ANTH 352 Spring 2014  Shamans, Priests and Healers
Doyle Seminar, Berkley Center + STIA Global Health +CERES X-listings
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Description: This seminar combines critical issues of medical and political
anthropology, by focusing on a range of indigenous communities, their contested
worldviews, changing healing practices, and spiritual leaders. Diverse and controversial
questions are probed. What is the relationship between individual and community
healing? How and why are concepts of body-mind integration significant cross-
culturally? How are cultural revitalization movements begun and sustained? What are
the flashpoints of intercultural conflict in colonial and post-colonial contexts? How do
people perceive and discuss sources of religious and spiritual authority? What are the
roots of ‘religion’? What is the shifting relevance of gender in religious leadership?
Why are some religions considered ‘world religions’ while others are not? How can we
compare and contrast shamans, priests, healers, and ‘medicine men’? How are local and
academic concepts of authenticity, confidentiality and secrecy constructed and debated?
These questions are explored through a survey of anthropology literature, including
indigenous scholarship, on ‘folk healing,’ spirituality, missionaries, sacred sites, and the
politics of religion. Readings cover classics and recent literature, with emphasis on
Eurasia and Native North America. Readings from other regions enhance comparisons.
Analytical approaches feature in-depth study of selected cases, with sensitivity to cultural
change, interethnic relations, and degrees of indigeneity. Students are welcome to
bring special interests into our discussions through research projects and personal
experience with indigenous, “integrative” or “complementary” medicine.

Goals include deeper understanding of the social dynamics of healing practices cross-
culturally. Stimulation of student sympathy and empathy for what individuals, families
and societies go through in times of crisis and rapid social change is a further goal.
Learning how scholars and practitioners position themselves in ethical terms is vital.
Perspective on various ethnographic traditions is gained, especially but not only through
Native American, Native Siberian, Asian and Russian scholarship.

Doyle Seminar: This course is a Doyle Seminar, part of the Doyle Engaging Difference
Program, a new campus-wide curricular initiative, and gives faculty the opportunity to
enhance the student research component of upper-level seminars that address questions of
national, social, cultural, religious, moral, and other forms of difference. The Doyle
seminars are intended to deepen student learning about diversity and difference through
enhanced research opportunities, interaction with thought leaders, and dialogue with the
Georgetown community and beyond.

Prerequisite is alert interest. Students with various language skills are welcome;
required reading is in English. Since I encourage extensive consultations, everyone has
frequent chances for class discussion and research project clarification.

The course grade is based on active class participation, a short thematic essay, an in-
depth research project, and a synthetic essay final chosen from a range of questions
generated by students. Classes include special guests, film clips, and creative reports.
Most readings are available electronically. A few paperbacks have been ordered for the book store, Lauinger reserves:

Outline: Some themes 1 week, others 2 weeks, so that reading is distributed with sensitivity to short essay and research project timing. In the last 2-3 weeks, reports on special research projects are integrated into class discussion.

**Framing Debates**: Anthropology Theories and Students’ Experiences with Healing
Have you experienced or seen a cure you did not understand?
What is religion? What is spirituality?

**Cultural Revitalization Movements**
Why do new religions emerge?
How are religion, politics and health intertwined?

**Americas – From Brooklyn to the Caribbean**
Vodou and the problem of reputation
**Native Americans – US “We are Still Here”**
Why did newcomers think “Indians” would be gone by the 21rst century?
(Visit to National Museum of the American Indian)
**Native Americans, First Nations – Canada**
Has Canada “done better” with its indigenous peoples? If so, by what measures?

**Eurasia – Siberia, Far East**
Can study of less known cases provide new perspectives? Perspectivism, ecology

**Inner Asia – Buriatia, Nepal**
Violence, pacifists and miracles

**Asia – Tibet, China, India**
Do self-immolations reveal the Dalai Lama’s “blind spot”?
Buddhist, Hindu traditions, activism, contrasts

**Asia – Korea**
What does development have to do with it? “Urban shamans ‘in motion’

**European Russia**
Are ‘folk traditions’ different from indigenous ones? What is “authentic”?
What are Human Rights?

**Cautious Comparisons**
What does gender have to do with it?
Spiritual transformations or conversions?

**Bringing Debates Home**
Framing Debates: Anthropology Theories and Students’ Experiences with Healing
(Have you experienced or seen a cure you did not understand? What is religion?)

Jan 8 class introductions and discussion
- Lurhmann, Tanya M. 2013 “When Demons are Real” New York Times Dec. 28 op ed (email sent electronically or use hyperlink)


Cultural Revitalization Movements
(Why do new religions emerge? How are religion, politics and health intertwined?)

Jan 20 - Martin Luther King holiday. Martin Luther King 1964 Nobel Prize Speech (handout also given Jan. 15)

Americas – From Brooklyn to the Caribbean
(Vodou and the problem of reputation)

Native Americans – US “We are Still Here”
(Why did newcomers think “Indians” would be gone by the 21rst century?)
- Mike Kiyaani as told to Csordas, Thomas 1997 “On the Peyote Road” Natural History 106(2): 48-49.
[Treasure Hunt: By Feb 5 visit National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian, and search for phrases, exhibits, ideas that relate to the course for discussion. Be sure to see their basic introduction film “Who We Are,” running constantly.]
Native Americans, First Nations – US and Canada
(Has Canada “done better” with its indigenous peoples? If so, by what measures?)

Feb 17 – President’s Day.
Feb 19 – Mid-term essays due. Chose a topic that connects readings from at least 3 of the weeks/ themes already covered. We discuss these in class, and review course.

Eurasia – Siberia, Far East
(Can study of less known cases provide new perspectives, models?)
Feb 24 - Popov, A. A. 1968 “How Sereptie Djarouskin of the Nganasans (Tavgi Samoyeds) Became a Shaman” V. Dioszegi, ed Popular Beliefs and Folklore Traditions in Siberia. Indiana, 137-145.

Inner Asia – Burятия, Nepal
(Violence, Pacifists and Miracles)

Spring Break March 7-17 Recover, refresh, and dig in to special projects?

Asia – Tibet, China, India
(Hindu, Buddhist contrasts. Do self-immolations reveal the Dalai Lama’s “blind spot”?)
-Dalai Lama interview with Amy Kazmin November 7, 2013 Financial Times.
Asia – Korea
(What Does Development Have to do with it?)

European Russia
(Are ‘folk traditions’ different from indigenous ones? What is “authentic”? What are Human Rights?)

Cautious Comparisons
(What Does Gender Have to do with it?)

Cautious Comparisons
(Spiritual Transformation or Conversion?)
Apr 14 - Koss-Chioino, Joan, Hefner, Philip, eds. 2006 Spiritual Transformation and Healing. AltaMira, Chpt. 1, 3-9.

Easter Break – no class April 21 – Catch up and observe/participate in a ritual?

Bringing Debates Home
- Narby, Jeremy 2001 “Shamans and Scientists” Shamans Through Time, 301-305.