

HPRS5017/HPRS6017

Living Ancestors and Talking Tree: Indigenous Religions Today

Prof Bettina Schmidt

Module Handbook for the Academic year 2021/22

Block 7

Lampeter Campus

CONTENT OF THE MODULE

The module provides an overview about a range of beliefs and practices of indigenous people in various parts of the world. We will examine specific religions but also the debate about indigenous religions in the academic field of the study of religions. The aim of the module is to gain knowledge about indigenous religions today and about the academic discussion about them.

Credits: 20

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AIM(S)

- To familiarise students with a range of beliefs and practices of indigenous people in various parts of the world.
- To provide students with a tool to critical evaluate different beliefs and practices of indigenous people in various parts of the world.
- To enable students to examine and discuss the debate about indigenous religions in the academic field of the study of religions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the diversity of indigenous religions;
- Reflect critically on the situation and status of indigenous religions in the 21st century;
- Assess how indigenous religions are discussed in the study of religions.
- Evaluate the significance of the study of indigenous religions within academia.

ASSESSMENT

1. A **Poster presentation** of your selected indigenous religion and its significance in the 21st century, including a bibliography of used material to be submitted via **Turnitin on 23rd May 2022 9 a.m. and presented in class on the same day (23rd May 2022).**

2. A **critical assessment** (essay) of 3750 words of the selected indigenous religion in relation to the academic debate (topic to be agreed in assessment workshop) to be submitted via **Turnitin on 31 May 2022 before 12 (noon)**.

The Faculty Marking Criteria will be applied relevant to your level.

Please be aware that it is Faculty policy to submit all assignments via Turnitin.

Please notice also a change in the Academic Regulations with regard to word count:

If the specified word limit for an assessment has been exceeded, the following penalties apply: The penalty cannot take the work into the fail category.

- a. Up to 10% above the word limit – No deduction off final mark
- b. Between 10% and 25% above the word limit – Deduction of 5 marks off final mark (or reduce the mark to the capped mark, whichever is greater)
- c. Between 25% and 50% above the word limit – Deduction of 10 marks off final mark (or reduce the mark to the capped mark, whichever is greater)
- d. 50% or more over length – Maximum mark of capped mark

Likewise, a failure to meet the maximum word limit may result in lower marks based on the quality of the work because they may not have included the necessary information required for the assessment and met the stated learning outcomes.

Also ensure that you download all submitted work, and marker's comments, from Moodle before June 15 2022. All such material will not be available to you after you graduate or progress to the next level of study.

Syllabus: [the order of topics might change]

Block 2, Room tbc

Date	Title	Readings or other information
<u>Week 0</u>	Preparation	Reading: Select one of:

	Select one of the three essentialist readings and get familiar with it	Cox, J.L., <i>From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions</i> (London: Ashgate, 2007). Harvey, G. (ed.), <i>Indigenous Religion: A Companion</i> (London: Continuum, 2000). Harvey, G. (ed.), <i>Readings in Indigenous Religions</i> (London: Continuum, 2002).
<u>Week 1</u>	Introduction	
Mo	Welcome What are indigenous religions? Part 2: Common features of Indigenous Religions	We will also discuss your preparation reading to check your understanding. Part 2: Reading: Stacie Swain: Unpacking the Baggage of “Indigenous Religion(s)”. in: <i>Bulletin for the Study of Religion</i>, posted on October 17, 2017 (link on Moodle) If we have time, we might watch the film <i>The Other Men</i> by Michel Viotte that presents the west’s encounters with traditional civilisations
Tue	Common features of ATR (African Traditional Religion)	Reading: Olupona, J. K., <i>African Religions: A Very Short Introduction</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). We will watch a documentary <i>Yaa Asantewaa: the heroism of an African queen</i> which will highlight the role of Kings and Queens in traditional African societies.
Thu	Common features of Indigenous religions in the Americas	Reading: Brown, J. E., with E. Cousins. <i>Teaching Spirits: Understanding Native American Religious Traditions</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
Fri	Significance of the study of indigenous religions today.	We will discuss the place of the study of indigenous religions. Should they be

		included in study programmes (e.g., schools and universities)? And what does it mean for the study of religions in general? Reading: Cox, J.L., <i>From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions</i> (London: Ashgate, 2007).
Week 2	Concepts	
Mo	Animated objects? The importance of material things in IR Example: Katchina	We will watch a documentary about the so called Hopi dolls (Katchinas) prepared by the Philipps Truffault (Musee du Quai Branly, Paris)
Tue	Animated objects? The importance of material things in IR Discussion about fetishism Workshop: how to prepare the poster?	We will discuss an article by Tim Ingold on objects. Reading: Ingold, Tim. Being alive to a world without objects. In: <i>The Handbook of Contemporary Animism</i>, ed. by Graham Harvey. (Durham: Acumen, 2013), pp. 213-225.
Thu	Community as the foundation of IR: Example: Potlatch	We will look at some material on potlatch from the Cultural Centre in Alter Bay, Canada and also watch a short film prepared by the Cultural Centre
Fri	Dealing with spirits: Shamanism	We will discuss the article by Robert Hamayon on shamanism. Reading: Hamayon, Roberte. Shamanism and the hunters of the Siberian forest: soul, life force, spirit. In <i>The Handbook of Contemporary Animism</i>, ed. by Graham Harvey. (Durham: Acumen, 2013), pp. 284-293.

