

## **Comparative Religion**

ANTH 330

Ritual and religion have historically been powerful shapers of society. Every society that has existed has asked universal questions like the following: Where do we come from? Why are we here? What are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to act? What happens to us when we die? What does it all mean? This course provides a cross cultural and comparative examination of religious, cultural and ideological constructs that people have generated in seeking to answer these questions. The course examines the role of religion as an integral component of worldview and social institutions. Unlike other courses on the Anthropology of Religion that emphasize what social scientific theories have concluded about religion, this course instead relies on primary texts to inform us. We will be reading from the Bible, Koran, Book of the Hopi and other historical manuscripts that convey sacred teachings. We will enhance our knowledge of religious texts through conversation with practicing religious specialists. The course provides students with unique learning opportunities through first-hand exploration of specific religions as presented by local religious specialists. Scheduled visits to local churches, mosques, temples and synagogues, where we will meet with religious leaders, are mandatory for satisfactory completion of course requirements.

### Course Objectives:

- Gain knowledge of the fundamental elements of religion
- View religious beliefs and behaviors in their historical, political, cultural and economic contexts
- Understand the role of myth in culture and society
- Articulate key components and notions that make up religious thought
- Understand the purpose of ritual
- Realize the power of metaphor
- Enhance greater tolerance through exposure to new ways of thinking

## **Course Schedule:**

**Come to class having read the assigned reading for that week**

### WEEK 1

#### **HOLY—that of the other world**

Introduction: Anthropological Study of Religion; The Concept of Culture; Diverse Definitions of Religion; Fundamental Elements of Religion: Holy/Sacred vs. Profane; Creation; Anima and the One; the Hero/Prophet/Messenger; Sacred Texts; Ethics/Codes of Behavior; Ritual and Prayer; the Center-Umbligo; Death and Afterlife

Exercise: zooming out and reflecting on Joseph Campbell's discussion on the eternal, "Masks of Eternity."

#### **READ for next week:**

*Book of the Hopi*, Creation  
*Old Testament*, Genesis

### WEEK 2

#### **CREATION**

Cosmogony; Origins of the Universe and Human Beings; Cosmic Architecture; Religious World View; *Popol Vuh*

Quiz on reading

Discuss: *Book of Hopi* and *Genesis*

READ: *Vedas* and *Upanisads*

### WEEK 3

#### **ANIMA**

Anima and the Concept of the Soul; Supernatural Entities; Creator Gods, anthropomorphization

READ: *Baghavat Gita*

### WEEK 4

The Eternal, symbolic imaging, personification

View:

*Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth: The Message of the Myth*

READ: *Gilgamesh*

### WEEK 5

**Native American Holy Man: A Visit and lecture from Robert John Knapp.**

READ: *Siddhartha*

WEEK 6

**HERO/MESSENGER/PROPHET**

Religious Ideology, Metaphor, Rebirth, Archetypes

Discuss *Gilgamesh* and *Siddhartha*

Video on Islam

READ: *Koran*

WEEK 7

**Explorations in Religious Studies**

View: *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth: The Hero's Adventure*

Exercise: see WebCT

WEEK 8

**Visit to Islamic Center of San Diego  
with Imam Taha Hassane**

Meet there at 3pm. Do not be late, be respectful, dress appropriately.

WEEK 9

**SACRED TEXTS AND TEACHINGS**

Religious Beliefs and Symbols; Ritual Language; Mythology

READ: *TBA*

WEEK 10

**Explorations in Religious Studies**

**ETHICS/CODES OF BEHAVIOR**

Interpretation of Religious Teaching; Religious Social Organization;

Types of Religious Specialists; Religion as Institution

READ: *Tao Te Ching*

View: *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth: Love and the Goddess*

Exercise: see WebCT

WEEK 11

**RITUAL AND PRAYER**

Purpose of Ritual; Prayer, Song and Chant; the Enactment of Religious Beliefs; Communion; Life Cycle Rituals, Ecstasy, Enlightenment

Judaism videorecording

READ: Torah

WEEK 12

**Visit to Adat Salom Synagogue**

WEEK 13

**Visit to Deer Park Buddhist Monastery**

READ: *TBA*

View: *Myth of the Five Suns*

WEEK 14 December 1

**CENTER-UMBLIGO**

The World Tree, The World Navel, Pyramid, Temple, Home; Religion and Economics, Politics and Gender, Lord Pacal

READ: *Egyptian Book of the Dead*; *Tibetan Book of the Dead*

WEEK 15 December 8

**DEATH AND AFTERLIFE**

Apocalypse, the fate of the soul

Texts:

We will be relying as much as possible on primary sources. I will have texts and excerpts available through the e-reserve system at the library homepage. Password=religion

Vedas—the Rig Veda

Upanisads—Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Chandogya, Taittiriya

Baghavad Gita

Bible—Old and New Testaments

Torah

Vayikra: The Book of Leviticus

Koran

Book of the Hopi—Frank Waters (see e-reserve,)

Popol Vuh

Tibetan Book of the Dead

Egyptian Book of the Dead

Gilgamesh

Siddhartha Herman Hesse

**Evaluation and Requirements:**

We will be taking several field trips to various sacred sites throughout the semester to meet with religious specialists. These trips are required. Please be sure to fill out the waiver form and return it to Dr. Bade before traveling during class time.

**1. Research Paper (25%)**

Choose 1-3 elements of religious thought and elaborate them using both ethnographic and scholarly research on and in a particular religion or religious philosophy. Six pages double-spaced.

**2. Explorations in Religious Studies: Ethnographic Observations**

WebCT (25%)

You may attend a lecture or discussion on religion, or a religious service, and write two pages on it. Your writings should state where and when you attended the session, along with the name of the speaker. You will need to do this at least three times during the semester in order to earn full credit for this assignment.

**3. Exercises or quizzes on readings, video, and course material**

WebCT (25%)

**4. Final Exam (25%)**

**Academic Honesty:**

Each student shall maintain academic honesty in the conduct of his or her studies and other learning activities at CSUSM. The integrity of this academic institution, and quality of the education provided in its degree programs, are based on the principle of academic honesty. The maintenance of academic honesty and quality education is the responsibility of each student within this university and the California State University System. Cheating and plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus is listed in Section 41301, Title 5, California Code of Regulations, as an offense for which a student may be expelled, suspended, put on probation, or given a less severe disciplinary sanction. See page 77 of the 2006-2008 General Catalog or at ([http://www.csusm.edu/academic\\_programs/catalog/](http://www.csusm.edu/academic_programs/catalog/)) for more information on the Academic Honesty Policy.