

REL4936 (6049), RLG5937 (1135), ANT4930 (167E),

ANG6930 (1666):

T5-6; R6. AND-34

"CONTEMPORARY SHAMANISMS"

Prof. Robin M. Wright (Off. Hrs: T-W-R 10:00 -
11:30; Anderson 107C; office phone: 392-1625;
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<http://www.newstudiesonshamanism.com>

Objectives of Course: This course examines the varieties of religious experience that come under the rubric of 'shamanism' and 'shaman'.

Part I presents an overview of shamanic spiritualities throughout the world, the processes of becoming a shaman, altered states of consciousness and shamanic transformations, and the relations of shamans to the cosmos and its spiritual powers. Part I also considers various ways of understanding the long-range historical development of shamanic consciousness.

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The course will consider several of the contemporary developments of shamanism by urbanized, non-indigenous movements: core shamanism and the neo-shamanic movement, shamanic revitalization movements, and prophet movements directly connected to shamanic cosmologies. The societies we will be focusing our attention on in the course include: early Celtic; contemporary Maya; contemporary 'core shamanism'; Amazonia; and Mongolia.

The next four units (Parts II-V) focus on shamans in history: II. The prophet movements in Native North American history; III. Assault sorcery in Amazonia; IV. Priestly vs shamanic knowledge and powers; V. Core shamanism and Revitalization movements. While there is overlap amongst all of these units, there are features which nevertheless distinguish one from the other, in regards to forms of knowledge and power, sociality, relations among human and other-than-human beings (spirits, especially).

Each unit will be amply illustrated and discussed through readings, audio-visual material, and the Professor's own research and experiences of over 35 years among indigenous Amazonian shamans, core shamanism of North America, prophet movements of the Americas. Slides, films, tape recordings, CDs from that work will be used during

class.

Course Readings: The most important books from which the readings for the course will be drawn, are:

1. Michael Harner, *Cave and Cosmos. Shamanic Encounters with Another Reality*, 2013. North Atlantic Books (paperback, \$19.95, Amazon.com);
2. Tom Cowan, *Fire in the Head. Shamanism and the Celtic Spirit*. 1993. Harper & Row (paperback. \$4.85 used. Amazon.com);
3. Manduhai Buyandelger, *Tragic Spirits. Shamanism, Memory, and Gender in contemporary Mongolia*. 2013. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Kindle e-book Amazon.com)
4. R.M. Wright, *Mysteries of the Jaguar shamans of the Northwest Amazon*. 2013. University of Nebraska Press.
5. N. Whitehead & R. Wright, *In Darkness and Secrecy*. 2004, Duke. (paperback, used \$8.24 on Amazon.com);
6. Alfred A. Cave. *Prophets of the Great Spirit. Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America*. 2006. University of Nebraska Press (\$20.00 new or used hardback. Amazon-com);
7. Pedro Pitarch. *The Jaguar and the Priest. An Ethnography of Tzeltal Souls*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 2010.

The majority of the books will be put on Reserve at Smathers Library. Copies of all articles will be uploaded to the course Sakai website and on the site www.newstudiesonshamanism.com

Course website: Established in 2011, www.newstudiesonshamanism.com is a growing resource for recent research on shamans in the world. Its site name, "Maliri, X'men and World-Making", refers to two ethnic

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names for "shaman" in two different cultures (Mayan and Arawakan) and to one of the principal powers of the shaman to unfold, reveal, and communicate with the spirit world. To enter the course website, create a Username and Password and begin to browse; there are many resources that will be useful during the course.

Schedule of Classes, Readings, Films and Exams:

01/07: course presentation and introduction to the readings;

UNIT I: PARAMETERS OF SHAMANISM;

01/09: **DEFINITIONAL QUESTIONS.** York, "Shamanism - Traditional" & "Urban Shamanism", in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (hereafter ERN), v.2, pp. 1532-37 ([on website](#)); "Indigenous Religious Traditions of the World", https://www.academia.edu/1972191/INDIGENOUS_RELIGIOUS_TRADITIONS_OF_THE_WORLD;

01/14: **THE WORLD'S OLDEST SPIRITUAL TRADITION.**

Fire in the Head, Tom Cowan;

01/16: *Fire in the Head*, Tom Cowan;

01/21: **BECOMING A SHAMAN.**

Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans, Introduction, Ch. 1, "You Are Going to Save Many Lives. Life-Story Of Manuel Da Silva, Hohodene Jaguar-Shaman"; Ch. 2, "Mandu's

