

Religion and Ritual – Course Code L6040

Autumn Term 2009

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ALL SESSIONS WILL START IN WEEK 1 OF THE AUTUMN TERM

Lecture

Monday 1400-1600: Silverstone Building (formerly EDB) 121

Seminars

Thursday 1400-1600 Russell Building 46

Thursday 1600-1800 Russell Building 46

Friday 0900-1100 Russell Building 13

Friday 1100-1300 Russell Building 13

Introduction

This course is designed to introduce students to the main themes in theoretical and ethnographic writing on religion and ritual, from the early work of Emile Durkheim to the more recent contributions of anthropologists currently working in the area. The course as a whole is organised around several related themes, which in turn stem from some common assumptions made about religion and ritual. Addressing these assumptions also addresses some of the most central concerns in Social Anthropology, about how to understand cultural difference, and how to theorise the relationship between culture and society.

1. When asked why different peoples have different beliefs the most common answer must be "because it's their culture". We ask in this course whether this answer is sufficient, and focus in particular on how to explain the reasons why particular beliefs are different, and how they came to be so. Such explanations rely on making explicit links between religion and society. Where religion is normally thought of as a spiritual process, we examine its social embeddedness.

2. It's often assumed that in 'Modern Western' society, religion is no longer an important factor in social life. By this logic, the world can be divided into a rational, scientific 'us' and a superstitious 'them', whose world is still ruled by mumbo-jumbo. The course questions this dichotomy, both theoretically and ethnographically. In the process it will also question the very definition of religion. What is religion and how does it work? Is a system of religious belief any different from a system of scientific belief?
3. We tend to think of religions as rigid sets of rules or dogmatic statements about morality. This course focuses in particular on how religions are *practiced*, and how that practice can both deviate from and change the rule of doctrine.

The themes outlined here are not exhaustive. There are plenty of other areas we will be exploring, and there will be ample opportunity for you to develop your ethnographic and theoretical interests through both writing and discussion.

Course Structure and Learning Outcomes

The course is oriented around two **compulsory** weekly sessions – a 2-hour lecture and a 2-hour seminar. Generally speaking, the lecture will serve as an overall orientation and introduction to a theoretical area, whilst the seminar will involve the detailed discussion of ethnographic examples you yourself have explored. The aim is to move away from a more structured and 'packaged' type of course, to assist and enable you to become much more independent and autonomous learners. The lecture is an opportunity for me to introduce the week's topic, whilst the seminar will be oriented around your own work (see below) and enable you to set your own agendas and ask your own questions about the week's topic. This will then feed into your own writing and research, developing your ability to conduct bibliographic research without direct supervision. As a whole, this should give you more confidence in your learning, such that when you go into your final General Topic in the Spring term, you will be 'the complete Sussex anthropologist'. It should also prove invaluable in the future, however. We see the skills of agenda-setting – the ability to go into a meeting and controlling the course of a discussion – and of bibliographic research as transferrable skills, useful not only in an academic environment, but also in other work-places, where many of you may well find yourselves at the end of the year.

By the end of the course you should be able to demonstrate:

1. Knowledge of anthropological approaches to understanding religion and ritual
2. Understanding of the social contexts of religion and ritual
3. Ability to critically assess intellectual arguments
4. Ability to recognise significant researchable issues
5. Ability to present sophisticated arguments in oral and written forms

Reading

Each week I have outlined the general area of debate, and given a number of relevant readings. The readings are divided into 'Main' and 'Group' readings. All students should read both the Main readings, and the readings assigned for their Reading Group (see below). Alongside the readings I have outlined a number of questions to direct your reading, and help you prepare as fully as possible for the seminars. Try to avoid just looking at one of the questions, because in most cases they are intended as a 'package' and try to think about how these questions – and readings – relate to the rest of the course, and to the rest of Anthropology.

All readings are in the library, and most of them in the CORE COLLECTION as photocopied offprints. If you are having trouble finding readings, then get in touch with me AS EARLY AS YOU CAN, and I will try to help. Not finding the reading will **not** be considered an adequate excuse for lack of participation in class.

Study Pack

The key theoretical readings are collected in a course Study Pack, which is available from the Global Studies School Office. In order to succeed in the course, you must read MORE than just the study pack. It is there to assist you, rather than as an exhaustive textbook.

Seminars

The success of the seminar classes will depend on the preparation and regular participation of all students. There are four seminar groups, each of which will be sub-divided into 3 Reading Groups. The reading list that follows is divided with the Seminars numbered 1-4 and the Reading Groups lettered a-c. These will be allocated in the first seminar of term, and you should quickly make yourself familiar

with both your Seminar number and Reading Group letter, to find your way around the reading list. Reading Groups are expected to meet at least once a week outside class, to discuss their reading. This meeting will then formulate an 'agenda' for their participation in the main seminar class – a set of issues or questions which the Reading Group feels ought to be addressed during the class, based on their reading of a particular piece of ethnography.

