

**Course Outline for:** ANTH 1188 Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: The Anthropology of Belief Systems

**A. Course Description:**

1. Number of credits: 3
2. Lecture hours per week: 3
3. Prerequisites: ENG 0860 (C- or better); OR  
ENG 0800 (C- or better) and READ 0860 (C- or better); OR  
High school GPA of 2.00-2.59 with native speaker result on EAP survey; OR  
Accuplacer Reading score of 235-249; OR  
Accuplacer Classic Reading score of 60-77
4. Corequisites: None
5. MnTC Goals: Goal #5 History and the Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Goal #8 Global Perspective

Belief systems exist in all societies around the world and shape our experiences as humans. Students will examine methods used by anthropologists to interpret and illuminate belief systems in diverse cultural environments.

**B. Date last reviewed/updated:** January 2024

**C. Outline of Major Content Areas**

1. Early belief systems in prehistory and history
2. Definitions within the realm of belief systems
3. Meanings of symbolism, the sacred and the profane (secular)
4. Sacred places and sacred landscapes
5. Different types of ritualistic behaviors
6. Role of practitioners in belief systems – priests, shamans, sorcerers, witches, magicians
7. Functions of belief systems in cultures
8. World religions
9. Revitalization movements
10. Mind-altering practices in belief systems
11. Gender dynamics in belief systems

**D. Course Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Articulate a working knowledge of the anthropological terms and concepts that make it possible to think and talk about belief systems in our society and others. (Goal 2a, 5b, 5c, 8a, 8b)
2. Describe the development of human attention to the supernatural through time, from early prehistoric depictions to formalized systems today. (Goal 2a, 2b, 5b, 5c, 8a, 8b)
3. Evaluate aspects of the major established religions in the world as to how they function in society. (Goal 2a, 2b, 2d, 5b, 5c, 5d, 8b, 8c)
4. Articulate the ways belief systems function in society for the individual and the

- community. (Goal 2a, 2b, 2d, 5b, 5c, 5d, 8b, 8c)
5. Evaluate the many ways that belief systems interact negatively well as positively with other aspects of culture, including aspects not usually associated with beliefs, such as nutrition, medical and health treatments, and politics. (Goal 2a, 2b, 5b, 5c, 5d, 8a, 8b, 8c)
  6. Analyze the relationship between belief systems and change (Goal 2a, 2b, 5b, 5c, 5d, 8a, 8b, 8c)

**E. Methods for Assessing Student Learning:**

Methods for assessment may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Exams
2. Quizzes
3. Journals
4. Research papers
5. Oral presentations
6. Written assignments
7. Reflection essays
8. Group work

**F. Special Information:**

None