



Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit - 2020-2021

Anthropology of Religion

Course Code	G_BATRSPC205
Credits	6
Period	P5
Course Level	200
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Religion and Theology
Course Coordinator	dr. M. Klaver
Examiner	dr. M. Klaver
Teaching Staff	dr. M. Klaver, dr. W. Boender
Teaching method(s)	Seminar, Lecture

Course Objective

1. The student is able to give an overview of the main theoretical debates and concepts in the discipline of anthropology of religion.
2. The student can relate these concepts and debates to contemporary forms of religion
3. The student is able to discuss and reflect upon conceptualizations of religion in ethnographic studies and religious phenomena the student is familiar with
4. The student is able to conduct a small ethnographic research project and present a fieldwork report.
5. The student is able to reflect on the position of the researcher in qualitative religion research

Course Content

Religion is one of the most studied subjects in the discipline of cultural anthropology. This course is designed to give an overview of anthropological perspectives to religion and the theoretical debates that stem from it. Throughout the course we will discuss a selection of key texts from the anthropological field to introduce various theoretical frameworks towards the phenomenon of religion like idealism, materialism, functionalism, structuralism, symbolism and postcolonial perspectives. Each of these theoretical frameworks will be placed within its historical context as well as related to the study of contemporary religion in an increasing globalizing world. Important concepts like symbols and rituals, the difference (or not) between religion and magic, gender, religious authority, practices of witchcraft and shamanism, and the role of body, the senses and the aesthetics in religious experiences will be addressed. The students will be introduced to the significance and practice of the distinct anthropological method of ethnographic research.

Teaching Methods

The student prepares the lectures by reading the specified literature and making weekly assignments. In class the literature and the assignments are critically discussed. Each theoretical debate will be related to actual case studies in the form of (guest)lectures, film or online resources..

There are 6 ECTS for this course (= 168 sbu). The classes approx. 18 hours, ethnographic assignment and presentation 30 hours, preparation for classes (including reading literature) 80 hours and take home exam 40 hours.

Method of Assessment

Method of assessment (study guide)

A. In weekly assignments (20%) the students are introduced to the main theoretical debates in the discipline Anthropology of Religion. These assignments are used in class to relate concepts and theories to contemporary religious phenomena.

B. Students conduct an ethnographic research project (30%) including a fieldwork report with personal reflection on the position of the researcher in doing qualitative research. They will present their project in class.

C. A take home exam (50%). In this exam the students critically discuss the relevance of theories and concepts of religion being discussed in the course, in light of a contemporary religious phenomenon.

Each of the three parts must be evaluated at least sufficiently.

Literature

M. Lambek editor, 'A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion' (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing 2008, 2nd edition) and various articles.