This method is being used in lieu of formal presentations to encourage and develop your abilities in co-operative Group-work and your capacity to autonomously set a learning agenda. It is born of two sets of priorities: (i) Making you aware of and allowing you to reflect on how intellectual agendas are set, by doing it yourselves; (ii) Giving you experience in creating a working agenda - which many of you will be expected to do in your future, whether it's academic or not.

Written Work

The course is examined by two pieces of written work:

- 1. Coursework Essay** – 1500-2000 words (two copies, double spaced), submitted in the Autumn term to the Global Studies School Office, C168, by 4pm on Wednesday of week 6, 11 November 2009 (25% weighting).
- 2. Long Essay** – 4000 words (two copies, double spaced), submitted in the Spring term to the Global Studies School Office, C168, by 4pm on Tuesday of week 1, 12 January 2010 (75% weighting).

The coursework essay should answer one of the questions outlined below. The Long Essay should follow a topic of your own choosing, that draws on the work of the course, but explores it in a different or complementary manner. You will arrive at your topic through tutorial discussions in week 5 and week 8. It is important that you make the most of these sessions, and start thinking about your topic early. Note that **there is no teaching time allocated for supervision or the reading of drafts in the Christmas vacation.** You should therefore have a clear idea about what you are going to write about **by the end of term at the latest.**

Tutorial

In **weeks 5 and 8** we will have tutorials to discuss your plans for the long essay. By the final meeting, you will be expected to have thought through your ideas and agreed a title. We will sign a title form to confirm this. Full details of the tutorials will be arranged nearer the time.

Essay Questions – for Coursework Essay – 1500-2000 words, Autumn Term week 6. Choose ONE of the following titles for your essay:

1. Is religion a cultural system?
2. Why have anthropologists moved from defining ritual to theorising ritualisation? What are the consequences of this move?
3. Why does Asad characterise religions as discursive traditions? How does this perspective differ from Geertz's?
4. Critically assess Kertzer's definition of ritual as 'action wrapped in a web of symbolism'.
5. Is it possible to envisage an anthropology of religion that is not also an anthropology of ritual?

SYLLABUS

Week One

All lectures and seminar classes will start in **Week One**. The meetings will focus on course logistics and the designation of Reading Groups. It is therefore **imperative** that you come to these meetings. The meetings will also introduce the course content, and there will be a more general discussion around the following questions:

- * What is religion?
- * What does it consist of?
- * How can we study it?
- * How does it differ from other modes of thought/science?
- * What is the place of religion in the world?

Week Two: Definitions and Concepts

This week's class will focus on some definitional questions. Following on from the Introductory discussion, we will focus on how to define religion and ritual, and how to understand the relationship between the two.

Questions:

How does Geertz's definition of religion as a cultural system tally with your understanding of what religion is? Why does Asad criticise Geertz? If religion is a cultural system, how does it differ from other cultural systems? If all people have religions/cultural systems, how can we explain the fact that they're different? What is ritual? Is it a property of particular events, or of the way in which people understand those events? What do rituals 'say'? What is the relationship between ritual and power?

Background:

T.H. Eriksen - Small Places, Large Issues, Ch. 13

Main Reading (All Groups)

On Religion:

C. Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System'.

(Can be found in Geertz's Interpretation of Cultures, Lessa & Vogt's Reader in Comparative Religion, and ASA3, Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion.)

and

T.Asad, 'Religion as an Anthropological Category'.

(In his Genealogies of Religion, or alternatively read his 'Anthropological conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz', in Man 1983: 237-259.)

On Ritual:

C. Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, Ch.4.

Further Reading:

E. Leach - 'Ritual' in International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, **or**

E. Leach, Political Systems of Highland Burma, pp.10-17, or

C Humphrey & J Laidlaw - The Archetypal Actions of Ritual Ch3 & 4

D Kertzer - Ritual, Power and Politics Ch1

B Morris - Anthropological Studies of Religion pp312-319

D Pals - Seven Theories of Religion Ch7

R Grimes – Readings in Ritual Studies

T. Asad – Genealogies of Religion

D. Scott & C. Hirschkind (eds) Powers of the Secular Modern

B. Kapferer, 'Ritual Dynamics and Virtual Practice: Beyond Representation and Meaning' in D. Handelman & G. Lindquist (eds) Ritual in its own Right

Week Three: 'Us' and 'Them' (1): Rationality, Religion and Secularisation

Much of the social science of religion has revolved around explanations for the decline of religious belief – or at least its radical transformation – as a consequence of modernisation. This week will focus on the implications of such arguments, and in particular question the opposition that is frequently made between 'rational' and 'irrational' ways of thinking. This opposition has been used to contrast past and present societies as well as 'the West' and 'the Rest'. As such, it goes straight to the core of anthropology and its concern to account for and explain social and cultural difference. The ethnographic examples show that in the contemporary west, there are plenty of people who believe things which seem to go against notions of 'modern', 'rational' thought. We will examine various explanations of how 'modern' people can still be credulous, despite the apparent 'secularisation' of society.

Questions:

Is 'modern' society dominated by a secular view of the world? Does the process of rationalisation really transform the way we think? Is magic a bastard science, and if so how does this help us to understand different beliefs? How come people in modern western societies believe in things that appear to be 'irrational' – what do they get out of it?

