

## **RELS 305.01 Indigenous Religions: Shamanism**

(Spring 2019, 2:00-3:15 M/W ECTR 219)

Dr. Lee Irwin, Religious Studies

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Religious Studies Department

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Office Hours: MW 11:00-12:00, 1:00-2:00; F: 11:00-12:00

(Or by appointment)

### **Course Description:**

This course will explore various types of shamanic practitioners in four cultural contexts: first, we will look at an American example in Canada, the Ojibwa, and their religious practices related to shamanism. Then we will transition to Siberian peoples of Russia, with emphasis on the shamans of Mongolia. A third example will be the use of Ayahuasca in Peruvian shamanism. A final example will be contemporary "core shamanism" promoted by the well-known American shaman teacher, Michael Harner. Interspersed with the ethnographic accounts will be readings on theories of shamanism from the 16th century to the present. We will explore the contested meaning of "shaman" and "shamanism" and how these concepts have been constructed and deconstructed by writers and scholars of different disciplines. The primary questions of this course are: "What is shamanism?" "What are the practices and beliefs of shamanism in a comparative and contemporary context?" and "How has shamanism been evaluated by non-practitioners?" We will also look at various visual materials to better appreciate the non-cognitive, ritual aspects of shamanism; we will also explore the role of dreams, visions, paranormal perception, trance (ASC), possession, divination, and spirit communication in various shamanic eco-cosmologies.

### **Books (Required):**

Capos, Don Jose. *The Shaman & Ayahuasca* (Divine Arts, 2011).

Grim, John. *The Shaman: Patterns of Religious Healing Among the Ojibway Indians*. (University of Oklahoma Press; Reprint 1988).

Harner, Michael. *Cave and Cosmos: Shamanic Encounters with Another Reality* (North Atlantic Books, 2013).

Narby, Jeremy. *Shamans Through Time: 500 Years on the Path to Knowledge*. TarcherPerigee; Reprint edition (September 9, 2004).

Turner, Kevin. *Sky Shamans of Mongolia: Meetings with Remarkable Healers*. Paperback (North Atlantic Books, 2016).

### **Requirements:**

Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions, failure to do so may result in a lower final grade (two missed classes permitted). Grades will be based on the following nine assignments: five one-page critical reading exercises (CRE, each worth 5% = 25%; you can turn in more of these for extra credit); three exams (each 15% = 45%), one final 8-10 page paper (5% for proposal + 25% for paper = 30%). No quizzes! No excuses will be accepted for missed assignments, such as oversleeping, lost books, or being stuck out of town. Assignments and tests are due on the day they are assigned. If you have a legitimate excuse, please talk to me before the scheduled assignment. Students must make up any missed assignments (or receive an F).

### **Classroom Electronics:**

Students must TURN OFF all electronic devices before class starts; you are not permitted to engage in texting or reading electronic mail (etc.) while class is in session. If you have a computer for taking notes, you must ONLY take notes (no jumping to read email or surf the web). Any violation of this code will result in a deduction of points from your final grade average; repeated violations will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Honor Code:** Lying, cheating, and plagiarism (failure to cite sources used in a paper) are violations of the Honor Code. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure based on dishonesty. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating.

**Center for Student Learning (CSL)** offers academic support services for assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843) 953-5635.

**Disabilities:** If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter to me from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. Please discuss with me any special needs you may have. For more information regarding accommodation and SNAP program, see: <http://www.cofc.edu/~cds/index.htm>

**Grading Scale:**

Numerical/letter grades: A+ = 100-97; A = 96-93; A- = 92-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D+ = 69-67; D = 66-63; D- = 62-60; F = 59 or lower.

**Reading Assignments:** Readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

- I. **Week One, January 9:** Introduction to Shamanism
  - A. Reading Assignment: Narby & Huxley, pp. 1-22  
Discuss: One Page Critical Reading Assignment (CRA) [Handout]
  
- II. **Week Two, January 14, 16:** Siberian Shamanism
  - A. Readings: Narby & Huxley, pp. 23-37;
  - B. Readings: Grim, 1-55
  - C. **Grade Assignment: CRE One, due Jan 16** (Grim 14-55)
  
- III. **Week Three, January 23** (No class Jan 21): Ojibwa Shamanism
  - A. Readings: Narby & Huxley, pp. 41-42, 49-57, 64-71
  - B. Readings: Grim, 56-119
  
- IV. **Week Four, January 28, 30**
  - A. Readings: Nary & Huxley: 72-73, 75-89, 90-93
  - B. Readings: Grim, 120-167 Ojibwa Cosmology
  - C. **Grade Assignment: CRE Two, due Jan 30** (Narby & Huxley, 72-93)
  
- V. **Week Five, February 4, 6**
  - A. Readings: Grim, 168-208 Ojibwa Ritual / Trance
  - B. **Grade Assignment: EXAM ONE, Feb 6** (Siberian and Ojibwa Shamanism)
  
- VI. **Week Six, February 11, 13**
  - A. Readings: Narby & Huxley, 94-107, 119-120, 128-130
  - B. Readings: Turner, 3-58 Mongolian Shamanism
  - C. **Grade Assignment: CRE Three, due Feb 13** (Turner 37-58)
  
- VII. **Week Seven, February 18, 20**
  - A. Readings: Narby & Huxley, 137-140; 141-147, 148-153
  - B. Readings: Turner, 59-122

**VIII. Week Eight, February 25, 27**

- A. Readings: Narby & Huxley, 169-177, 178-183
- B. Turner, 123-183

**IX. Week Nine, March 4, 6**

- A. **Grade Assignment: EXAM TWO, March 4** (Mongolian Shamans)
- B. Reading: Campos 1-43 Mestizo Shamanism

**X. Week Ten, March 11, 13**

- A. Readings: Narby & Huxley 195-199;
- B. Reading Assignment: Campos, 44-88
- C. **Grade Assignment: CRE Four, due March 13** (Campos: 31-57)

**SPRING BREAK MARCH 17-23**

**XI. Week Eleven, March 25, 27**

- A. Readings: Narby & Huxley pp. 216-222; 227-233
- B. Readings: Campos, 89-129
- C. Pass out Paper Assignment (Proposal & Paper Guidelines)

**XII. Week Twelve, April 1, 3**

- A. **Grade Assignment: EXAM THREE, April 1 (Mestizo Shamanism)**
- B. Readings: Narby & Huxley, 248-250, 251-256, 257-260
- C. Reading Assignment: Harner, 1-66 (Core Shamanism)

**XIII. Week Thirteen, April 8, 10**

- A. Readings: Narby & Huxley, 263-271, 280-285
- B. Readings: Harner, 67-134
- C. **Grading Assignment: CRE Five due April 10** (Harner, 47-95)

**XIV. Week Fourteen, April 15, 17**

- A. Readings: Narby & Huxley, 286-290, 291-297
- B. Readings: Harner, 135-196
- C. **Grading Assignment: Final Paper Proposal Due, April 15**

**XV. Week Fifteen, April 22, 23**

- A. Narby & Huxley, 298-300, 301-305
- B. Readings: Harner, 197-216
- C. **Grade Assignment: Final Paper Due April 23**