description of UWM fee policies may be found in the Schedule of Classes.

Date	Topic/Assignment	F2F or online	Bowen	Pike
Sept				
2	Religion: idea, practice, experience	F2F	Ch. 1	
7	Studying religions anthropologically	F2F		Preface & Intro
9	Introductory online assignment	Online		Ch. 1
14	Van Gennep, Turner, & ritual practice	F2F	Ch. 3	
16	Durkheim, shared sentiments, & the celebration of death	F2F	Ch. 4	
21	Religious artifacts	F2F	Ch. 9	
23	Places & pilgrims	F2F	Ch. 13	
28	Assignment #1: shrines and gatherings	Online		Ch. 2
30	Assignment #1 continued	Online		Ch. 2
Oct				
5	Assignment #1 Debriefing	F2F		
7	Magic and healing	F2F	Ch. 6	
12	Witchcraft and sorcery	F2F	Ch. 7	
14	Purity and pollution	F2F	Ch. 8	
19	Assignment #2: spectacle & Satanic panic	Online		Ch. 3
21	Assignment #2 continued	Online		Ch. 3
26	Assignment #2 debriefing	F2F		Ch. 3
28	Speaking & discourse	F2F	Ch. 11	
Nov				
2	Media & performance	F2F	Ch. 12	
4	Assignment #3: religious syncretism	Online		Ch. 4

9	Assignment #3 continued	Online		
11	Assignment #3 debriefing	F2F		
16	Constructing gender	F2F	Ch. 5	
18	Constructing culture	F2F	Ch. 10	
23	Assignment #4: making memory	Online		Ch. 5
25	Thanksgiving – no class			
30	Assignment #4 continued	Online		Ch. 5
Dec				
2	Assignment #4 debriefing	F2F		
7	Saints & messiahs	F2F	Ch. 14	
9	Religious nationalism & the state	F2F	Ch. 15	
14	Official religion	F2F	Ch. 2	
21	Assignment #5: self, religion and the civil society (assignment due by 12 noon)	Online		Ch. 6, & Concl.