Background Reading:

S Bruce – Religion in the Modern World Ch2 & 3

G Davie – Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging Introduction & Ch10

S Bruce – 'Religion in Britain at the Close of the 20th Century: A Challenge to the Silver Lining Perspective' Journal of Contemporary Religion 11(3): 1996

Main Reading:

SJ Tambiah – Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality Ch3

M Weber – ‘Religion and Other Factors in the Development of Modern Capitalism’ in

S Andreski (ed) Max Weber on Capitalism, Bureaucracy and Religion pp126-137

J Beckford – Is Secularisation Good for the Sociology of Religion?; unpublished paper available at <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/~syred/Secularisation.htm>

Group Readings:

Group 1a: C Stewart, Demons and the Devil, part 1, esp chapter 4

Group 1b: TM Luhrmann, Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft, chapters 1, 3, 8, 21, 22, 23

Group 1c: S Greenwood, Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld chapters 1, 2 up to p37, 5, 7, 8

Group 2a: C Stewart, Demons and the Devil, part 1, esp chapter 4

Group 2b: M Brown, The Channeling Zone: American spirituality in an anxious age, chapters 1,3,6,8

Group 2c: TM Luhrmann, Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft, chapters 1, 3, 8, 21, 22, 23

Group 3a: C Stewart, Demons and the Devil, part 1, esp chapter 4

Group 3b: TM Luhrmann, Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft, chapters 1, 3, 8, 21, 22, 23

Group 3c: L Danforth, Firewalking and Religious Healing: the Anastenaria of Greece and the American Firewalking Movement, introduction, chapter 4 pp 126-131, chapter 5, chapter 6 pp 200-213, chapter s 7 & 8

Group 4a: TM Luhrmann, Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft, chapters 1, 3, 8, 21, 22, 23

Group 4b: C Stewart, Demons and the Devil, part 1, esp chapter 4

Group 4c: R Prince & D Riches, The New Age in Glastonbury, part 3

Further Reading:

W.H. Swatos & DVA Olsen (eds) The Secularization Debate

M Weber – The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

D Holmes – Cultural Disenchantments

EE Evans-Pritchard – Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande

EE Evans-Pritchard – Theories of Primitive Religion

M Hollis & S Lukes – Rationality & Relativism

R Horton – Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West

R Horton & R Finnegan – Modes of Thought

L Levy-Bruhl – How Natives Think

B Morris – Anthropological Studies of Religion pp61-78, 196-235, 264-312

B Wilson – Rationality

Week Four: 'Us' and 'Them' (2): Religion and Modernity

Following on from debates about secularisation and rationalisation in the West, this week examines a body of anthropological work that has explored the consequences of social and economic change elsewhere. In particular it examines the dominant thesis that as societies become increasingly incorporated into 'modernity', they will inevitably become more 'rational'. A number of anthropologists have suggested the opposite – that actually, modernity leads to an 'enchantment' of the world, with the rapid and often catastrophic social changes brought about by colonisation, the introduction of capitalist market economy, missionisation etc. leading to a proliferation of religious forms, from types of pentecostal Christianity to witchcraft, vampires and other elements of the demonic. This week we will explore concepts of modernity and how anthropologists have understood the enchantment of the non-Western world in relation to the modern.

Questions:

Does modernity lead to a disenchantment of the world? How many modernities are there: one, many or none? Should we understand the proliferation of witchcraft and the demonic as a form of resistance to or symbolisation of modernity?

Background Reading:

C. Taylor, Two Theories of Modernity in D.P. Gaonkar Alternative Modernities

B. Latour, We Have Never Been Modern

Main Reading:

B. Latour, Tribunals of Reason, chapter 5 of his Science in Action

J.P. Mitchell, 2002, Modernity and the Mediterranean, Journal of Mediterranean Studies 12(1): 1-22

J.S. Kahn, 2001, Anthropology and Modernity, Current Anthropology 42(5): 651-679

H. Englund & J. Leach, 2000, Ethnography and the Meta-Narratives of Modernity, Current Anthropology 41: 225-248

Group Readings:

Group 1a: J Comaroff & J Comaroff, 1999, Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: notes from the South African Postcolony, American Ethnologist 26(2): 279-303

Group 1b: R Shaw 1997 The Production of Witchcraft/Witchcraft as Production: Memory, Modernity and the Slave Trade in Sierra Leone, American Ethnologist 24(4): 856-876

Group 1c: P Geschiere, The Modernity of Witchcraft, Introduction, chapter 5

Group 2a: P Geschiere, 'Globalization and the Power of indeterminate meaning: witchcraft and spirit cults in Africa and East Asia', Development and Change 29(4): 811-837

Group 2b: D J Smith, 2001, 'Ritual Killing, 419 and Fast Wealth: inequality and the popular imagination in Southeastern Nigeria' American Ethnologist 28(4): 803-826

Group 2c: J Comaroff & J Comaroff, 1999, Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: notes from the South African Postcolony, American Ethnologist 26(2): 279-303

