**Course Description:**
This course offers an introduction to the anthropological study of human religious experience, with particular emphasis on religious and ritual practice in comparative perspective. What is the relationship between religion and society? Can categories such as “religion” and “the sacred” be legitimately applied to other cultures? Does religion necessarily imply belief in a God or sacred beings? We will concentrate on a range of small-scale, non-western cultures for much of the semester, returning to religious experience in the modern industrial world at the course’s end.

**Learning Goals:**
Students will be asked to master the following skills in this course, including:

**Core Skills**
- critical thinking, including the ability to analyze, interpret and synthesize a diverse variety of materials across several disciplinary boundaries, including anthropology, religious studies, the visual and performative arts (including film), psychoanalytic theory, and literature.
- assess the values of topic-driven and disciplinarily informed analysis
- working independently to develop a final research paper on a topic of their own choice, in consultation with the instructor

By the conclusion of the course, students can expect to have a good understanding of the following fields:

**Knowledge**
- a broad interdisciplinary understanding of cultural formulations of what constitutes religious process and experience cross-culturally (anthropology, religious studies)
- an understanding of ritual process and interpretation (anthropology, psychology/psychoanalytic theory)
- exchange theory involving persons and objects (anthropology)
• **POSTINGS**: 3 Reading Response @ 10%

• **PAPERS: OPTION #1**: (3 papers on an assigned topic—@ 25% each) @ 75%

• **PAPERS: OPTION #2**: (1 paper on assigned topic—assigned Paper #1—**AND** a Final Independent Research Paper, with required preliminary Abstract/Annotated Bibliography due earlier) @ 75%

—Final Independent Research Paper Abstract and Annotated Bibliography (required, but not graded, included as part of Final Paper Grade)

• **CLASS PARTICIPATION**: (including regular contributions to class discussion; “Opening Questions”; in-class reading-responses; and attendance) @ 15%

________________________

**DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

• **IMPORTANT**: Please submit ALL your written work in MSWord .doc format, as an attached document.

• **POSTINGS**—Periodic Reading Responses (3 postings total)—Due: Posting #1: Friday, 1/29 @ 10:00AM; Posting #2: Friday, 3/18 @ 10:00AM; Posting #3: Friday, 4/15 @ 10:00AM.

Students will be asked to respond to the readings periodically in Posting assignments (three times over the course of the semester, scheduled before a paper is due) on LATTE. These responses of approximately 250 words will be in response to prompts relevant to the readings, and should stress the basic arguments outlined in the readings, and respond critically to the material, raising questions for class discussion, and anticipate possible paper topics.

• **PAPERS**:
  • **PAPER #1 (ALL students write this paper)** 7-8 pages, double spaced—Due: Friday, 2/5 @ 10:00AM (topic TBA—will be posted on LATTE, in appropriate “Assignments” Folder)

OPTION #1:
  • **PAPER #2 (OPTION #1)** 7-8 pages, double spaced—Due: MONDAY, 4/4 @ 10:00AM (topic TBA—will be posted on LATTE, in appropriate “Assignments” Folder)
  • **PAPER #3 (OPTION #1)** 7-8 pages, double spaced—Due: TUESDAY, 5/5/16 AT 5:00PM (topic TBA—will be posted on LATTE, in appropriate “Assignments” Folder)

OPTION #2:
  • **FINAL RESEARCH PAPER ABSTRACT & ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (OPTION #2)**—Due: MONDAY, 4/4 @ 10:00AM
  • **COMPLETED FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (OPTION #2)** 14-16 pages, double spaced: Due TUESDAY, 5/5/16 at 10:00AM

Students who chose OPTION #2 (Final Research Paper) will be asked to submit a 1 page abstract of the designated topic, outlining the main thesis, theoretical approach, and primary data. In addition, students must submit an annotated bibliography of approximately 6-8 outside sources, as well as 3-5 sources from class readings. (“Annotated” in this context means a brief explanation
of how you anticipate this source will contribute to your final paper project—you do not have to have read all the possible sources—but some familiarity with a possible source will help).

The final paper paper project (pages) should demonstrate a creative engagement with the issues raised in the course of the semester. It is expected that you will “take on” a set of problems and/or topics of interest, and take it beyond what is covered in class. We will be discussing (both individually and collectively in class) possible topics and approaches.

* For students who would like comments on a completed final draft of their paper may submit it 1 week prior to the deadline to the LATTE Assignments Folder for “Completed Drafts”.

• **OCCASIONAL IN-CLASS READING RESPONSES**: From time to time, students will be asked to respond in writing, in class, to questions/issues raised by the readings.

• **CLASS PARTICIPATION**:
  1) attendance
  2) timely completion of reading assignments (by the date listed in the syllabus)
  3) participation in “Opening Questions” exercise at beginning of class;
  thoughtful and regular contributions to class discussions, including participation in several in-class written reading responses.

• **ATTENDANCE**, on time, is required. *After two absences, each additional absence will lead to a deduction of 5% of the overall class grade per each missed class.* All medically excused absences must be confirmed by your Dean of Students.

