Anthropology 405/605: Language, Religion and Politics

Instructor: Dr. Jenanne Ferguson (jenannef@unr.edu)

Course Overview

In this course we will examine ways that people in the United States and around the world use religious discourse to frame changing relationships between their local communities and global social and political realities. We’ll extend our exploration from national to global politics, by analyzing changes in language use that accompany the conversion of the world’s indigenous communities to “world religions” like Christianity and by exploring the creative responses of indigenous communities to missions and colonialism. Beginning with an analysis of fundamentalist Christian language and discourse in the United States, we will then move on to focusing on “voice” and “voicing” among South Korean Christian converts. We will also touch on what scholars have termed the “Ghost Dance” religion as a movement that began with a succession of Paiute prophets in our local area and spread across Native communities throughout the West, and look at how indigenous language and religious practice revivals are connected among Mazatec speakers in Mexico. Religious revival after a period of atheism is considered in by looking at Mari El, a Republic within the Russian Federation with considerable religious and ethnic diversity. We will finish the course by examining the role of sermons circulated on cassette in public speech in Egypt with implications for other public spaces in the Middle East.

Course Objectives

CORE OBJECTIVE 11: GLOBAL CONTEXTS – Students will apply and evaluate modes of academic inquiry, creative expression, or results of research to problems in historical and contemporary global contexts. Students will articulate connections among local, national and international contexts and evaluate the ways that historical and contemporary global influences affect their current situations.

CORE OBJECTIVE 13: INTEGRATION AND SYNTHESIS – Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.

This course will bring together various components of core knowledge in that students will articulate through writing and communication skills anthropological knowledge of language, religion, and politics acquired in the course of their studies. This course also enables students to integrate knowledge on these topics addressed in anthropology’s sister disciplines, such as political science, history and sociology, extending to them a knowledge that engages these other areas while maintaining an anthropological perspective. As such, the study of language, religion and politics is viewed from an historical and global lens providing an anthropological understanding as it cross-fertilizes with these other disciplines and the knowledge that students have gained in the course of their studies.

With these objectives in mind, students will compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes (CO1). This course also integrates other core objectives such as critical analysis and use of information (CO3) in that students will be able to absorb information
and systematically engage in research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches in acquiring knowledge.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will:

1. articulate and evaluate connections among local, national, and international contexts (CO11)
2. identify the complex elements important to a diverse array of cultural groups in the global arena in relation to history, values, politics, language and religious beliefs and practices (CO11)
3. identify, analyze, and interpret connections between localized events and their global contexts (CO11)
4. analyze and interpret information about cultural, linguistic and religious differences, rules, and biases in their own society or about non-dominant or marginalized groups from a local and global perspective (CO11)
5. articulate ways in which social identities such as race, class, and gender intersect in order to influence individual life experiences and/or views and in turn, communicative behavior from a cross-cultural perspective (CO11)
6. make connections between and apply theories from previous coursework within cultural and linguistic anthropology and/or other disciplines to the context/topic of the Capstone course (CO13)
7. critically examine how one's configuration within intersecting social forces impacts one's worldview (CO13)

**Readings and Texts**

There are **two** required textbooks for this course:


There will also be a small selection of readings available online on WebCampus; these are listed in the schedule below.

The textbooks are available in the campus bookstore, and can also be purchased on Amazon (new and used). Amazon also offers textbook rental (for some titles) in either e-book or paperback. Powell’s books (www.powells.com) also is a good place to check, as often used texts are quite cheap.
Grading and Assessment

The grade breakdown is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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You will be evaluated according to the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th>Graduate Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 Webcampus exams</td>
<td>10% x 5</td>
<td>2-3 page essay questions with exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6-10 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media review</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1-2 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3-5 pages</td>
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Five short exams will be set that cover each of our five main texts (as well as the supplementary readings). Exams are made available at the conclusion of each reading and must be attempted within four days, and completed within one week from their availability date. Graduate students will also write 2-3 page papers summarizing the main theoretical arguments of each book.

For the media review, students will choose a film or television program or website that represents the intertwining of religion and politics, and analyze patterns of discourse or language use drawing upon at least one of the class readings.

For their research papers, students will conduct their own ethnographic projects applying methods and conceptual frameworks encountered in class to a sample of discourse in which religion and politics are intertwined. It is acceptable to use the media review as a stepping-stone to a more extensive ethnographic research paper—both assignments can contain analysis of the same example of discourse. A second option is to pursue an independent research paper on a topic appropriate to the class, in consultation with the professor. Graduate students are particularly encouraged to consult with me to pursue projects that are relevant to their research interests.

Class participation includes class discussions, office hour visits as well as short presentations of research projects. Of course, attendance, doing the reading and participating in class discussion is part of the package.

Policies and Responsibilities

**Academic Help:** Your student fees cover usage of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring-center), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing-center). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. If you are having trouble with more specific concepts or are unsure what is expected of you in this course, remember you can always contact me or your TA to set up a time to discuss them!

**Academic Honesty:** Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. They will result in an automatic F for the course and the student will be reported to UNR’s student affairs office. The UNR catalog outlines university policy concerning academic ethics and integrity; I advise all students to read it. If you are unclear about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please see me. Be aware that accidental plagiarism due to careless citation practices will be taken seriously. It is your responsibility to make sure that you cite all sources appropriately; again, please see me or the TA if you are having trouble with citations. All students must carefully read the following:

http://www.unr.edu/student-conduct/policies/university-policies-and-guidelines/academic-standards/policy

*Please see the Research section below for further citation guidelines.*

**Attendance:** is taken each class. You are allowed up to two absences during the semester that will not adversely affect your grade. Additional absences must be excused by me; more than two unexcused absences will result in your attendance and participation grade decreasing by 5 points each absence. I keep track of who is participating in class.
Please see me in advance, and provide written notice, if you need an absence for religious obligations (holy day absence) that do not fall on state holidays or periods of calls recess, or for university approved extracurricular activity (intercollegiate athletics, band, drama, recruitment, etc.)

