

ANTH 209  
Anthropology of Religion  
McGill University  
Winter 2019

REMOTE

Tuesday & Thursday 2:35- 3:35

*Lecture Location:* Zoom

<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/85477724270?pwd=emZaVHV0WXJKLy9NTnloUVpkalJuQT09>

*Discussion Location:* Zoom

Students will be assigned to a discussion section by Monday, January 25. They will receive a zoom link for the discussion session from their discussion leader (either TA or Prof. Lemons).

Professor Katherine Lemons

Email: [katherine.lemons@mcgill.ca](mailto:katherine.lemons@mcgill.ca)

OH: Friday 1-3pm on Zoom (<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/81367981892>)

*Teaching Assistants*

Emad Mortazavi: [emadodin.mortazavi@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:emadodin.mortazavi@mail.mcgill.ca)

Philippe Blouin: [philippe.blouin@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:philippe.blouin@mail.mcgill.ca)

Kit Mitchell: [margaretta.mitchell@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:margaretta.mitchell@mail.mcgill.ca)

Maryam Roosta: [maryam.roosta@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:maryam.roosta@mail.mcgill.ca)

**Course Description**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many people thought religion was withering away. However, if religion ever began to fade, it is now clearly back: from the Islamic revival in Lebanon to evangelical movements in the United States, religion has once again been recognized as a central issue in public life and political debates. There is significant debate about how to understand and make judgments about the many ways that religion appears today, and scholars in a range of disciplines offer answers to the question: What do we study when we study “religion”? How can social scientists study gods, spirits, and their impacts on and relevance to the sensible world?

Anthropologists have been asking these questions about religion since the discipline was first established. This course will introduce students to the anthropological study of religion. Throughout the semester, students will consider and reconsider the answers that a broad range of anthropologists and other social scientists have given to the question of what religion does and how it can be studied. Students will learn about the anthropology of religion by means of three primary activities: 1) Learning how a variety of anthropologists study “religion” through readings, and lectures; 2) Analyzing anthropological concepts and their relevance through in-

class activities; and 3) Reflecting, in summary assignments, on the consequences of different approaches to and aspects of the study of religion.

By the end of the course, students will be able to: 1) give an account of how anthropologists have studied and do study religion; 2) explain the central anthropological concepts used to study religion; 3) engage thoughtfully in contemporary debates about secularism and the place of religion in public life. Although this is not a comparative religion course, students will also learn about aspects of a variety of religions.

### **Remote Learning**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this course will be delivered remotely in Winter 2021. The class meets on Tuesday and Thursday. Most weeks, Professor Lemons will give one live lecture on zoom. These will be recorded and uploaded to the MyCourses site. Following the lecture, she will take questions live and from the Zoom chat; the Q&A will not be recorded.

Sometimes live lectures may be replaced by podcasts (20-25). In this case, podcasts will be uploaded to the mycourses site several days before the lecture and students can listen to them at any time. Professor Lemons will be available during class time to answer questions about podcasts and readings.

Students will also be required to attend discussion sessions throughout the semester. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be posted on MyCourses. If students are absolutely unable to attend, they may instead submit a 500-word writing assignment (in addition to the 200 word comment described below).

### **Course Requirements**

#### *Lecture*

Professor Lemons will give regular live lectures on Zoom. Students are strongly encouraged to attend. The lecture (but not the Q&A) will also be recorded and uploaded to MyCourses so that students who are not able to attend can do watch it on their own time. All students must watch or listen to the lecture before they attend their discussion session.

N.B. Sometimes live lectures may be replaced by podcasts (20-25 minutes). Podcasts will be uploaded to the MyCourses several days before class and students can listen to them at any time. Professor Lemons will be available during class time to answer questions about podcasts and readings.

#### *Discussion Sessions (Conferences)*

Each student will sign up for a discussion session (conference) on Minerva before January 25. Discussion sessions will meet seven times during the term. Students will be able to sign up for a discussion session either during regular class time or for another time of day **Attendance is required** and will be worth 10% of the final grade in the course. Discussion sessions will not be recorded.

N.B. Students who are absolutely unable to attend discussion sessions for reasons of bandwidth or living circumstances can receive attendance credit if they turn in a 500-word assignment

prior to the meeting they will miss, in addition to the preparatory 200-word assignment described below. Details about the assignment will be posted on MyCourses before the first discussion session.

#### Preparation for Discussion

Prior to each discussion session, students must upload a question or comment (200 words) about the lecture and/or weekly readings to MyCourses in the appropriate folder. These must be posted by **4p.m. the day before the discussion session**. The questions must reflect completion of the readings and the lecture. They may be questions aimed at *clarifying* a concept or argument, questions about how to interpret the course material, or questions that you would ask the author of the texts, if you could. Discussion questions will not be graded but will receive credit for completion and are collectively worth 20% of the final grade. Late submissions will not receive credit.