Group 3a: P Geschiere, 'Witchcraft and New Forms of Wealth: regional variations in south and West Cameroon' in P Clough & J Mitchell (eds) Powers of Good and Evil

Group 3b: J Comaroff & J Comaroff, 1999, Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: notes from the South African Postcolony, American Ethnologist 26(2): 279-303

Group 3c: R Shaw 1997 The Production of Witchcraft/Witchcraft as Production: Memory, Modernity and the Slave Trade in Sierra Leone, American Ethnologist 24(4): 856-876

Group 4a: P Geschiere, 'Globalization and the Power of indeterminate meaning: witchcraft and spirit cults in Africa and East Asia', Development and Change 29(4): 811-837

Group 4b: J Comaroff & J Comaroff, 1999, Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: notes from the South African Postcolony, American Ethnologist 26(2): 279-303

Group 4c: D J Smith, 2001, 'Ritual Killing, 419 and Fast Wealth: inequality and the popular imagination in Southeastern Nigeria' American Ethnologist 28(4): 803-826

Further Reading:

J Fernandez, Bwiti, chapters 9, 11, 12

M L Bastian, "Bloodhounds who have no Friends": witchcraft and locality in the Nigerian popular press, in J. & J. Comaroff (eds) Modernity and its Malcontents Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J., 1995, 1997, Of Revelation and Revolution – 2 vols. Chicago: University Press.

Geschiere, P. and Rowlands, M., 1996, 'The Domestication of Modernity: Different Trajectories', Africa, 66 (4): 552-55

Geschiere, P., 1999, 'Globalization and the Power of Indeterminate Meaning: Witchcraft and Spirit Cults in Africa and East Asia', in Meyer, B. and Geschiere, P., eds., Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure. Oxford: Blackwell: 211-36.

Kahn, J. S., 1997, 'Demons, Commodities and the History of Anthropology', in Carrier, J., ed., Meanings of the Market. Oxford: Berg: 69-98.

Marshall, R., 1991, 'Power in the Name of Jesus', Review of African Political Economy, 52: 21-38.

Marshall, R., 1993, "Power in the Name of Jesus': Social Transformation and Pentecostalism in Western Nigeria 'Revisited'", in Ranger, T. And Vaughan, O., eds, Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Meyer, B., 1996, 'Modernity and Enchantment: The Image of the Devil in Popular African Christianity', in van der Veer, P., ed., Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity. London and New York: Routledge.

Meyer, B., 1999, Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Parry, J., 1989, 'On the Moral Perils of Exchange', in Parry, J. and Bloch, M., eds, Money and the Morality of Exchange. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rowlands, M. and Warnier, J.-P., 1988, 'Sorcery, Power and the Modern State in Cameroon', Man (N.S.) 23: 118-32.

Shaw, R., 1996, 'The Politician and the Diviner: Divination and the Consumption of Power in Sierra Leone', Journal of Religion in Africa, 26 (1): 30-55.

Taussig, M., 1995, 'The Sun Gives Without Receiving: An Old Story', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 37 (2): 368-98.

Week Five: 'Us' and 'Them' (3): The Anthropology of Science

NO SEMINARS THIS WEEK: FIRST TUTORIAL FOR LONG ESSAY

The Lecture will focus on the Anthropology of Science – a by-product of the Anthropology of Religion – and on preparing you for the first Long Essay tutorial.

Tutorial: Each student will meet with me for 10-15 minutes to discuss a possible Long Essay topic. To make the most of this session you **MUST** come prepared; with a concrete idea of something you wish to explore. Your topic **MUST** take you further than the materials provided on the course in the lectures and reading list, as you need to start to demonstrate your ability to internalise the theoretical and ethnographic messages of anthropology, and apply it to diverse cases. This will require a certain amount of thought, but should be exciting. Your topic **MUST** be related to the course, but should not be restricted by it. If you have a particular interest in a particular area of the Anthropology of Religion (which can include questions of Knowledge more generally – including the Anthropology of Science – and secular rituals of various sorts) then bring that along and we can discuss the possibilities.

Lecture: We live in a world in which technology is seen as the main agent of change, and science as a progressive journey from non-knowledge to knowledge. However, if we question the relevance of setting off 'West' from 'Rest' and present from past – as we did last week – this raises important questions about this triumphalist scientific narrative. This week we examine a range of literature which has examined science in the same way that earlier anthropologists approached 'religion' – namely, as a cultural system established and perpetuated at particular times and in particular places, in relation to a particular notion of power.

Questions:

To what extent is science 'constructed' knowledge? How does this construction take place – what are the techniques for its construction? Are all the things that go on in a laboratory done for purely 'rational' reasons, or are the rules obeyed more arbitrary and ritualised? What is the relationship between the production of scientific knowledge and the perpetuation of power? Does the 'logic' of scientific inquiry always lead to 'logical' conclusions?

