

**Anthropology of Religion, Symbolism and Rituals**

Code: 101269  
ECTS Credits: 6

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
2500256 Social and Cultural Anthropology	OB	2	2

The proposed teaching and assessment methodology that appear in the guide may be subject to changes as a result of the restrictions to face-to-face class attendance imposed by the health authorities.

### Contact

Name: Virginia Fons Renaudón  
Email: Virginia.Fons@uab.cat

### Use of Languages

Principal working language: spanish (spa)  
Some groups entirely in English: No  
Some groups entirely in Catalan: No  
Some groups entirely in Spanish: No

### Teachers

Jordi Castellvi Girbau

### Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.

### Objectives and Contextualisation

The course is taught during the second semester of the second year. It deals with the development of anthropological theory and the analysis of the cultural diversity of religion, rituals and symbolic-cognitive systems. In addition, it focuses on the application of disciplinary knowledge within these domains in order to identify and study current sociocultural realities (in particular, the analysis of both "traditional" and current rituals). Thus, its main goal is to critically address some assumptions, concepts and theories related to these fields of knowledge.

### Competences

- Apprehending cultural diversity through ethnography and critically assessing ethnographic materials as knowledge of local contexts and as a proposal of theoretical models.
- Developing critical thinking and reasoning and communicating them effectively both in your own and other languages.
- Respecting the diversity and plurality of ideas, people and situations.
- Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the history of anthropological theory and the genesis of its basic concepts.
- Using the discipline's ethnographic and theoretical corpus with analytical and synthesis skills.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Applying the basic concepts of the anthropological theory.
2. Assessing critically the explicit and implicit theoretical models in the ethnographic materials.
3. Engaging in debates about historical and contemporary facts and respecting the other participants' opinions.
4. Establishing historical connection between ethnographic and theoretical development.
5. Identifying main and supporting ideas and expressing them with linguistic correctness.
6. Identifying the sociocultural variability through ethnographic texts and audiovisual resources.
7. Interpreting the cultural diversity through ethnography.
8. Summarising acquired knowledge about the origin and transformations experienced in the several fields of anthropology.
9. Summarizing the characteristics of a written text in accordance to its communicative purposes.

## Content

The syllabus of this course focuses mainly on: the classical theories of religion, symbol, myth and ritual. It attempts to review key questions for the understanding of the religious phenomenon and to take an anthropological approach to different forms of symbolic communication and classification, symbolism, ritual processes and ritual dramas. Also, the course takes a close look on rituality and provides some current examples about symbolic representation (in its broader sense) and its symbolic effectiveness.

### Thematic block I on religion.

Topic 1: Social anthropology and the study of religion.

Topic 2: Review of key concepts: natural / supernatural, sacred / profane, nature / culture, visible / invisible, etc.

Topic 3: Definition of the religious phenomenon.

### Thematic block II on the symbol and forms of classification.

Topic 4: Symbolic thinking. The anthropological study of the symbol. Symbol, structure and forms of classification.

Topic 5: Symbolic analysis. The notion of symbolic efficiency.

### Thematic block III on the myth and other forms of symbolic communication.

Topic 6: The classic theories of myth. The structural analysis of the myth.

Topic 7: Examples of myths and other forms of symbolic communication.

### Thematic block IV on the ritual, its content and its effectiveness.

Topic 8: Anthropological study of the ritual (theoretical approaches). Symbolism, process and ritual dramas.

Topic 9: Definition of the ritual (characteristics, symbolic content and functions). Ethnographic examples on rituality in different societies. Contemporary rituals and symbolic acts of problematic classification. Process of constant change and creativity.

## Methodology

- Lectures with ICT support and debate in a large group; viewing and discussion of ethnographic documentaries linked to religious systems and rituals; discussion of texts related to the different thematic blocks; discussion and analysis of rituals.

- Definition of key concepts, especially religion, symbol, ritual and myth; Comprehensive reading of texts; application of theoretical concepts to the analysis of ritual situations; theoretical work and analysis of a ritual from a guide for its realization.

## Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Screening and further discussion of documentaries	6	0.24	2, 6, 7, 1
Theoretical lectures and lecturer-led practices	30	1.2	2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 1
Type: Supervised			
Supervision via group tutorials on observation, description and analysis of a ritual. Oral and public presentation of the analysis of that ritual	14	0.56	2, 4, 6, 5, 7, 3, 1
Type: Autonomous			
Comprehensive reading of texts	25	1	2, 4, 6, 5, 7, 9, 8
Observation, description and analysis of a ritual, autonomously, individually or in group	25	1	4, 6, 7, 8, 1
Personal study	25	1	2, 4, 6, 5, 7, 8, 1
Writing works	25	1	5, 9, 1

## Assessment

The evaluation system is organized in 3 modules, each one with a specific weight in the final grade:

1. Written test module (40%). The transversal knowledge of anthropological theory will be evaluated around the main thematic fields worked in the classroom.
2. Practical work module (40%). A practical work will be evaluated upon the analysis of a ritual.
3. Participation module (20%). The participation in practical works, tutorials and/or public presentation of the analytical work of a ritual will be evaluated. This module is not re-evaluable.