• **READINGS** must be completed by the assigned date; come to class ready to engage in thoughtful discussion of each assigned reading. Except for the books, all readings are available in electronic form on LATTE, or through other electronic data site. *Students are expected to bring hard copies of all the readings to class, along with detailed readings notes.*

• **‘OPENING QUESTIONS’**: students will be asked to introduce a selected reading (from the assigned readings for a particular class) by posing several questions about issues raised in the reading, to facilitate beginning class discussion. These brief presentations will be scheduled during the first full week of class.

• **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & PLAGIARISM**: You may only submit your own original work in this course; this includes quizzes, exams, response essays, written papers, and other media. Please be careful to cite precisely and properly the sources of all authors and persons you have drawn upon in your written work. Plagiarism (from published or internet sources) is a serious violation of academic integrity and of the relationship of trust between student and instructor. Please take special care to indicate the precise source of all materials found on the web, indicating the correct URL address of any material you have quoted or in any way drawn upon. Remember, you must indicate through quotations, indentation and citation when quoting from any outside source (internet or print). Please consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* (online or in the Reference section of the library) if you are uncertain how to cite sources.

• **Late work** will only be accepted under exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the instructors, and if accepted, will be penalized.
• PLEASE NOTE: Students are responsible for properly posting all assigned work on LATTE, in a MS Word .doc format. If you have any questions on how to do this, please consult the LTS Help Desk in the library. Technical difficulties do not constitute an “excused” submission, and will be counted as late.

• Accommodations: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see the instructors at the start of the semester.

• Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week): Success in this this four credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

• Readings: Graduate students are encouraged to read “beyond” the syllabus whenever possible, following the work of a particular author, or reading more widely on a particular topic, in consultation with the instructor, and are expected to do all the “Recommended” reading.

• Postings: Follow the undergraduate postings, but please write a lengthier response (500 words or more)

• Paper #1: Graduate students will be required to write Paper #1 (7-8 pages)

• Final Research Paper: A research-length paper (at least 25 pages or longer) plus bibliography on a topic of their own choosing, in consultation with the instructor (a meeting with the instructor is required). Please follow the deadlines and instructions for OPTION #2 above (re. the research paper option—abstract and annotated bibliography due on Friday, 3/25 @ 10:00AM; and completed research paper due on 5/5/16 at 10:00AM

REQUIRED BOOKS: (available at the University Bookstore, and on Reserve in the Library)

• Michael Lambek (editor). A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion. (NOTE: abbreviation in syllabus is RAR)

• Ian Reader. Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku. (University of Hawaii Press)

• Jim Wafer. The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomble.

Course Outline

**Thursday, 1/14: Introduction—Thinking about Religion, Society, and Culture**

**Tuesday, 1/19: Foundational Concepts**

- Edwin Tylor. “Religion in Primitive Culture.” (RAR, pp. 21-33)
- Zygmunt Bauman. “Together and Apart” (Chapter 4 of *Thinking Sociologically*) (pp. 71-88) (LATTE)
- Clifford Geertz. “Religion as a Cultural System.” (RAR, pp. 61-82)

**Thursday, 1/21: Religion and Society: Aboriginal Australia and the American South**


**Tuesday, 1/26: “Bricolage”, Ritual and Games: Myth-making and Ritual Experience**


**Thursday, 1/28: Belief and Experience**

- In class video: “Salem Family Revival.”
- Bradd Shore. “Spiritual Work, Memory Work: Revival and Recollection at Salem Camp Meeting.” (LATTE)

**Friday, 1/29: POSTING #1 Due at 10:00AM**

**Tuesday, 2/2: Categories, Category Violation and Category Transcendence**


• View film in class: *Holy Ghost People*

※ **Thursday, 2/4: Religion and Cultural Ethos**


ʹʹ **Tuesday, 2/9: PAPER #1 due on LATTE by 10:00 AM:** TopiC: “The Performance of Faith”: Develop a comparative discussion of Salem Camp Meeting (as discussed by Shore, and as seen in the film *Family Revival*) and the African American religious services discussed in Hinson's book. What differs in these two kinds of religious service, and why? Your discussion should bring to bear the ideas of at least TWO other authors discussed in the first section of the course. Which author’s approaches do you find the most effective, and why? As you refer to the film, please describe the scenes you choose to analyze **in detail**, analyzing the minutiae of social interactions, and material surroundings. For instance, you may wish to explore the material and symbolic significance of particular “sacred objects” featured in the films, *Salem Family Revival* (including the “tents”, photographs, or sawdust) or in film *Holy Ghost People* (the snakes and the congregation itself).