Background Reading:

L Nader – Naked Science

B Latour – We Have Never Been Modern

C Geertz – The Legacy of Thomas Kuhn: the right text at the right time. In Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics

P Lassman et al (eds) 1989 Max Weber's 'Science as a Vocation'

Main Reading:

M Weber - 'Science as a Vocation' in T Parsons (ed) From Max Weber

T Kuhn - The Structure of Scientific Revolutions Ch1, Ch2, Ch5, Ch6, Ch7, Ch8

S Franklin - 'Science as Culture, Cultures of Science' Annual Review of Anthropology 1995 (24): 163-184

M Foucault – 'The Human Sciences' in The Order of Things

M Foucault – 'Truth and Power' in Power/Knowledge – also published in P Rabinow (ed) The Foucault Reader

Further Reading

The Human Genome Project

MJ Flower & D Heath - 'Micro-Anatomo Politics: Mapping the Human Genome Project' *Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry* 1993 (17): 27-41

D Haraway - 'Gene: Maps and Portraits of Life Itself', Ch4 in her [Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan^c_Meets_OncoMouseTM](#)

HT Greely, 1998, Legal, Ethical & Social Issues in Human Genome Research, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 – also available online at:
<http://anthro.annualreviews.org/cgi/content/full/27/1/473>

G Palsson & P Rabinow, The Human Genome Project in Iceland, *Anthropology Today* 15: 5: 1999

Particle Physics

S Traweek - *Beamtimes and Lifetimes: the world of international particle physics* – chapters 2, 4, 5, epilogue

S Traweek - 'Cultural Differences in High-Energy Physicists' in S Harding (ed) *The 'Racial' Economy of Science*

S Traweek - 'Border Crossings: Narrative Strategies in Science Studies and among Physicists in Tsukuba Science City, Japan' in A Pickering (ed) *Science as Practice and Culture*

Neuroendocrinology

B Latour & S Woolgar - *Laboratory Life* Ch2, Ch3, Ch6

B Latour - *Science in Action* Ch1, Ch2

General, and Miscellaneous

S Traweek - 'An Introduction to Cultural and Social Studies of Sciences and Technologies' *Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry* 1993 (17): 3-25

S Harding - Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?

S Goonatilake - Aborted Discovery: Science and Creativity in the Third World

P Rabinow – Essays in the Anthropology of Reason

D Haraway – Primate Visions

D Haraway – Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature

B Barnes & S Edge (eds) - Science in Context

A Pickering (ed) - Science as Practice and Culture

M Midgeley 1992 Science as Salvation: a modern myth and its meaning

Week Six: Religion, Ritual & the Social (1): Ritual, Power & Collectivity

COURSEWORK ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK

This week takes us back to the origins of the Anthropology of Religion, and the work of Emile Durkheim, who argued that Religion, rather than being a spiritual process, was eminently social. He saw religious ritual as a celebration of society, and God as a symbolic representation of the social order. We will also look at Marx, who had a similar take on religion and ritual, but whereas Durkheim saw religious celebration as a relatively harmonious thing, for Marx it was fundamentally coercive. We look at the implications of these theories for the understanding of collective rituals.

Questions:

Why does Durkheim focus on rituals? Do rituals produce society? Can they be seen as a means by which people are convinced of the 'correctness' of the social order? Is religion a coercive or an emancipatory force in social life? How do rituals and religion become the sites of contestation?

Background:

E Durkheim - The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life Bk2, Ch7

D Pals - Seven Theories of Religion Ch3 & 4

B Turner - Religion and Social Theory Ch2, 3 & 8

Main Reading:

P Connerton, 1989, How Societies Remember pp41-43

R Bellah, 1967, Civil Religion in America, Daedalus 91(6): 1-21; reprinted in
Daedalus 134, 4 (Fall 2005), 40-56

M Angrosino, 2002, Civil Religion Redux, Anthropological Quarterly 75(2): 239-267.

M Bloch – The Past and the Present in the Present Man 12: 278-292; Symbols,
Song, Dance and Features of Articulation or Is religion an extreme form of
traditional authority? Archives Europeennes de Sociologie – both articles also
published in Bloch, 1989, Ritual, History and Power

D Gellner – Religion, Politics and Ritual: Remarks on Geertz and Bloch Social
Anthropology 7(2): 135-153

Group Reading:

Group 1a: CA Davies, A oes heddwch? Contesting Meanings and Identities in the
Welsh National Eisteddfod, in F Hughes-Freeland (ed), Ritual, Performance,
Media

Group 1b: G Baumann - 'Ritual Implicates "Others": Rereading Durkheim in a Plural
Society' in D de Coppet, Understanding Rituals

Group 1c: R Kaur, Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism – chapter 4:
Ganesh Chaturthi: festival as praxis

Group 2a: S Lewis, National Day: achieving collective identity on the Isle of Man, in
N Rapport (ed) British Subjects: an anthropology of Britain pp49-65

Group 2b: G Baumann - 'Ritual Implicates "Others": Rereading Durkheim in a Plural
Society' in D de Coppet, Understanding Rituals

Group 2c: R Kaur, Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism – chapter 4:
Ganesh Chaturthi: festival as praxis

Group 3a: CA Davies, A oes heddwch? Contesting Meanings and Identities in the
Welsh National Eisteddfod, in F Hughes-Freeland (ed), Ritual, Performance,
Media