#### Summary Assignments

The course is divided into six parts. At the end of parts 1-5 you will briefly summarize (in 500 words) the major arguments presented in this part of the course. Your summary will be due one week after we finish each part of the course. These summaries will be graded and are, together, worth 35% of your grade.

#### Final Take-home Exam

The final exam will be a 1500-word summary assignment covering the entire course. The assignment will be posted on MyCourses in early April and will be due during the exam period. It will be worth 35% of the final grade.

#### Extensions and Lateness

Only Professor Lemons can grant extensions for valid, documented reasons. Please see her as soon as you foresee an issue completing an assignment on time. Late summary or final assignments will lose one-third of a grade per day (A becomes A-) unless the student has received an extension from Prof. Lemons in advance of the deadline. Late discussion preparation questions will not receive credit.

#### Office Hours and Communication

Professor Lemons and the TAs have office hours every week, and you are always welcome to drop in. You need not have a question about a specific assignment; you may wish simply to talk about a reading you liked or that troubled you, to seek academic advising, to learn more about the anthropology major or minor or for other reasons relating to class. We look forward to getting to know you this semester.

Professor Lemons: Friday 1-3pm on Zoom (drop-in). See link above.

#### TA Office Hours (TBA)

TA Name	TA office hours	Zoom link
Philippe Blouin	Wednesday, 1-2pm	<a href="https://us04web.zoom.us/j/4302209738?pwd=MkxVK1">https://us04web.zoom.us/j/4302209738?pwd=MkxVK1</a>

		<a href="https://mcmill.zoom.us/j/84976122927?pwd=aUxieTg1RHdxOFFMdGtXVG5SMWVUT09">pHN25jWEIEdnhRMWIFejhmdz09</a>
Kit Mitchell	Monday 3-4pm	<a href="https://mcmill.zoom.us/j/84976122927?pwd=aUxieTg1RHdxOFFMdGtXVG5SMWVUT09">https://mcmill.zoom.us/j/84976122927?pwd=aUxieTg1RHdxOFFMdGtXVG5SMWVUT09</a>
Emad Mortazavi	Tuesday, 9-10am	<a href="https://us05web.zoom.us/j/6484613159?pwd=RmRYYUovRFhkQWFhZytsKzJ2Wi9PUT09">https://us05web.zoom.us/j/6484613159?pwd=RmRYYUovRFhkQWFhZytsKzJ2Wi9PUT09</a>
Maryam Roosta	Monday, 10-11am	<a href="https://mcmill.zoom.us/j/87961997175?pwd=ckZmQkM4SFdtVkNuWGpDQysvbjVidz09">https://mcmill.zoom.us/j/87961997175?pwd=ckZmQkM4SFdtVkNuWGpDQysvbjVidz09</a>

### Required Readings

All readings *except the assigned book* are available on the class MyCourses website. Please do print them out if you prefer reading in hard copy or are experiencing “zoom fatigue.”

The ethnography we will read together, *Enchanted Modern* by Lara Deeb, is available for purchase at the Libarie Paragraphe. You can buy the book in the bookstore at 2220 McGill College Ave, or you can call 514-845-5811 or email [paragraphbooks@paragraphbooks.com](mailto:paragraphbooks@paragraphbooks.com) to arrange curbside pickup. Alternatively, you can visit Paragraphe’s B2C site <https://paragraphbooks.com/collections/textbooks>, which has a textbook section. Books will be under ANTH 209 course code once the new semester begins. The book is also available as an e-book through the McGill library.

## Class Schedule

Tuesday, January 12: Introduction

Preparation:

- ♦ Read the course outline carefully and come to lecture prepared to ask questions!
- ♦ Complete the brief survey on MyCourses by 5p.m. Wednesday.

### 1. Contours of Religion in Anthropology

Thursday, January 14: Lecture: "Religion as Belief in Spiritual Beings"

Read:

- ♦ Tylor, Edward Burnett. [1871] Religion in Primitive Culture. In Lambek, Michael, ed. 2008. *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. Pp. 23-33.

Tuesday, January 19: Lecture "Living with Spirits"

Read:

- ♦ Pérez Elizabeth. 2016. *Religion in the Kitchen: Cooking, Talking, and the Making of Black Atlantic Traditions*. North American Religions. New York: New York University Press. Chapter 2

Thursday, January 21: Lecture: "Religion as Society"

Read:

- ♦ Durkheim, Emile. 2001 [1912] *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. 1-3, 8-12; 34-44, 419-422.

### Tuesday, January 26: Discussion

Please use the zoom link you have received from your discussion leader.

### 2. Religion and Exchange

Thursday, January 28: Lecture: "Religion as an Historical Force"

Read:

- ♦ Weber, Max. 2008 [1904] *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. T. Parsons, trans. Excerpts.

