

Anthropology of Religion:  
**History of Religion and Ritual**

## **Course Objectives**

Some of the questions we're going to cover in this course are:

- What is anthropology as a field and mode of knowledge and practice?
- How to conduct ethnographic fieldwork?
- What is the history of religion?
- What is the history of spiritual practices that are popular today?
- What is spiritual healing and how does it manifest itself in our lives?
- How do we understand the metaphysical realm in our everyday life?

### **This course will help participants:**

- Analyze and interpret beliefs, practices, and social structures in religious traditions from an anthropological perspective
- Cover sufficient conceptual and background material on the selected topic.
- Reflect on the literature directly related to the history and theories of anthropology of religion and magic and the debate over the mystical and the modern mind/mentality.
- Compare and contrast popular spiritual healing practices from around the globe with those prevalent in Egypt.
- Write fieldnotes.
- Conduct ethnographic fieldwork on a topic of the student's choice.

### **Contact info:**

[sohavlaelfakahany@gmail.com](mailto:sohavlaelfakahany@gmail.com)

+2 01124101411

## **Course: Hybrid (Online and Offline)**

### **Part One: Anthropology and History**

Open discussion: What is anthropology and what is history and how can we use both to investigate the cultural aspects of religion and belief systems.

#### **Session 1 (February 8th) - Introduction to Anthropology**

To read before we meet:

Delaney, C and Kaspin, D. Chapter 1: Disorientation and Orientation in Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. 1-32

To watch:

An introduction to the discipline of anthropology

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5aglbGT Eig>

Or

Anthropology bel 3araby - What is anthropology?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDpOv1rEv9U>

#### **Session 2 (February 15th) - Introduction to History of Religion**

To read before we meet:

Religion in the Ancient World, <https://www.worldhistory.org/religion/>

History of the study of Religion. Britannica,

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/study-of-religion/History-of-the-study-of-religion>

To watch: History of Ideas: Religion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge071m9bGeY>

#### **Session 3 (February 22nd) - Fieldnotes**

To read before the session:

Campbell, S. 2007. Shane the Lone Ethnographer: A Beginner's Guide to Ethnography

or

Jackson, J. (1990). "I am a Fieldnote"

In class exercise: **Listen and Analyze the song "Tom's Diner" and write a fieldnote.**

## Part Two: Rituals and the Body

### Session 4 (March 1st) - What are Rituals?

To read before we meet:

Eriksen, Thomas H. 2010. 'Religion and Ritual' (Chapter 14) Small Places, Large Issues an Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology. 3rd ed. Anthropology, Culture, and Society. New York: Pluto Press.

To watch: History of Ideas: Rituals

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q\\_xlpVlry14](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_xlpVlry14)

Exercise: **Start a self-healing practice and carry it out till the end of the course + keep taking field notes and writing reflections.**

### Session 5 (March 8th) - The Body and Religion

To read before we meet:

McGuire, M. (1990). Religion and the Body: Rematerializing the Human Body in the Social Sciences of Religion.

### Session 6 (March 15th) - Healing - Guest Speaker (Dr. Hanan Kholousy)

To read before we meet:

Susan J Matt, "Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions," *Doing Emotions History*, p. 41-53.

**or**

Mate, G. (2003). When the Body Says 'No': The Cost of Hidden Stress. NY and Toronto: A.Knopf., Ltd.

To watch:

The Body Keeps the Score

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSCXyYuT2rE>

and/or

Heal or Unwell (Netflix) or What the Health on

<https://watchdocumentaries.com/what-the-health/>

+ Discuss mini ethnographies to prepare for elevator pitches.

**March 22nd OFF**

## **Part Three: The Magical, Mystical, and Unseen**

### **Session 7 (March 29th) - Ethnography Workshop and Elevator Pitches**

### **Session 8 (April 5th) - The Mystical and the Modern**

To read before we meet:

Douglas, M. (2002). Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. Florence, United Kingdom: Routledge. (pp. 1-7; 95-115)

Or

Levi-Strauss, C. (1962). The Savage Mind. (1-34)

To watch:

History of Ideas: Modernity <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIdflecVQG8>

### **Session 9 (April 12th)**

**Watch, Analyze and Review: Saheb el Makam**

## **Part Four: Healing and the New Age**

### **Session 10 (April 19th) - Psychology and Ancient Wisdom**

Before we meet:

Reading:

Mijares, S. (2002) Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom: Psychological Healing Practices from the World's Religious Traditions. Routledge. (Buddhism – Christianity – Goddess Spirituality – Judaism – Native American Psychspirituality – Sufism – Taoism – Yoga and Hinduism)

**Exercise: 500-words reflection or mini presentation on a tradition that is not your own (Due before class on the 19th).**

### **Session 11 (April 26th) - Consuming the Self**

To read before we meet:

Rindfleish, J. (2005). Consuming the Self: New Age Spirituality as “Social Product” in Consumer Society. Consumption Markets and Culture.

### **Session 12 (April 30th) - (Rescheduled for Eid on May 3rd) - Mini Exhibition Final Presentations for Creative Projects**