At the beginning of the course, the lecturer will provide the submission deadlines for works and exams, as well as the guidelines for properly undertaking this task. At the time of carrying out each evaluation activity, the lecturer will inform the students about the procedure and date for grade reviewing.

To pass the course, modules (1) and (2) must be approved individually. In order to be evaluated in that course, the student must have passed at least one of the tests (1) or (2) throughout the course. The student who has not passed any tests (1) and (2) during the semester will be, therefore, considered as NOT AVALUABLE. Should any student, once eligible for evaluation, doesn't pass a specific module (1) or (2), he/she could be re-evaluated it during the re-evaluation period.

Students who engage in misconduct (plagiarism or copying) in an assessment activity will receive a mark of "0" for the activity in question. In the case of misconduct in more than one assessment activity, the students involved will be given a final mark of "0" for the subject.

In the event that tests or exams cannot be taken onsite, they will be adapted to an online format made available through the UAB's virtual tools (original weighting will be maintained). Homework, activities and class participation will be carried out through forums, wikis and/or discussion on Teams, etc. Lecturers will ensure that students are able to access these virtual tools, or will offer them feasible alternatives.

## Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Individual or collective practical work on the analysis of a ritual	40%	0	0	2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 1
Individual theoretical work	40%	0	0	2, 4, 6, 5, 7, 9, 8, 1
Participation in practical work, tutorials and / or public presentation of a work	20%	0	0	2, 4, 6, 5, 3, 9, 1

## Bibliography

Readings (Dossier)

### Thematic block I on religion.

Evans-Pritchard, Edward E. (1991 [1965]). "Las teorías psicológicas" i "Las teorías sociológicas". A: *Las teorías de la religión primitiva*. Madrid: S.XXI, pp. 41-82 i 83-128.

Delgado, Manuel (1993). "La religiosidad popular. En torno a un falso problema". *Gazeta de Antropología*, 10.

Godelier, Maurice (2000 [1972]). "Hacia una teoría marxista de los hechos religiosos". A: *Economía, fetichismo y religión en las sociedades primitivas*. Madrid: S.XXI, pp. 346-354.

Durkheim, Émile (2003 [1912]). "Definición del fenómeno religioso y de la religión". A: *Las formas elementales de la vida religiosa*. Barcelona: Alianza, pp. 57-93.

Godelier, Maurice (2000 [1972]). "Lo visible y lo invisible en los baruya de Nueva Guinea". A: *Economía, fetichismo y religión en las sociedades primitivas*. Madrid: S. XXI. pp. 355-365.

Sarró, Ramon (2007). "Cómo los pueblos sin religión aprenden que ya tenían religión: notas desde la costa occidental africana". A: C. Salazar (coord.) *Religió, Cultura i cognició. Perspectives des de l'antropologia, Quaderns de l'Institut Català d'Antropologia*, 23, pp.103-121.

### Thematic block II on the symbol and forms of classification.

Douglas, Mary (1991 [1966]). "La profanación secular". A: *Pureza y peligro. Un análisis de los conceptos de contaminación y tabú*. Madrid: S. XXI, pp. 27-41.

Durkheim, Émile & Mauss, Marcel (1969 [1903]). "Sobre algunas formas primitivas de clasificación. Contribución al estudio de las representaciones colectivas". A: Durkheim E. (1996). *Clasificaciones primitivas (y otros ensayos de antropología positiva)*. Barcelona: Ariel, pp. 25-103.

Turner, Victor (1980 [1967]). "Símbolos en el ritual Ndembu" i "La clasificación de los colores en el ritual Ndembu: un problema de clasificación primitiva". A: *La selva de los símbolos. Aspectos del ritual Ndembu*. Madrid: S. XXI, pp. 21-52 i 65-102.

Thematic block III on the myth and other forms of symbolic communication.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1971 [1962]). "La ciència del concret". A: *El pensament salvatge*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, pp. 19-50.

Bidou, Paul (1989 [1979]). "A propósito del incesto y de la muerte. Un mito de los indios tatuyo del noroeste de la Amazonia". A: Iazard M. i Smith P. (eds.) *La función simbólica*. Madrid: Júcar, pp.113-145.

