Instructor: Dr. Ellen Schattschneider
Class: Tuesday and Friday, 11:00-12:20
Office Hours: Friday 8:30-10:30 & by appointment
Office: Brown 202
Phone: 781-736-2219
email: eschatt@brandeis.edu

Teaching Assistant: Houman Oliaei
Office Hours: TBA
Office: 112
email: 

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)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

• 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 (3)—Periodic Reading Responses (3 postings total)—Due: Posting #1: 9/26 @ 10:00AM; Posting #2: 11/7 @ 10:00AM; Posting #3: 12/10 @ 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: 10/8 @ 10:00AM on LATTE, in appropriate “Assignments” Folder)

OPTION #1:
  • PAPER #2: 7-8 pages, double spaced—Due: 11/19 @ 5:00PM (topic TBA—will be posted on LATTE, in appropriate “Assignments” Folder)
  • PAPER #3: 7-8 pages, double spaced—Due: 12/17 (topic TBA—will be posted on LATTE, in appropriate “Assignments” Folder)
OPTION #2:
- **FINAL RESEARCH PAPER ABSTRACT & ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**—Due: 11/19 @ 5:00PM
- **COMPLETED FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (OPTION #2) 14-16 pages, double spaced:** Due 12/17 at 10:00AM

Students who chose OPTION #2 (Final Research Paper) will be asked to submit a 1 page abstract of the proposed 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 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 11/12 @ 10:00AM; and completed research paper due on 12/17 at 10:00AM

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**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)
• Casey Golomski. Funeral Culture: AIDS, Work, and Cultural Change in an African Kingdom.
• Esra Özyürek. Being German, Becoming Muslim: Race, Religion and Conversion in the New Europe. (Paperback)

Recommended:

• Emile Durkheim. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.

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Course Outline

Friday, 8/32: Introduction—Thinking about Religion, Society, and Culture

Tuesday, 9/4: 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)

Friday, 9/7: Religion and Society: Aboriginal Australia and the American South

• Emile Durkheim. “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.” (RAR, pp. 34-49)
• Bradd Shore. “Spiritual Work, Memory Work: Revival and Recollection at Salem Camp Meeting.” (LATTE)
• In class video: “Salem Family Revival.”

Tuesday 9/11: No class: Rosh Hashanah

Friday 9/14: Belief and Experience

• Malcolm Ruel. “Christians as Believers.” (RAR, pp. 99-113)

• Emile Durkheim. Brief selection from The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. (LATTE)

**Tuesday, 9/18: 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)

• Emile Durkheim. Brief selection from The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. (LATTE)

**Friday, 9/21: Categories, Category Violation and Category Transcendence**

• Mary Douglas. “Land Animals, Pure and Impure.” (RAR, pp. 184-209)

• Victor Turner. “Liminality and Communitas.” (RAR, pp. 358-374)

• Emile Durkheim. Brief selection from The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. (LATTE)

• View film in class: Holy Ghost People

**Tuesday, 9/25: NO CLASS: “Brandeis Monday”**

**Wednesday, 9/26: Posting #1—Due @ 10:00AM**

**Friday, 9/28: Religion and Cultural Ethos**


• Max Weber. Additional selections from the Protestant Ethic, and “Charisma”.

**Tuesday, 10/2: Revisiting Durkheim and Durkheimians—“Collective Representation” and “Collective Effervescence” and Binary Oppositions**

• Emile Durkheim. Selections from Chapters 6, 7 & 9 of The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. (LATTE)

• Robert Hertz. “Death and the Right Hand.” (LATTE)

• REVIEW—of Victor Turner and Mary Douglas
Friday, 10/5: The Boundaries of Ritual: Games, Ritual and “Bricolage”

- Leon Festinger. *When Prophecy Fails* (selections). (LATTE)
- Bradd Shore. “Loading the Bases: How Our tribe Projects its Own Image into the National Pastime.” (LATTE)

**MONDAY 10/8: 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 Bradd Shore, and as seen in the film *Family Revival*) and the religious service depicted in Holy Ghost People. 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, 10/9: Cosmology and Mind: Sherpa Religion**


Friday, 10/12: Materiality and the Spirit (viewing thangka mandala in Anthropology Material Culture Lab)


Tuesday, 10/16: The Human Figurine and Ritual Practice—guest lecture by Dr. Holly Walters

- Holly Walters. “Living Fossils: Impressions of a Once and Future World.” (paper copies handed out, and on LATTE)

RECOMMENDED:
• Ellen Schattschneider. “Buy Me a Bride.” *American Ethnologist.* (LATTE)


**Friday, 10/19: Sacral Landscapes and Popular Japanese Religious Practice I**

• Ellen Schattschneider. *Immortal Wishes: Labor and Transcendence on a Japanese Sacred Mountain.* (selection—LATTE)

• View and discuss film: *Tsugaru no kamisama* [Shaman of Tsugaru] on female Japanese shamanism (Directed by Omori).