Group 3b: S Lewis, National Day: achieving collective identity on the Isle of Man, in
N Rapport (ed) British Subjects: an anthropology of Britain pp49-65

Group 3c: G Baumann - 'Ritual Implicates "Others": Rereading Durkheim in a Plural
Society' in D de Coppet, Understanding Rituals

Group 4a: G Baumann - 'Ritual Implicates "Others": Rereading Durkheim in a Plural Society' in D de Coppet, Understanding Rituals

Group 4b: S Lewis, National Day: achieving collective identity on the Isle of Man, in N Rapport (ed) British Subjects: an anthropology of Britain pp49-65

Group 4c: R Kaur, Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism – chapter 4: Ganesh Chaturthi: festival as praxis

Further Reading:

S Lukes, Political Ritual and Social Integration, *Sociology* 9: 289-308 – also available in William Outhwaite and Luke Martell (eds.), The Sociology of Politics. Vol. II Forms of Politics

D Handelman, State Ceremonies in Israel, in his Models and Mirrors

M Bloch - Ritual, History & Power

M Bloch - From Blessing to Violence

J Boissevain - Revitalising European Rituals

D Cannadine & M Price - Rituals of Royalty

S Wiletz - Rites of Power

B Wilson - Saints and their Cults

References on Carnival:

S Pink, Topsy-turvy Bullfights and Festival Queens, Social Anthropology 5(2): 90-107

M Gluckman, Rituals of Rebellion in South East Africa, in his Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa

BA Babcock (ed), The Reversible World

A Cohen, Masquerade Politics

J Mintz, Carnival Song and Society

E le Roy Ladurie, Carnival, foreword, chapters 7, 11, 12

A Cohen, Drama and Politics in the Development of a London Carnival, Man 15(1) 1980: 65-87

DeMatta, 1991, Carnivals, Rogues, Heroes

Week Seven: Religion, Ritual & Society (2): Rites of Passage

As well as producing the social order, ritual has been blamed for producing the people who live in it. This week we look at rituals of personal transformation, or what anthropologists have called Rites of Passage: rituals oriented around the passage of persons from one status to the next - childhood to adulthood, life to death etc. Such rites of passage are seen as central to the constitution of society, and their performance in a religious context demonstrates the extent to which religion is also central to social life. Why, for example, do organised religions control the rites of passage? The ethnographic examples we deal with come from Africa and Melanesia, and deal with the relationship between ritual, gender, society, symbol and experience.

Questions:

According to van Gennep, Turner and Bloch, rituals have three stages. What are they? What function does ritual have? How does it relate to social structure? What role does symbolism have in the ritual process? What does Turner mean by *liminality* and *communitas*? How do they work? How does Bloch develop Turner and van Gennep's ideas? What role does he ascribe to violence? What role can we ascribe to the experiential in our understanding of rites of passage?

Background:

A van Gennep - [The Rites of Passage](#) Ch2 & 3 – see also 'Rites of Passage' in the [International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences](#)

F Bowie – [The Anthropology of Religion](#) – chapter 6

Main Reading:

V Turner - [The Forest of Symbols](#) Ch1-4

V Turner - [The Ritual Process](#) Ch3

M Bloch - [Prey into Hunter](#) Ch1 & 2

H Moore, T Sanders, B Kaare, Introduction in their [Those Who Play With Fire](#)

Group Reading:

Group 1a: H Whitehouse - 'Rites of Terror: Metaphor and Memory in Melanesian Initiation Cults' [Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute](#) 1996

Group 1b: S Heald (1982). The making of men: the relevance of vernacular psychology to the interpretation of a Gisu ritual [Africa](#). **52**:1 pp 15-36.

- Group 1c:** FJP Poole - 'The Ritual Forging of Identity' in G Herdt, Rituals of Manhood
- Group 2a:** S Heald, Manhood and Morality: sex, violence and ritual in Gisu society, chapters 2, 3, 4
- Group 2b:** FJP Poole - 'The Ritual Forging of Identity' in G Herdt, Rituals of Manhood
- Group 2c:** H Whitehouse - 'Rites of Terror: Metaphor and Memory in Melanesian Initiation Cults' Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 1996
- Group 3a:** H Whitehouse - 'Rites of Terror: Metaphor and Memory in Melanesian Initiation Cults' Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 1996
- Group 3b:** S Heald (1982). The making of men: the relevance of vernacular psychology to the interpretation of a Gisu ritual Africa. 52:1 pp 15-36.
- Group 3c:** FJP Poole - 'The Ritual Forging of Identity' in G Herdt, Rituals of Manhood
- Group 4a:** FJP Poole - 'The Ritual Forging of Identity' in G Herdt, Rituals of Manhood
- Group 4b:** H Whitehouse - 'Rites of Terror: Metaphor and Memory in Melanesian Initiation Cults' Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 1996
- Group 4c:** S Heald, Manhood and Morality: sex, violence and ritual in Gisu society, chapters 2, 3, 4

Further Reading:

- F Barth – Ritual and Knowledge Among the Baktaman of New Guinea Part II 'The Initiation Rites', Part V 'The Sociology of Baktaman Knowledge'
- M Godelier – The Making of Great Men – chapter 3
- A Alves - 'Transgressions and Transformations: Initiation Rites among Urban Portuguese Boys' American Anthropologist 1993
- D Kaspin, The Lion at the Waterhole: the secrets of life and death in Chewa Rites de Passage, in H Moore, T Sanders, B Kaare, Those Who Play With Fire
- T Asad - 'On Discipline and Humility in Medieval Christian Monasticism' in his Genealogies of Religion
- JD Vigil – 'Street Baptism: Chicano Gang Initiation' Human Organization 1996 (55): 149-153
- M Murphy, Coming of Age in Seville, Journal of Anthropological Research 39(4)

JS La Fontaine, Ritualisation of Women's Life-crises in Bugisu, in JS La Fontaine
(ed) The Interpretation of Ritual

A Richards, Chisungu: a girl's initiation, introduction, pp60-63, part III

M Gluckman - Essays in the Ritual of Social Relations

I Rudie - 'The Ritual Work of Malay Marriages as a Field of Debate' in Brock-Due,
Rudie & Bleie, Carved Flesh, Cast Selves

R Schechner - The Future of Ritual

N Brock Johnson - 'Sex, Color and Rites of Passage in Ethnographic Research'
Human Organization 1984 (43): 108-120

JD Vigil – 'Street Baptism: Chicano Gang Initiation' Human Organization 1996 (55):
149-153

G Lewis - Day of Shining Red

R Wagner – 'Ritual as Communication: Order, Meaning and Secrecy in Melanesian
Initiation Rites' Annual Review of Anthropology 1984 (13): 143-155

G Bateson – Naven

J La Fontaine – The Interpretation of Rituals

Week Eight: No Classes This Week

SECOND ESSAY TUTORIAL THIS WEEK

This week there will be no lecture or seminar; rather you will work towards a **tutorial** – timings to be confirmed – to discuss plans for your long essay.

Week Nine: Understanding Belief (1): Language & Conversion

One of the central problems for the Anthropology of Religion is how to understand belief. This is not only a theoretical problem, but a methodological one too, because an Anthropology of belief presupposes belief is something that can be examined. If we understand belief as an interior state - as most of us probably would - then the task becomes an impossible one. How can we get inside other people to see what they believe? This week focuses on the work of Rodney Needham who formulated a linguistic theory of belief. Heavily influenced by Wittgenstein and the linguistic philosopher Austin, he argued in essence that believing is a linguistic act, rather than an activity of the soul. Other anthropologists, such as Susan Harding, have focussed on the construction and effects of *narratives* of conversion.

Questions: How can we account for religious conversion? How do we know when someone has converted? How can we get at belief if we don't assume that what people say is what they do? Is an expression of belief the same as believing? Is belief an internal property of the person?

Background Reading:

AL Austin – How to Do Things With Words

R Needham - Belief, Language and Experience Ch2, 6, 7 & 8

Main Reading:

M Ruel, Christians as Believers, in M Lambek (ed) A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion – see also M Ruel 'Christians as Believers' in J Davis (ed) Religious Organisation and Religious Experience

Pouillon, J, Remarks on the verb 'to believe' in M Izzard & P Smith (eds) Between Belief and Transgression: 1-8

T Asad - 'The Constitution of Religion as an Anthropological Category' in his Genealogies of Religion

or 'Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz' Man 1983.

W Keane, Religious Language, Annual Review of Anthropology 1997 (26): 47-71 – also available online: <http://anthro.annualreviews.org/cgi/content/full/26/1/47>

Group Reading:

Group 1a: PG Stromberg - Language and Self-Transformation Ch1, 3 & 7

Group 1b: J Beckford - 'Accounting for Conversion' British Journal of Sociology 1978

Group 1c: S Harding - 'Convicted by the Holy Spirit' American Ethnologist 1987 – also published in M Klass, MK Weisgrau (eds) Across the Boundaries of Belief; see also her The Book of Jerry Felwell – chapter 'Speaking is Believing'

Group 2a: S Harding - 'Convicted by the Holy Spirit' American Ethnologist 1987 – also published in M Klass, MK Weisgrau (eds) Across the Boundaries of Belief; see also her The Book of Jerry Felwell – chapter 'Speaking is Believing'

Group 2b: PG Stromberg - Language and Self-Transformation Ch1, 3 & 7

Group 2c: J Beckford - 'Accounting for Conversion' British Journal of Sociology 1978

Group 3a: B Szuchewycz, 1994, Evidentiality in Religious Discourse, Language in Society 23: 389-410

Group 3b: J Beckford - 'Accounting for Conversion' British Journal of Sociology 1978

Group 3c: S Harding - 'Convicted by the Holy Spirit' American Ethnologist 1987 – also published in M Klass, MK Weisgrau (eds) Across the Boundaries of Belief; see also her The Book of Jerry Felwell – chapter 'Speaking is Believing'

Group 4a: J Beckford - 'Accounting for Conversion' British Journal of Sociology 1978