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Apprenticeship and a Jaguar-shaman's Powers of World-making",

01/23: **ALTERING STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS.** Langdon, Jean, 2014, "Ayahuasca and Shamanism"; "In Search of Parika" (with ppt. presentation, "Blood of the Ancestors"); "Malikai Dapana: Baniwa House of Shamans' Knowledge and Power"; M. Harner, "The Sound of Rushing water" (**course website**)

01/28: **SHAMANISM AND COSMOLOGIES.** J. Overing, "Shaman as 'Maker of Worlds'"; Chapter 4, *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans*;

01/30: **Discussion of Unit 1. Written Take-Home Exam on UNIT I.**

02/04: **UNIT II: SHAMANISM AND POWER. PROPHETS AND GREAT SPIRITS.** Alfred Cave, *Prophets Of The Great Spirit*

02/11: Alfred Cave, *Prophets Of The Great Spirit*

02/13: Alfred Cave, *Prophets Of The Great Spirit*

02/18: Alfred Cave, *Prophets Of The Great Spirit*

02/20: **PAPERS ON UNIT II DUE**

UNIT III: ASSAULT SORCERY

02/25: "Introduction" to *In Darkness and Secrecy*, Whitehead and Wright; M. Brown, "Dark Side of the Shaman" (**on course**)

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website); Johannes Wilbert, "The Order of Dark Shamans among the Warao", Fernando Santos-Granero, "The Enemy Within" (**on website**) Wright, 2013; and Carlos Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco". All In Whitehead & Wright, *In Darkness and Secrecy*. Also, Wright (2013)Ch. 3, "You Will Suffer Along Our Way"

02/27: **Film:** "Baniwa. A Story Of Plants And Cures"

MARCH 01 - 08: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASSES.

03/11: DISCUSSION OF CASES; PAPERS ON UNIT III DUE.

UNIT IV: Priestly Knowledge and Power

03/13: Pedro Pitarch, *The Jaguar And The Priest*;

03/18: Pitarch, *Jaguar and the Priest*;

03/20: Pitarch, *Jaguar and the Priest*;

03/25: **Film, (TBD)**

03/27: DISCUSSION OF UNIT IV; PAPERS ON UNIT IV DUE.

UNIT V: Core Shamanism & Shamanic Revitalizations

04/01: *Cave And Cosmos*, M. Harner; Kocku von Stuckrad, "Harner, Michael - and the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, ERN, v. 1, 743-4;

04/03: *Cave And Cosmos*, M. Harner,

04/08: *Cave And Cosmos*, M. Harner;

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04/10: Revitalization of Shamanic Traditions: Mongolia

Tragic Spirits, Buyandelger;

Supplementary Reading (recommended)

"A Revival of Mongolian Shamanism", p. 3-11, *Shamanism Annual* (**on course website**); "The Revival of Shamanism in State-Level Societies", F. Lipp, pp. 11-17, (**on website**); "In Search of Traditional Shamans", Daur in Inner Mongolia...", Grimaldo, pp. 17-24 (**on website**); "Soul Loss or Diminishment", Sifers, pp. 24-30 (**on website**).

04/15: *Tragic Spirits*, Buyandelger;

04/17: *Tragic Spirits*, Buyandelger;

04/22: DISCUSSION ON UNIT V; COURSE WRAP-UP.

(END OF READING PERIOD): PAPERS ON UNIT V DUE (in Religion Department, Anderson 107).

Course Requirements:

Four (4) short (3-5 pp.) reflection papers on each of the major units of the course, and a written test on Unit 1. The four papers count for 80% of the final grade. Class participation (5%) and the written test (15%) = 20%. Students are expected to attend all classes and complete assigned readings prior to each class meeting. Class participation does count in final grade evaluation. **Continued absence will not be tolerated;** following the

third absence, 2 grade points will be taken off the final grade for each day of absence. **More than 6 absences will lead to administrative withdrawal from the course;**

Pop-quizzes will be administered whenever the Professor considers them necessary.

REGULATIONS OF THE COURSE:

1. **Plagiarism or cheating:** Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm><http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm> for more information on UF policies.

2. **Incompletes are strongly discouraged** and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete **before** the end of the semester.

3. **Make-up exams and quizzes** will be given only under very special circumstances, such as a medical emergency. In that case, students must bring a doctor's note.

4. Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom. Please turn phones and pagers off during class.

5. **Students with Disabilities.** Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.