### Tuesday, February 2: Discussion

Read:

- ♦ Bernstein, Anya. 2013. *Religious Bodies Politic : Rituals of Sovereignty in Buryat Buddhism*. Buddhism and Modernity. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 6.
- ♦ **Summary Assignment #1 Due**

### 3. Religious Reason

Thursday, February 4: Lecture: "Religion and Reason"

Read:

- ♦ Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1977. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Chapters 1&2.

### **Tuesday, February 9: Discussion**

Read:

- ♦ Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja. *Form and Meaning of Magical Acts*. In Lambek, Michael, ed. 2008. *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. Pp.311-325.

Thursday, February 11: Lecture: "Magic, Religion, Reason"

- ♦ Review Evans-Pritchard and Tambiah

- ♦ **Summary Assignment #2 Due**

### **4. Religious Action**

Tuesday, February 16: Lecture: "Classification and Symbolic Anthropology"

Read:

- ♦ Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Routledge. Pp. 36-71.

Thursday, February 18: Lecture: "Ritual Transformation"

Read:

- ♦ Turner, Victor. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Transaction Publishers. Pp. 94-113, 125-130.

### **Tuesday, February 23: Discussion**

Thursday, February 25: Lecture: "Race, Sexuality, Ritual"

Read:

- ♦ Pérez Elizabeth. 2016. *Religion in the Kitchen : Cooking, Talking, and the Making of Black Atlantic Traditions*. North American Religions. New York: New York University Press. Chapters 4 & 5.

- ♦ **Summary Assignment #3 Due**

## READING WEEK

Tuesday, March 9: Lecture: "Systems of Symbols"

Read:

- ♦ Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Religion as a Cultural System. In Michael Lambek, ed. *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Blackwell Publishing. Pp. 57-76

## 5. Religion and Power

Thursday, March 11: Lecture: "'Religion' as an Historical Product"

Read:

- ♦ Asad, Talal. The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category. In Michael Lambek, ed. *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Blackwell Publishing. Pp. 110-126

## Tuesday, March 16: Discussion

- ♦ **Summary Assignment #4 Due**

Thursday, March 18: Lecture: "'Religion' and (Post)Colonialism"

Read:

- ♦ Ramberg, Lucinda. 2009. "Magical Hair as Dirt: Ecstatic Bodies and Postcolonial Reform in South India," *in Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*. Vol. 33, No. 4. Pp. 501-522.

Tuesday, March 23: Lecture: "Rights and Religion"

Read:

- ♦ Marx, Karl. 1992 [1843]. On the Jewish Question, Part I. In *Karl Marx Early Writings*. Penguin Classics. Pages 211-234.

*Take-home exam prompts posted on MyCourses*

Thursday, March 25: Lecture: "The Impossibility of Religious Freedom"

Read:

- ♦ Fernando, Mayanthi. 2014. Intimacy Surveilled: Religion, Sex, and Secular Cunning. *Signs* 39(3): 685-708.

## Tuesday, March 30: Discussion

## 6. Enchanted Modernity

Thursday, April 1: Lecture: "Reading an ethnography: Introduction to Deeb"

Read:

- ♦ Deeb, Lara. 2006. [An Enchanted Modern](#). Princeton: Princeton University Press. Introduction and chapter 1, 2

- ♦ **Summary Assignment #5 Due**

## Tuesday, April 6: Discussion

Read:

- ♦ Deeb, Lara. 2006. [An Enchanted Modern](#). Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 3, 4

Thursday, April 8: Lecture: “Public Piety and Embodied Religion”

Read:

- ♦ Deeb, Lara. 2006. [An Enchanted Modern](#). Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5, 6

Tuesday, April 13: Lecture: “Enchanted Modernity and the Anthropology of Religion” ; final Q & A

- ♦ Deeb, Lara. 2006. [An Enchanted Modern](#). Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 7

Final take-home exam: Due Date TBA

## Other Class Policies

I seek to make the learning environment inclusive and respectful for all participants. Thus, violent or harmful language on discussion boards, in chats, or in discussions as well as in user names or visual backgrounds may be cause for disciplinary action.

In the interest of clarity, please keep your microphone muted during the live zoom sessions until the instructor indicates that it is your turn to speak. We will discuss appropriate uses of the Zoom chat during the first lecture.

If you experience barriers to learning in this course do not hesitate to discuss them with me or with the Office for Students with Disabilities: <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>

Accommodations are possible for students who experience barriers to learning—including disabilities or medical conditions but also inadequate internet access or living situations that make participation in live discussions difficult or impossible. **Students who need accommodations should contact me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as a barrier arises.**

If you have an ongoing mental health concern or one that arises during the semester and that interferes with your coursework, contact me as soon as you are able. You should also contact Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://www.mcgill.ca/counselling/home>) for a preliminary appointment.

Please let me, the TAs, and the other students know your preferred pronoun.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/))

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the instructor's or the university's control, the content and/or evaluation methods for this course may change.