

# **Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, Culture and Society**

**July 2018**

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## **Type of Class Arrangement:**

Three days a week, 14:30-18:00

## **Course Description and Objectives:**

This course is for those who are interested in the anthropological approaches and methods of studying religious and cultural practices in both western and non-western societies.

The course will enable students to gain access to the history of anthropology and learn from various theoretical ideas that examine religion, culture and society. They will also be informed of key debates in anthropology and be encouraged to critically examine issues found in the following key topics; ritual, symbolism, purity and pollution, gender, body, spirit possession, healing, death, and religious practices in the Diaspora, by way of attending lectures, reading monographs, discussing ethnographic films, and examining empirical case studies. The students are expected to conduct short fieldwork on one of the topics discussed in the lectures.

## **Topic for Each Session:**

1. Introduction: Anthropological Approaches and Methods
2. Ritual
3. Symbolic Meanings
4. Purity and Pollution
5. Body and Spirituality
6. Gender and Sex
7. Ancestor worship
8. Spirit Cults
9. The Diaspora

## **Teaching Methods:**

Lecture and seminar discussion

## **Recommended Readings:**

Bowie, Fiona (2000) 2006. *The Anthropology of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell.  
Hammersley, M. 2014. *Reading Ethnographic Research: A Critical Guide*. London: Routledge.  
Singleton, A. 2014. *Religion, Culture and Society: A Global Approach*. London: Sage.  
Stocking, G. W. 1983. *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Madison, WI: UWP.

**Assessment:** One 2,000 words essay on one of the topics has to be submitted by the deadline, which constitute 50 percent of the total course work. Exams marks will constitute the other 50 percent.

### **1. Introduction: Anthropological Approaches and Methods**

The lecture attempts to locate anthropological debates on religion, culture and society in the history of Western intellectual thought and provide comparative cross-cultural perspectives in understanding the 'other' mainly in non-Western societies. The anthropological methods of conducting fieldwork are also introduced to help students understand religious and cultural practices and meanings in their respective contexts. The lecture familiarises them with the development of 'participant observation'; a method widely used in ethnographic fieldwork.

#### **Reading:**

- Asad, T. 1993. 'The construction of religion as an anthropological category.' In *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Bernard, H. R. 2011. *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. London: Alta Mira.
- Borneman, J. and Hammoudi, A. (eds.) 2009. *The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (eds.) 1997. *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Jorgensen, D. L. 1989. *Participant Observation: A Methodology for Human Studies*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Kuper, A. 1973. *Anthropologists and Anthropology: the British School*. Penguin Books.
- Okely, J. 2012. *Anthropological Practice: Fieldwork and the Ethnographic Method*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.
- Robbn, A. C. G. M. and Sluka, J. A. (eds.) 2012. *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford; John Wiley & Sons.
- Sanjek, R. (ed.) 1990. *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

### **2. The Study of Ritual**

This lecture surveys some of the major developments that have taken place in ritual studies since the works of Van Gennep and Turner. Some rituals are intended to maintain social stability whilst others undermine or subvert the authority of social order. There are rituals performed to control aspects of natural environment and others that are simply about performance.

#### **Reading:**

- Alexander, B. C. 1997. 'Ritual and current studies of ritual: overview.' In *Anthropology of Religion: A Handbook*, (ed.) S. Glazier. London: Greenwood.
- Babb, L. A. 1970. 'The food of the gods in Chhattisgarh: some structural features of Hindu ritual.' *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 26, 3: 287-304.
- Bell, C. 1992. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: OUP.
- Bynum, C. 1987. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Douglas, M. (1973) 2003. *Food in the Social Order*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Grimes, R. L. 2013. *The Craft of Ritual Studies*. Oxford: OUP.
- Kertzer, D. I. 1988. *Ritual, Politics and Power*. London: Yale University Press.
- Rappaport, R. A. 1999. *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Schechner, R. 1993. *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Sax, W. S., Quack, J. & Weinhold, J. 2010. *The Problem of Ritual Efficacy*. Oxford: OUP.

Turner, V. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.  
Van Gennep, A. (1909) 1960. *The Rites of Passage*, (trans.) M. B. Vizedom & G. L. Caffee.  
Chicago: CUP.

### 3. Symbolic Meanings

Natural symbols play prominent roles in cultural and religious symbolism throughout the world. This lecture examines how bodily symbols are used as universal metaphor to construct order and express ways in which people communicate with one another.

