

**PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS  
SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION**

**Religious Studies 781/Anthropology 704  
Introduction to the Anthropology of Religion  
Mondays 9:30-11:30, CNH 307**

Professor Celia Rothenberg  
UH 124  
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Office hours – by appointment

**Course objectives:**

This course aims to familiarize students with key topics and theorists in the history and current scholarship of the anthropology of religion. Students will acquire familiarity and competency in the field, enabling them to theoretically and historically contextualize their own and others' research.

**Course requirements:**

**(1) Weekly (total of ten) article commentaries, each worth 5% = 50%**

Article commentaries should critically evaluate **the week's readings**. "Critical evaluation" may mean discussing the strengths and/or weaknesses of the argument, or considering how the argument relates to (e.g., enhances, demonstrates, contradicts) other course material. I encourage you to quote directly (and briefly) from the article to demonstrate your points. Article commentaries are due in class the day we discuss the articles. No late commentaries will be accepted. Commentaries should be approximately three to four pages in length. *Note: We have eleven weeks of readings; you are required to write a paper for ten of the eleven weeks.* You may write a paper for all eleven weeks and I will drop your lowest paper's mark.

**(2) Discussion participation = 50%**

This course will be conducted as a seminar. You should come prepared to discuss the readings in terms of the specific points made by the author. Note: I often use a "round-robin" method of discussion. This method requires that each student seated around the table raise a point of discussion or provide a summary of a reading in turn.

**Please regularly check our course website on Avenue for updates, readings, and other information.**

**Text:**

A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion – ed. Michael Lambek, second edition ("Reader")

Additional readings will be available from Mills Library.

**Recommended for background reading:**

Nine Theories of Religion – Daniel Pals, third edition (“Pals”)

**Course schedule:**

- 11-Sep Meet and greet; review syllabus.
- 18-Sep **Emile Durkheim, Max Weber**  
**Reader:** General Introduction, 2 Durkheim, 3 Weber
- 25-Sep **E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Bronsilaw Malinowski**  
**Reader:** 11 Evans-Pritchard, 14 Malinowski;  
Evans-Pritchard, E. E.  
1979 “Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events.” In *Reader in Comparative Religion*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, eds. Pp. 362-366. New York: Harper and Row.
- 02-Oct **Mary Douglas**  
Douglas, Mary  
2000 (1966) *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge. Chapters 1, 2, 3.
- 09-Oct Fall recess
- 16-Oct **Victor and Edith Turner**  
**Reader:** 26 V. Turner; E. Turner (TBD)
- 23-Oct **Clifford Geert, Talal Assad, Malcolm Ruel**  
**Reader:** 4 Geertz, 9 Assad, 8 Ruel
- 30-Oct **Sherry Ortner**  
**Reader:** 12 Ortner;  
Ortner, Sherry  
1974 Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture? In *Woman, Culture, and Society*. M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds. Pp. 67-88. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- 06-Nov **Mark Jurgensmeyer**  
Jurgensmeyer, Mark  
2017 “Introduction” and Part Two “The Logic of Religious Violence.” In *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.  
*Choose one case study.*
- 13-Nov **Janice Boddy, Lila Abu-Lughod**  
**Reader:** 30 Boddy;  
Abu-Lughod, Lila (TBD)

- 20-Nov            **Saba Mahmood**  
Mahmood, Saba  
2001 Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual:  
Disciplines of *Salat*. *American Ethnologist* 28:827-853.
- 2001 Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent:  
Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival. *Cultural  
Anthropology* 16 (2): 202-236.
- 27-Nov            **McMaster's anthropologists of religion!**  
Featuring articles by McMaster professors Ellen Badone, Mark  
Rowe  
Readings to be posted on Avenue.
- 04-Dec            Rothenberg, Celia  
2016 *On Doing Fieldwork in Palestine: Advice, Fieldnotes, and Other Thoughts*.  
New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## **TURNITIN.COM**

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).