

RELS 305 Topics in Indigenous Religions: Shamanism

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Office Hours: Mon & Weds 2:00-4:00
(or by appointment)

Course Description:

This course will explore various types of shamanic practitioners in three cultural contexts: first, the Siberian peoples of Russia, with a special emphasis on the Evenk-Tungus. Secondly, we will compare these Siberian shamanic traditions with those of Greenland (Inuit) and those in central Canada (Ojibwa). We will then open the horizon of our study to include Neo-Shamanism and contemporary shamans around the globe. 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?" and "What is your understanding of the term?". We will also look at various visual materials and listen to some shamanic music to better appreciate the non-cognitive, ritual aspects of shamanism. Some emphasis will also be placed on the role of dreams and visions in shamanic cosmology and religious practice.

Books (Required):

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

Hutton, Ronald. *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination*. Hambledon and London (2001).

Jakobsen, Merete. *Shamanism: Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to the Mastery of Spirits and Healing*. Berghahn Books (1999).

Narby, Jeremy and Francis Huxley. *Shamans Through Time*. Tarcher (2004).

Znamenski, Andrei A. *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and Western Imagination*. Oxford University Press, USA (2007).

Recommended: Vitebsky, Piers. *Shamanism*. University of Oklahoma Press (2001)

Requirements:

Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions, failure to do so may result in a lower final grade. Grades will be based on the following ten assignments: five one-page summaries (each worth 2% = 10%, you can turn in more of these for extra credit); two analytic papers, 5-7 pages each (15% each = 30%); and three exams (20% each = 60%). 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).

Honor Code: Lying, cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the Honor Code and are not permitted at the College. 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.

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: August 26, 28 The problems of "shamanism," a brief review
A. Reading Assignment: Narby & Huxley, pp. 1-37; Hutton pp. 1-44.

- II. Week Two: September 2, 4 Siberian Shamanism
A. Reading Assignment: Hutton pp. 47-67; Znamenski pp. 1-38
B. **Reading Summary One (Hutton), due September 4**

- III. Week Three: September 9, 11 Siberian Shamanism
A. Reading Assignment: Hutton pp. 69-110; Grim pp. 1-32
B. **Reading Summary Two (Znamenski), due September 11**

- IV. Week Four: September 16, 18 Siberian Shamanism
A. Reading Assignment: Hutton pp. 113-162; Grim pp. 33-55
B. **EXAM ONE (Hutton/Siberian Shamanism), September 18**

- V. Week Five: September 23, 25 Theories of Shamanism
A. Reading Assignment: Narby & Huxley pp. 38-73; Znamenski 39-120.
B. Pass Out Paper Assignment #1

- VI. Week Six: September 30, October 2 Inuit Shamanism
A. Reading Assignment: Jakobsen pp. 1-38; Narby & Huxley pp. 79-107
B. **Paper Assignment One, due October 2**

- VII. Week Seven: October 7, 9 Inuit Shamanism
A. Reading Assignment: Jakobsen pp. 45-89; Narby & Huxley pp. 108-134.

- VIII. Week Eight: October 16, Inuit Shamanism
A. **Fall Break, October 13, 14**
B. Reading Assignment: Jakobsen pp. 89-146.

- IX. Week Nine: October 21, 23 Theories of Shamanism
A. Reading Assignment: Znamenski, pp. 121-164
B. **EXAM TWO (Jakobsen/Inuit), October 21**

- X. Week Ten: October 28, 30 Ojibwa Shamanism
 - A. Reading Assignment: Grim, pp. 56-119.
 - B. Pass out Paper Assignment #2
 - C. **Chapter Summary Three (Grim), due October 30**

- XI. Week Eleven: November 4, 6 Ojibwa Shamanism
 - A. Reading Assignment: Grim, pp. 120-179.
 - B. **Paper Assignment Two, due November 6**

- XII. Week Twelve: November 11, 13 Rethinking Shamanic Models
 - A. Reading Assignment: Grim, pp. 180-208; Znamenski 165-203.
 - B. **Reading Summary Four (Znamenski), due November 13**

- XIII. Week Thirteen: November 18, 20 Modern NeoShamanism
 - A. Reading Assignment: Narby & Huxley, pp. 137-183; Jakobsen pp. 147- 207.

- XIV. Week Fourteen: November 25 Modern NeoShamanism
 - A. Reading Assignment: Znamenski, pp. 233-320.
 - B. **EXAM THREE (Znamenski/Neoshamanism), November 25**

- XV. Week Fifteen: December 2, 4 Modern NeoShamanism
 - A. Reading Assignment: Narby and Huxley, pp. 200-206, 248-262, 280-300; Znamenski 321-361.
 - B. **Reading Summary Five (Znamenski), due December 4**