#### Reading:

Douglas, M. 1970. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. New York: Random House.  
Firth, R. 1973. *Symbols: Public and Private*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.  
Hertz, R. 1973. 'The pre-eminence of the right hand: a study of religious polarity.' In *Right and Left*, (ed.) R. Needham, pp. 3-31.  
Hiltebeitel, A. and Miller, B. D. 1998. *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*. Albany, NY: SUNY.  
Jung, C. G. 1968. *Man and His Symbols*. New York: Dell.  
Needham, R. 1973. *Right and Left: Essays on Dual Symbolic Classification*. Chicago: UCP.  
Obeyesekere, G. 1984. *Medusa's Hair: Personal Symbols and Religious Experience*. Chicago: CUP.  
Synnott, A. 1993. *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self, and Society*. London and New York: Routledge;

### 4. Purity and Pollution

The lecture examines the agents, activities, periods, substances, and contexts that are known to pollute, whilst others purify. It also considers why 'pollution' challenges the social order and how taboos are used to demarcate and define social and religious boundaries.

#### Reading:

Bowen, J. 2004. *Religions in Practice: An Approach to the Anthropology of Religion*. New York: Pearson.  
Carman, J. B. & F. A. Marglin (eds.) 1985. *Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society*. Leiden: Brill.  
Douglas, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
Fuller, C. J. 1979. 'Gods, priests and purity: on the relation between Hinduism and the caste system.' *Man; New Series* 14, 3: 459-76.  
Miyazaki, F. 2005. 'Pilgrims and Mt. Fuji: changing perspectives on the exclusion of women author(s).' *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, 3: 339-91.

### 5. Body and Spirituality

The human body has served as a vehicle in the quest for higher spirituality through the use of various techniques ranging from extreme physical austerities to mental visualisations, providing a metaphor on topics such as that of the cosmos, divinity, and the nature of sacred. This lecture attempts to understand some of the ways in which physicality and spirituality becomes intertwined and constructed through the mediation of the social body.

#### Reading

Bell, R. M. 1987. *Holy Anorexia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  
Coakley, S. (ed.) 1997. *Religion and the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Das, V. 1985. 'Paradigms of body symbolism: an analysis of selected themes in Hindu culture.' In *Indian Religion*, (eds.) R. Burghart & A. Cantlie. London: Curzon Press.  
Douglas, M. 1995. *Implicit Meanings*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.  
Kawanami, H. 2001. 'Can women be celibate?' In *Celibacy, Culture and Society: the Anthropology of Sexual Abstinence*, (eds.) E. Sobo & S. Bell. Wisconsin: UWP.  
Ong, A. and Peletz, M. G. (eds.) 1995. *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Martin, E. 1992. *The Women in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Scott, S. and Morgan, D. 2004. *Body Matters: Essays on the Sociology of the Body*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Simpson, J. H. 1993. 'Religion and the body: sociological themes and prospects.' In *A Future for Religion? New Paradigms for Social Analysis*, (ed.) W. H. Swatos, Jr. London: Sage.
- Sullivan, L. E. 1990. 'Body works: knowledge of the body in the study of religion.' *History of Religions* 30: 86-99.

## 6. Gender and Sex

The lecture offers an anthropological perspective to the issue of gender and examine gender roles and practices in non-European societies. It examines how gender is re-constructed in initiation rituals and introduces debates regarding cultural representations of gender, and explores whether or not universal patterns can be discerned.

### Reading:

- Caplan, P. 1993. 'Learning gender: fieldwork in a Tanzanian coastal village, 1965-85.' In *Gendered Fields: Women, Men and Ethnography*, (eds.) D. Bell, P. Caplan & W. J. Karim. London: Routledge.
- Di Leonardo, M. 1991. *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*. Berkeley, CA: UCP.
- Lincoln, B. 1981. *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Rituals of Women's Initiation*. Oxford: OUP.
- Moore, H. 1988. *Feminism and Anthropology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lutkehaus, N. C. 1995. *Gender Rituals: Female Initiation in Melanesia*. London and New York: Routledge
- Ortner, S. B. 1974. 'Is female to male as nature is to culture?' In *Woman, Culture and Society*, (eds.) M. Rosaldo & L. Lamphere. Stanford University Press: 67-88.
- Ortner, S. B. & H. Whitehead (eds.) 1981. *Sexual Meanings: the Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rashid, S. F. 2000. 'Female adolescents and their sexuality: notions of honour, shame, purity and pollution during the floods.' *Disasters* 24, 1: 54-70.
- Richards, A. 1982. *Chisungu: A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia*. London and New York: Routledge.