Thematic block IV on the ritual, its content and its effectiveness.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1987 [1958]). "La eficacia simbólica". A: *Antropología Estructural*. Barcelona: Paidós, p. 211-227.

Douglas, Mary (1991 [1966]). "Magia y milagro". A: *Pureza y peligro. Un análisis de los conceptos de contaminación y tabú*. Madrid: S. XXI, pp. 61-79.

Turner, Victor (1988 [1969]). "Niveles de clasificación de un ritual de vida y muerte". A: *Proceso ritual*. Madrid: Taurus, pp. 13-53 i 101-136.

Geertz, Clifford (1987 [1973]). "Ritual y cambio social: un ejemplo javanés". A: *La interpretación de las culturas*. Barcelona: Gedisa, pp. 131-151.

Delgado, Manuel (1997). "Exorcismo y martirio de las imágenes. La iconoclastia como violencia corporal en las sociedades mediterráneas". A: Checa F. i Molina P. (eds.), *La función simbólica de los ritos. Rituales y simbolismo en el Mediterráneo*. Barcelona: Icaria/ICA, pp. 367-398.

Christian, William (1995). "La devoción a las imágenes de bronce en Catalunya. La Mare de Déu de Montserrat", *Revista d'Etnologia de Catalunya*, 6, pp. 24-33.

General bibliography

Cantón Delgado, Manuela (2001). *La razón hechizada. Teorías antropológicas de la religión*. Barcelona: Ariel.

Díaz Cruz, Rodrigo (1998). *Archipiélagos de rituales. Teorías antropológicas del ritual*. Barcelona: Anthropos.

Duch, Lluís (1997). *Antropología de la religión*. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat.

Iazard, Michel & Smith, Pierre (eds.) (1989 [1979]). *La función simbólica*. Madrid: Júcar.

Leach, Edmund (1978 [1976]). *Cultura y comunicación. La lógica de la conexión de los símbolos*. Madrid: S.XXI.

Morris, Brian (1995 [1987]). *Introducción al estudio antropológico de la religión*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Salazar, Carles (2009). *Antropología de las creencias. Religión, simbolismo, irracionalidad*. Barcelona: Ed. Fragmenta.

Sperber, Dan (1980 [1974]). *El simbolismo en general*. Barcelona: Anthropos.

Vallverdú, Jaume (2008). *Antropología simbólica. Teoría y etnografía sobre religión, simbolismo y ritual*. Barcelona: UOC.

Waal Malefijt, Annemarie de (1975). *Introducción a la antropología religiosa*. Estella: Verbo Divino.

\*Para profundizar en los autores clásicos también pueden ser útiles las enciclopedias antropológicas:

Barnard, A. & J. Spencer (eds) (1996). *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London & NY: Routledge.

Bonte, P. & M. Izard (eds) (1991). *Dictionnaire de l'Ethnologie et de l'Anthropologie*. Paris: PUF (Hi ha traduïció al castellà editat per Akal el 1996).

Recommended bibliography (available an extensive bibliography by subjects)

Augé, Marc (1998). *Dios como objeto. Símbolos-cuerpos-materias-palabras*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

Balandier, Georges (1994 [1992]). *El poder en escenas. De la representación del poder al poder de la representación*. Paidós.

Douglas, Mary (1991 [1966]). *Pureza y peligro. Un análisis de los conceptos de contaminación y tabú*. Madrid: S. XXI.

Douglas, Mary (1998 [1996]). *Estilos de pensar*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

Geertz, Clifford (1994 [1968]). *Observando el islam*, Barcelona: Paidós.

Geertz, Clifford (1987 [1973]). *La interpretación de las culturas*. Buenos Aires: Gedisa.

Gledhill, John (2000 [1999]). *El poder y sus disfraces*. Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra.

Griaule, Marcel (1987 [1948]). *Dios de agua*. Barcelona: Alta Fulla.

Leenhardt Maurice (1997 [1947]). *Do Kamo. La personne et le mythe dans le monde mélanésien*. Paris: Gallimard.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1987 [1958]). *Antropología estructural*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Mallart, Lluís (1983). *La dansa als esperits. Itinerari iniciàtic d'un medecinaire africà*. Barcelona: La Llar del Llibre.

Turner, Victor (1990 [1967]). *La selva de los símbolos*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.

Turner, Victor (1988[1969]). *El proceso ritual. Estructura y antiestructura*. Madrid. Taurus.

Ventura i Oller, Montserrat (2012). *En el cruce de caminos. Identidad, cosmología y chamanismo Tsachila*. Quito: FLACSO / Abya-Yala/ IFEA.