

# ANTH 254: Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion

Summer 2024

Classroom: COCC Prineville Campus 120

Meeting Time: Mondays (in-person) & Wednesdays (Zoom) 10:15am - 12:15pm

Instructor: Dr. Bennett Comerford

World, Languages, and Cultures Department

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Office Location: Barber Library Basement, Room 013

Office Hours: Mondays 12:15pm-1:15pm (Prineville) and via Zoom by appointment

## Course Description

What do magic and witchcraft have to do with religion? What do the terms “magic,” “witchcraft,” and “religion” even mean? What similarities do they share? How might they differ? What can we learn from a cross-cultural study of these terms and concepts? This course approaches such questions from an anthropological perspective. By focusing on these central and longstanding topics of interest in the field of anthropology, we will also consider the history of anthropology itself, with an emphasis on the subfield of the anthropology of religion. This course facilitates a deeper awareness of religious pluralism in a multicultural world and promotes openness to and tolerance of perspectives different from the student’s own.

*Recommended preparation: WR 121*

## Course Modules

Week 1: Introducing Socio-Cultural Anthropology and the Academic Study of Religion

Week 2: Magic and Witchcraft in Popular Culture

Week 3: Magic and Witchcraft beyond North America

Week 4: Exploring Ethnography

Week 5: Course Conclusions: Local Religion, Witchcraft, and Magic

## Topics Covered

Week 1: Introducing Anthropology

Week 1: Cultural Anthropology: Theories and Methods

Week 2: Religion and Culture

Week 2: Anthropology of Religion

Week 3: Anthropological Intersections: Mixing Magic and Witchcraft with Religion

Week 3: God, Gods, and Goddesses

Week 4: Ritual

Week 4: Divination  
Week 5: Rites of Passage  
Week 5: Healing, Death, and Dying  
Week 6: Local Religion, Witchcraft, and Magic

\*Final Project are due on Friday August 2nd\*

**Zoom Link for Wednesday Meetings:** <https://cocc.zoom.us/j/94261305156>

## Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will develop a general understanding of anthropology, the anthropology of religion, and religious studies. Students will be able to understand and articulate longstanding questions and theoretical concerns in the anthropological study of religion, witchcraft, and magic. The course provides foundational training in the social sciences and cultural literacy. Graded activities are designed to facilitate student development of critical thinking, reading, writing, and public speaking abilities.

## Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- (1) Discuss religion, magic, and witchcraft as categories of social scientific analysis
- (2) Comprehend the complexity and diversity of religious systems
- (3) Analyze the cultural context that informs religious systems
- (4) Identify major concepts of the discipline and apply them to concrete examples
- (5) Synthesize ideas and information from various academic sources

This class counts toward the *Social Science* requirement for the AAOT (Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer). Successful students will:

- Apply analytical skills to social phenomena in order to understand human behavior
- Apply knowledge and experience to foster personal growth and better appreciate the diverse social world in which we live

This course meets the *Cultural Literacy* requirement for the AAOT. Successful students will:

- Identify and analyze complex practices, values, and beliefs and the culturally and historically defined meanings of difference

## Course Materials

All course materials are available via Canvas or online.

## Graded Activities

Class Attendance and Participation: 15%  
Opening Class Presentation: 10%  
Weekly Discussion Board Posts/Quizzes: 35%  
Midterm Exam: 15%  
Final Project: 25%

*Weekly Discussion Board Posts/Quizzes are to be submitted via Canvas by 5pm each Friday.  
Midterm Exam date: Wednesday July 19<sup>th</sup>.  
Final Project due date: August 2nd.*

## Grading System

The grading system policy of COCC will be followed in assigning letter grades. The percentage distribution is as follows:

A	=	95-100%	B	=	84-86%	C	=	70-76%
A-	=	90-94%	B-	=	80-83%	D	=	60-69%
B+	=	87-89%	C+	=	77-79%	F	=	59% and lower

*Note: if you receive a "0" on any assignment it is because you did not submit or I do not have a record of your submission.*

## Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 12:15-1:15pm

I will be available to meet with students after class on Mondays and Wednesdays. I am also happy to arrange meetings at other times via Zoom or in person.

## Policies And Expectations

**Academic Integrity:** Academic honesty – being honest and truthful in academic settings, especially in the communication and presentation of ideas – is required to experience and fulfill the mission of COCC. Academic dishonesty – being untruthful, deceptive, or dishonest in academic settings in any way – subverts the university mission, harms faculty and students, damages the reputation of the university, and diminishes public confidence in higher education. Taking ideas or words from others without citation is a breach of trust and will result in a failing grade on the paper or assignment and possibly other disciplinary actions. If you are unsure about what plagiarism is, please feel free to ask me.

Everything you submit for this course **MUST** represent 100% your own work. Failure to comply with the Academic Integrity Policy will result immediate penalty and possible failing grade for the course.

**Conduct:** The success of this course depends on your willingness to participate in a manner that is respectful of other people's ideas and experiences. Students are expected to engage in a respectful manner with viewpoints that may they differ in substantive ways from their own. Always assume the best intentions and respond with the best intentions.

**COCC Policies:** Please be sure to review the Institutional Syllabus posted on the syllabus page in your Canvas courses. This Syllabus has information about snow closures, enrollment and drop deadlines, and class recording policies, along with other student rights and responsibilities.