※ **Tuesday, 2/9: Religion and Society: West Africa**

• Meyer Fortes. “Fate in Relation to the Social Structure.” (RAR, pp. 376-382)

• Karin Barber. “How Man Makes God in West Africa.” (LATTE)

※ **Thursday, 2/11: Mirrors and Models of the Self: Zar in the Sudan**

• Janice Boddy. “Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan: The Cultural Therapeutics of Possession and Trance.” (RAR, pp. 398-418)


※ **Tuesday, 2/16: MIDTERM RECESS—NO CLASS**

※ **Thursday, 2/18: MIDTERM RECESS—NO CLASS**
※ **Tuesday, 2/23: Cosmology and Mind: Sherpa Religion**


※ **Thursday, 2/25: The Human Figurine and Ritual Practice**


※ **Tuesday, 3/1: Sacred Aesthetics and Ritual Practice in Japan**

- Ian Reader. “Cleaning Floors and Sweeping the Mind: Cleaning as a Ritual Process.” In *Ceremony and Ritual in Japan* (pp. 227-245) (LATTE)
- View sections of film: *Dream Girls.*

※ **Thursday, 3/3: Sacral Landscapes and Popular Japanese Religious Practice I**

- Ellen Schattschneider. *Immortal Wishes: Labor and Transcendence on a Japanese Sacred Mountain.* (selections)
- View and discuss film: *Tsugaru no kamisama* [Shaman of Tsugaru] on female Japanese shamanism (Directed by Omori).

※ **Tuesday, 3/8: Pilgrimage: Comparative Perspectives I**

- Erik Cohen. “Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence.” (LATTE)
• Paul Younger. “Velankanni Calling: Hindu Patterns of Pilgrimage at a Christian Shrine.” (LATTE)

※ Thursday, 3/10: Pilgrimage in Nepal

• Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi. “Religious Synthesis at a Muslim Shrine.” (LATTE)
• Donald Messerschmidt. “Hindu Pilgrimage in the Nepal Himalayas.” (LATTE)
• Tone Bleie. “Pilgrim Tourism in the Central Himalayas: The Case of Manakamana in Gorkha, Nepal.” (LATTE)

※ Tuesday, 3/15: SPECIAL CLASS—Korean Shamanic Music—Performance and Lecture by Dr. Hilary Finchum-Sung, (Ethnomusicologist)  NOTE LOCATION: SLOSBERG RECITAL HALL

Musicians: Musicians: Lee Tae-Back (Ajaeng/percussion); Yi Ji-Young (Gayageum); Won Wan-Chul (Daegeum); Lee Suk-Joo (Piri); Lim Hyeun-Bin (Pansori/folk song/percussion); Hilary Finchum-Sung (haegeum)

• Laurel Kendall. *Shamans, Housewives and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (please read the opening chapters) (on RESERVE in library)
• Boudewijn Walraven. *Songs of the Shaman: The Ritual Chants of the Korean Mudan* (please skim any sections you find of interest) (on RESERVE in library)

※ Thursday, 3/17: Concluding Discussion of Korean Material & Religion and National Symbols

• Concluding discussion of Korean materials and performance—Kendall and Walraven
• Screening and discussion of sections of films, *Mansin* (2014) and *In Between* (Sa eso) (2009)

気軽にFriday, 3/18: POSTING #2 Due @ 10:00AM on LATTE

※ Tuesday, 3/22: Sacral Landscapes and Popular Japanese Religious Practice I

• View film: *Marathon Monks of Mt. Hiei*
• John Stevens. *The Marathon Monks of Mt. Hiei*. (selections)

**Thursday, 3/24: Sacral Landscapes and Popular Japanese Religious Practice II**

• Ian Reader. *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku.* (selections—LATTE)

• View sections of film: *Walking Pilgrims (Arukibenro).*

**Tuesday, 3/29: Inversion and Spiritual Power**

• Paul Radin. “The Winnebago Trickster Figure.” (*RAR*, pp. 244-257)


**Thursday, 3/31: National Imaginaries and Religious Ritual**


• John Nelson. “Social Memory as Ritual Practice: Commemorating Spirits of the Military Dead at Yasukuni Shinto Shrine.” (LATTE)


**Monday, 4/4: Paper #2 OR Final Research Paper Abstract & Annotated Bibliography Due at 10:00AM on LATTE**

**Tuesday, 4/5: Religion and (Anti) Colonialism**


**Thursday, 4/7: Thinking about the Haj**

• James Steel Thayer. “Pilgrimage and its Influence in West African Islam.” (LATTE)
• Richard McGregor, Dressing the Ka’ba from Cairo: The Aesthetics of Pilgrimage to Mecca. In Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief, edited by David Morgan (pp. 247-261) (LATTE)

• View film: Inside Mecca. Directed by Anisa Mehdi.

※ Tuesday, 4/12: The Work of the Dead

• Thomas Laquer. The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains (selections) (LATTE)

• View film: The Tomb of the Unknowns (Arlington Cemetery)

※ Thursday, 4/14: Spirit Possession in Candomble I

• Jim Wafer. The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomble. (begin)

※ Tuesday, 4/19: Spirit Possession in Candomble II (LAST CLASS)

• Jim Wafer. The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomble. (concluding discussion)

(dirname) Friday, 4/15 Posting #3: @ 10:00AM

※ Thursday, 4/21: BRANDEIS FRIDAY—NO CLASS

(dirname) Tuesday, 5/5: FINAL PAPER DUE—PAPER #3, OR Final Resarch Paper Option ON LATTE by 10:00AM