Group 4b: B Szuchewycz, 1994, Evidentiality in Religious Discourse, Language in Society 23: 389-410

Group 4c: S Harding - 'Convicted by the Holy Spirit' American Ethnologist 1987 – also published in M Klass, MK Weisgrau (eds) Across the Boundaries of Belief; see also her The Book of Jerry Felwell – chapter 'Speaking is Believing'

Further Reading:

J Faubion The Darkness and the Light of Waco

S Harding The Book of Jerry Felwell

R Bauman, 1983, Let Your Words Be Few, introduction, chapters 2, 5, 9

Snow & Machelet, 1983, The Convert as a Social Type, in Collins (ed) Sociological Theory 1983

EV Gallagher, 1990, Expectation and Experience chapters 3 & 4

George R Saunders (1995). The crisis of presence in Italian Pentecostal conversion American ethnologist. **22:2** pp 324-40

FD Goodman, 1972, Speaking in Tongues, preface, chapters 1, 2

L Rambo – Understanding Religious Conversion

EV Gallagher – Expectation and Experience

P Stromberg – 'Ideological Language in the Transformation of Identity' American Anthropologist 1990 (92): 42-56

R Stringer - 'Towards A Situational Theory of Belief' Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford 1996

R Straus - 'Religious Conversion as a Personal and Collective Accomplishment' Sociological Analysis 1979

P Caldwell - The Puritan Conversion Narrative

EE Evans-Pritchard - Nuer Religion

EV Gallagher - Expectation and Experience

J Peacock - Pilgrims of Paradox

A Snow & R Machalek - 'The Sociology of Conversion' Annual Review of Sociology
1984

DA Tooker - 'Identity Systems of Highland Burma: Akha zan and a Critique of
Interiorised Notions of Ethno-Religious Identity' Man 1992

H Whitehead - Renunciation and Reformulation

Week Ten: Understanding Belief (2): Belief and the Body

NO SEMINAR THIS WEEK – Final Tutorial Surgery; the last opportunity to get some input into your long essay.

Recent Anthropological work has returned to the question of belief, via the burgeoning Anthropology of bodily experience. Rather than focusing on belief as a linguistic phenomenon, it attempts to locate it in the physical senses, and bodily experiences. Rather than being learned as doctrinal information, religion is felt. This takes the study of religion and ritual a step further, to focus on ritual not just as communicative of religion, but actually constitutive of belief.

Questions: What is the role of bodily experience in the constitution of belief? Is it legitimate to talk about religion in terms of linguistic or symbolic systems? How does the embodiment paradigm help us understand the transmission of religious systems?

Background Reading:

Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the Body." In Incorporations, edited by Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, 455-77. New York: Zone, 1992 [1934]. Also in Economy and Society 2: 70-88

A Strathern & PJ Stewart – 'Embodiment and Communication: two frames for the analysis of ritual' Social Anthropology 1998 (6;2): 237-251

P Connerton, 1989, How Societies Remember – chapter 3

Main Reading:

T Csordas - 'Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology' Ethos 1989

J Mitchell & H Mitchell – 'For Belief' Social Analysis 52(1): 2008

J Mitchell - 'A Moment with Christ: the importance of feelings in the analysis of belief'
Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 1997

Further Reading:

M Jackson, Paths Toward a Clearing chapters 8, 9

T Csordas, Words from the Holy People, in his Embodiment and Experience

S Coleman, The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity chapter 5

Orta A, 1999, Syncretic subjects and body politics: doubleness, personhood, and
Aymara catechists, American Ethnologist 26 (4): 864-889

M Jackson, 1983, Knowledge of the Body Man

H Whitehouse, 1992, Memorable Religions: transmission, codification and change in
divergent Melanesian contexts, Man

J Comaroff & J Comaroff, Ethnography and the Historical Imagination, chapter 3

T Csordas, The Sacred Self

H Whitehouse, Inside the Cult chapter 8

J Mitchell, Ambivalent Europeans - chapter 8

S Coleman & P Collins, 2000, The 'Plain' and the 'Positive': ritual, experience and
aesthetics in Quakerism and Charismatic Christianity, Journal of Contemporary
Religion 15:3: 317-329

M Jackson, 1983, 'Thinking Through the Body: an essay on understanding
metaphor' Social Analysis 14: 127-149

Mahmood S 2001 Rehearsed spontaneity and the conventionality of ritual:
disciplines of salat, American Ethnologist 28 (4): 827-853

U Wikan, 1991, Toward an Experience-Near Anthropology Cultural Anthropology 6:
285-305

J Fernandez, The Body in Bwiti, Journal of Religion in Africa 1990

R Werbner, The Suffering Body, Journal of Southern African Studies 1997: 23: 2:
311-24

M Featherstone, The Body

J Blacking The Anthropology of the Body

A Strathern – Body Thoughts

M Johnson – The Body in the Mind

V Turner & E Bruner – The Anthropology of Experience

F Barth – Cosmologies in the Making

T Csordas (ed) – Embodiment and Experience

B Turner - The Body in Society

E Turner - Experiencing Ritual