## 7. & 8. Ancestor Worship and Spirit Cults

Shamanism and spirit possession comprise a complex and exciting subject for anthropological study. Different forms and variations of spirit possession are examined from case studies in Asia and Africa in an attempt to understand how people negotiate or appropriate external powers in their episodes of illness, dissociation, dreams, and therapy. It also questions the many definitions in order to understand the phenomena and examines the rationalist approaches to spirit possession that attempt to interpret such practices from pathological and psychological standpoints.

### Reading:

- Boddy, J. 2002. 'Spirits and selves in Northern Sudan: the cultural therapeutics of possession and trance.' In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (ed.) M. Lambeck. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Brown, K. M. 1991. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Connor, L. H. and Samuel, G. 2001. *Healing Powers and Modernity: Traditional Medicine, Shamanism and Science in Asian Societies*. London: Bergin & Garvey.
- Crapanzano, V. 1980. *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan*. Chicago: UCP.
- Davis, W. 1980. *Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan*. Stanford, CA: SUP.
- Humphrey, C. 1996. *Shamans and Elders: Experience, Knowledge and Power among the Daur Mongols*. Oxford: Clarendon.

- Jacobsen, M. D. 1999. *Shamanism: Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to the Mastery of Spirits and Healing*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Kapferer, B. 1983. *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Kehoe, A. B. & Gilletti, D. H. 1981. 'Womens' preponderance in possession cults: the calcium-deficiency hypothesis extended.' *American Anthropologist* 83 (3): 549-61.
- Lambek, M. 1981. *Human Spirits: a Cultural Account of Trance in Mayotte*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lan, D. 1985. *Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*. London: Currey.
- Lewis, I. M. 1971 (1989). *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Palmer, T. 2014. *The Science of Spirit Possession*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Ong, A. 1987. *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*. Albany, NY: SUNY.
- Tambiah, S. J. 1970. *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Vitebski, P. 1995. *The Shaman: Voyages of the Soul, Trance, Ecstasy and Healing from Siberia to Amazon*. London: Macmillan.

## 9. The Diaspora

The study of Diaspora has attracted a huge interest in the last 20 years and it is said that 'Diaspora' has become 'one of the buzzwords of the post modern age'. Interestingly, 'religion' in its transnational diasporic context received relatively little attention in this growing field until perhaps 9.11. The lecture provides an overview of the study of Diaspora and examines the dynamics of religious transformation in the areas of identity, practice, and the various approaches that refer to 'hybridity'.

### Reading:

- Abbas, T. (ed.) 2005. *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*. London: Zed Books.
- Bhabha, H. K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bowen, D. G. 1987. 'The evolution of Gujarati Hindu organizations in Bradford.' In *Hinduism in Great Britain: The Perpetuation of Religion in an Allen Cultural Milieu*, (ed.) R. Burghart. London, Tavistock.
- Braziel, J. & A. Mannur (eds.) 2003. *Theorising Diaspora*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Buijs, G. (ed.) 1993. *Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities*. Oxford: Berg.
- Canclini, N. G. 1995. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gardner, K. 1998. 'Death, burial and bereavement amongst Bengali Muslims in Tower Hamlets.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 24 (3): 507-21.
- Fortier, A-M 2000. *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*. Oxford: Berg.
- Hatcher, B. A. 1999. *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Iyall Smith, K. E. and Leavy, P. (eds.) 2008. *Hybrid Identities: Theoretical and Empirical Examinations*. Leiden: Brill.
- Nye, M. 1995. *A Place for our Gods: Construction of an Edinburgh Hindu Temple Community*. Richmond: Curzon.
- Puwar, N. & P. Raghuram (eds.) 2003. *South Asian Women in the Diaspora*. Oxford: Berg.
- Vertobec, S. 2001. 'Islamophobia and Muslim recognition in Britain.' In *Muslims in Western Diasporas: from Sojourns to Citizens*, (ed.) Y. Y. Haddad Oxford: OUP.
- Vertobec, S. 2000. *Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns*. London: Routledge.
- Werbner, P. 2002. *Imagined Diasporas among Manchester Muslims*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Williams, R. B. 1998. 'Training religious specialists for a trans-national Hinduism: a Swaminarayan sadhu training center.' *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 66: 841-62.