<u>Week 3</u>	Responses to colonialism and modernity	
Mo	PPTX presentations, Poster Presentations / video presentation	Submission PPTX handout/ poster / video via TurnItIn before 9 a.m. Remember that you will have only 8 minutes for the presentation.
Tue	African witchcraft – part of ATR or a modern development due to Christianity?	The starting point will be Evans-Pritchard's study of the Azande witchcraft which will lead to witchcraft today, in the 21 st century and its place within African new Christian churches.
Thu	Mami Wata: the creation of a new entity. Workshop on essay writing (with discussion of outline)	We will discuss Mama Wata as a form of new entity developed in West Africa out of the merger of various female water deities. This will lead to a wider discussion about the impact of colonialism in Africa.
Fri	Ghost dance movement and other responses to colonialism and modernity	We will look at the impact of colonialism and other forms of suppression in North America. Reading: Mooney, J. <i>The ghost-dance religion and the Sioux outbreak of 1890</i>. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991) Feedback about the first assignment (presentation)
<u>Week 4</u>	Impact of Christianity	
Mo	The God controversy: how can we assess the impact of missionaries on indigenous religions today	We will look at an ongoing debate whether the belief on a creator god in indigenous religions is an invention caused by Christian missionaries or a pre-Christian concept. Reading: Cox, J.L., <i>The Invention of God in Indigenous Societies</i> (Durham: Acumen, 2014). Chapter 1.

Tue	Why study indigenous religions?	In the last session we will discuss the relevance of studying indigenous religions. Submission of essay via TurnItIn before 12 (noon) (feedback will be made available via Moodle in the following week)
Thu	Bank holiday	
Fri	Bank holiday	

Reading list

ESSENTIAL READINGS

- Cox, J.L., *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions* (London: Ashgate, 2007).
Harvey, G. (ed.), *Indigenous Religion: A Companion* (London: Continuum, 2000).
Harvey, G. (ed.), *Readings in Indigenous Religions* (London: Continuum, 2002).

FURTHER READINGS

- Bowie, F., *The Anthropology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
Cox, J.L., *The Invention of God in Indigenous Societies* (Durham: Acumen, 2014).
Cox, J. L. (ed.), *Critical Reflection on Indigenous Religions* (London: Ashgate, 2013).
Deloria, V. and J. Treat, *For this Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
Evans-Pritchard, E. E. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. Abridged edition. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976 [1937]).
Harvey, G. (ed.), *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*. (Durham: Acumen, 2013).
Harvey, G. (ed.), *Religions in Focus: New Approaches to Tradition and Contemporary Practices* (London: Equinox, 2009).
Harvey, G. and C.D. Thompson (eds.), *Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations* (London: Ashgate, 2005).
Hertzberg, H. W. *The Search for an American Identity: modern Pan-Indian movements*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971)
Hill, J. D. (ed.), *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past* (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988) [e-book].
Mbiti, J., *African Religions and Philosophy*. 2nd edition (London: Heineman, 1988).
Meyer, B., *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe of Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
Meyer, B., 'If You Are a Devil, You Are a Witch and, If You Are a Witch, You Are a Devil.' The Integration of 'Pagan' Ideas into the Conceptual Universe of Ewe Christians in Southeastern Ghana'. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 22 (2), 1992, pp. 98-132.
Mooney, J. *The ghost-dance religion and the Sioux outbreak of 1890*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991)
Olupona, J. K., *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
Rowse, T., *After Mabo: Interpreting Indigenous Traditions* (Carlton: Melbourne Univ. Press, 1993) [e-book].
Warren, L. S. Wounded Knee and the Ghost Dance: Christian Prayer, American Politics, and Indian Protest. *Reviews in American History*, Vol.39 (4), 2011, pp. 665-672.

Information about indigenous religions can also be found on these websites:

MamiWata West African and Diaspora Voudon

(<http://mamiwata.com/voodoo.html>)

Orisha Net Africles (<http://www.orishanet.org/africa.html>)

The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale

(<http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/indigenous>)

Cultural Survival (<http://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-religions>)

TEARA on traditional Maori religion (<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/traditional-maori-religion-nga-karakia-a-te-maori>)

Internet Sacred Texts Archive (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/>)