**Tuesday, 10/23: Sacral Landscapes and Popular Japanese Religious Practice II**

• View film: *Marathon Monks of Mt. Hiei*

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

**RECOMMENDED:**


**Friday, 10/26: The Shikoku Pilgrimage in Japan**

• Screen sections of film, *Arukibenro* (Walking Pilgrims) about the Shikoku pilgrimage in Japan


**Friday, 11/2: National Imaginaries and Religious Ritual**

• John Nelson. “Social Memory as Ritual Practice: Commemorating Spirits of the Military Dead at Yasukuni Shinto Shrine.” (LATTE)
• Klaus Antoni. “Yasukuni Jinja and Folk Religion: The Problem of Vengeful Spirits.” (LATTE)

** Posting #2–Rolling Deadline: 10/31–11/7 submitted to LATTE

Friday, 11/2: Religion and (Anti) Colonialism—I

• Jean and John Comaroff. Of Revelation to Revolution, VOLUME 2. (required book)
  
  Chapter 1: Introduction
  Chapter 2: Preachers and Prophets: The Domestication of the Sacred Word

Tuesday, 11/6: Religion and (Anti) Colonialism—II

• Jean and John Comaroff. Of Revelation to Revolution, VOLUME 2.
  
  Chapter 3: Cultivation, Colonialism, and Christianity: Toward a New African Genesis
  Chapter 4: Currencies of Conversion: Of Markets, Money, and Value

Friday, 11/9: Religion and (Anti) Colonialism—III

• Jean and John Comaroff. Of Revelation to Revolution, VOLUME 2.
  
  Chapter 5: Fashioning the Colonial Subject: The Empire’s Old Clothes
  Chapter 6: Mansions of the Lord: Architecture, Interiority, Domesticity

Tuesday, 11/13: The Work of the Dead—Swaziland I

• Casey Golomski. Funerary Cultures. AIDS, Work, and Cultural Change in an African Kingdom. (required book)
  
  Introduction
  Chapters 1 - 3

Friday, 11/16: Southern African Religious and Political Experience—Film screening and Discussion

• Screen film about Southern African religious experience, the AIDS pandemic, mortuary practices, and political protest
  
  • Continue discussing beginning of Golomski’s book
**MONDAY, 11/19:  PAPER #2 DUE AT 5:00 PM on LATTE—OR—RESEARCH PAPER ABSTRACT AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (see description of “Option #2” above)

**TUESDAY, 11/20:  The Work of the Dead—Swaziland II

- Casey Golomski. *Funeral Cultures. AIDS, Work, and Cultural Change in an African Kingdom.* (required book)
  
  Chapter 4 through the Conclusion

**FRIDAY, 11/23:  NO CLASS—Thanksgiving

**TUESDAY, 11/27:  Concluding Discussion of Golomski, and Comparative Issues (AIDS Quilt, etc.)

**FRIDAY, 11/30:  The Work of the Dead—European Historical Contexts


- Thomas Laqueur. “Memory and Naming in the Great War.”

- View selections from film, *Tomb of the Unknowns*, in Arlington National Cemetery

**TUESDAY, 12/4:  Religion, Nationalism and Personhood—I

- Esra Ozyurek. *Being German, Becoming Muslim: Race, Religion and Conversion in the New Europe.* (Princeton University Press, 2014) — (required book) (Chapters 1-3)


**TUESDAY, 12/11:  Posting #3: @ 5:00PM
Tuesday, 12/11: (LAST CLASS) Concluding Discussion—Definition of Religion?

- Revisiting earlier definitions of “religion”
- Concluding discussion of issues relevant to final paper

Monday, 12/17: FINAL PAPER DUE—PAPER #3 — OR — Final Research Paper Option submitted on LATTE by 10:00AM