**Being in class:** Attendance, participation, and preparation are very important. Information will be presented in lectures that is not covered in the readings, and it will be on the exams! Furthermore, you need to complete all assigned readings before the class – you will get much more out of the lectures this way since you will have already familiarized yourself with the terms, etc.

I expect respect for your fellow students, as well as for myself. Speaking up in class can be tough, so please be kind and attentive.

Cell phones must be turned off or silenced during class, and stowed away in your bag. Texting during class will negatively affect your participation grade. If there is an emergency, please leave the classroom to call/text.

You may use laptops/tablets to take notes. However, if they prove to be distracting, I reserve the right to prohibit laptop use.

**Disabilities:** I am happy to make any necessary accommodations for students with disabilities; please see me early in the semester to discuss your needs. Please also ensure you visit the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to make arrangements.

**Getting in touch:** Email is the best way to contact me; I will try to get back to you within 24 hours, but at some times (especially on weekends) it may take a bit longer. For issues that need more discussion rather than a quick answer, please feel free to drop by the office hours listed on the top of the syllabus, or set up an appointment if another time is necessary.

**Late assignments:** All assignments are due by the day and time specified in each specific assignment’s instructions (generally, the beginning of class the day it is due!). Late assignments will be marked down 10 percentage points for each day they are late. Extensions must be granted in advance – please talk to me about this! It is your responsibility to plan ahead and allow time to deal with any technical issues that may arise.

**Recording:** Any unauthorized video- or audio-taping of class is prohibited by law and by the Nevada Board of Regents. You may record ONLY with the written permission of the instructor. In some cases, students with disabilities have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

**Research:** Ann Medaille is UNR’s subject librarian for anthropology, and she can help you find good sources, use research databases, manage your research, and cite sources for your papers and presentations. Contact her with a research question or to set up an appointment (amedaille@unr.edu, 775-682-5600, MIKC 217).

There is also an anthropology library guide available here. This may be useful to you for Assignment #3: [http://guides.library.unr.edu/anthropology](http://guides.library.unr.edu/anthropology) (see also link on WebCampus)
Citation style for anthropology is based on the American Anthropology Association’s use of the Chicago Manual of Style (2003); comprehensive citation guidelines can be found here: http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf (see also link on WebCampus)

Schedule
You will be advised in class if there are any changes to the schedule throughout the semester; please also check the news section on WebCampus as well for updates. (Class cancellations, room changes, etc. will all be dealt with through WebCampus!)

Week 1

Tuesday: Introductions, Harding Introduction

Thursday: Harding, Chapter 1 "Speaking is Believing" and Chapter 3 "The Art of Jerry Falwell"

Week 2

Tuesday: Harding, Chapter 5 “Cultural Exodus"

Thursday: Harding, Chapter 6 "The Moral Majority Jeremiad" and Chapter 7 "The Pro-Life Gospel"

Week 3

Tuesday: Harding, Chapter 8 "The Creation Museum"

Thursday: Harding, Chapter 10 "The Born-again Telescandals" and Postscript, Chapter 9 "The Last Days"

Week 4

Exam 1 posted

Tuesday: Harkness, Introduction and Chapter 1 “Transformations of Voice”

Thursday: Harkness, Chapter 2 “Voicing an Advanced Korea” and Chapter 3 “Cultivating the Christian Voice”

Week 5

Tuesday: Harkness, Chapter 4 “The Clean Voice” and Chapter 5 “Tuning the Voice”

Thursday: Harkness, Chapter 6 “The Voice of Homecoming” and Chapter 7 “Feeling the Voice”
Week 6

Exam 2 posted

Tuesday: Luehrmann, Introduction, and Chapter 1 “Neighbors and Comrades: Secularizing the Mari Country”

Thursday: Luehrmann, Chapter 3 “Church closings and sermon circuits”

Week 7

Tuesday: Luehrmann, Chapter 4 “Marginal lessons” and Chapter 5 “Visual Aid”

Thursday: Luehrmann, Chapter 6 “The Soul and the Spirit”

Week 8

Tuesday: Luehrmann, Chapter 7 “Lifelong Learning” and Conclusion: Affinity and Discernment.


Week 9

Exam 3 posted

Tuesday: Faudree, Chapter 1 “From Revolution to Renaissance”

Thursday: Faudree, Chapter 2 “Revival in the Land of the ‘Magic Mushroom’”

Week 10

Tuesday: Faudree, Chapter 3 “Singing for the Spirits”

Thursday: Faudree, Chapter 4 “Scenes from a Nativist Reformation”

Project Prospectus Due

Week 11

Tuesday: Faudree ch 5 “Meeting at the Family Crypt”

Thursday: Faudree ch 6 “Seeing Double” and conclusion “Singing for the Dead and the Living”

Media review due
Week 12


Week 13
Exam 4 posted
Tuesday: Hirschkinds, Chapter 1 "Introduction"

Thursday: Hirschkinds, Chapter 2 "Islam, Nationalism and Audition"

Week 14
Tuesday: Hirschkinds, Chapter 3 "The Ethics of Listening"

Thursday: Hirschkinds, Chapter 4 "Cassettes and Counterpublics"

Week 15
Tuesday: Hirschkinds, Chapter 5 “Rhetorics of the Da’iya"

Thursday: Hirschkinds, Chapter 6 "The Acoustics of Death" and Chapter 7 "Epilogue"

Week 16
Exam 5 Posted
Ethnographic Projects or Papers due; class presentations and wrap-up discussion

Final exam date: TBA