Introduction Letter – Online Course
Anthropology 121

Welcome to Anthropology 121: The Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft online! The following is information to help you succeed in this class. Please read it carefully and feel free to email me (Rebecca Stein - steinrl@lvc.edu) if you have any questions.

What you should know about the content of the class
This course is an anthropological look at the variety of religious phenomena found in human societies. It is not a survey of world religions, but approaches the study of religion by looking at the basic concepts and manifestations of religion, using a variety of cultural examples as illustration. Our examples will come from familiar religions as well as the less familiar small-scale societies commonly studied by anthropologists. After first defining the core concepts of culture and religion, we will begin with basic concepts such as symbols, myths, rituals, and religious specialists. Then we will move on to consider magic, souls, gods and spirits, and witchcraft. Our final topic will be to examine how and why new religions come about, including a look at the issue of “cults” and beliefs in the paranormal (my favorite is alien abduction).

An important goal in this course will be to approach the study of religion from a position of cultural relativism; that is, appreciating the beliefs and behaviors of others without judging them according to our own cultural standards. We will try to determine what religious beliefs and behaviors are doing for both individuals and societies as a whole. In the wide variety of religions we will look for universals and common themes, as well as appreciating the diversity of ideas. Finally, we will use these cross-cultural comparisons to better understand the place of religion in our own lives and in our own culture.
What you should know about the structure of the class

• The class is entirely on-line – there are no required on-campus meetings.

• The class will be available starting the first day of the semester through the ETUDES website. A link to the website and information on how to figure out your username and password can be found at: http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/studentLoggingInOnline.html.

• A tutorial on how to use ETUDES can be found at: http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/ols/Welcome_Main_Menu.html.

• You will need to log on several times every week. Content and assignments will open and close on specific dates – you can’t do it all the last week. Every week you will be participating in discussions with your classmates – this is one of the best parts of the class (and a large part of your grade) so make sure to show up often and participate!

• Due to the nature of the online environment, there will be a lot of reading and writing involved in this class. Every week there will be modules to read, videos to watch, discussions to take part in, and written assignments to complete.

• An online class is not any easier nor does it take any less time than the in-person version. You need to have the time and be self-motivated and self-disciplined to succeed. If you are not sure if an online class is really for you, take the quiz at: http://www.foothill.edu/fga/pre_assessment.php.

• For resources to help improve your student success skills (e.g., time management, note taking, test taking), check out the College of the Canyons Virtual Learning Lab (http://www.cynosurenewmedia.com/coc_vll/Index.html) and the Dartmouth Academic Skills Center (http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/index.html).

What you need to do:

- Make sure that you have easy and reliable Internet access.
- Check to make sure that your computer system is adequate and that you have all the needed software (http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/studentThingsToKnow.html).
- Have a back-up computer (such as the computer labs on campus) in case of problems. Technical difficulties will not be an acceptable excuse for late or missed work.
- Have a working email address that you check regularly and make sure to enter that email address in your ETUDES profile.
- **Log on at least once during the first two days of the semester and post your introduction in the discussion forum** (if you don’t, I will think you are not in the class and will drop you as a “no show”).
- Log on several times a week after that.
- Read all of the content materials (located in the “Modules” online and in the textbook), complete the assignments and exams, and participate in the discussions.
- Ask questions whenever you have them.
- Learn some new interesting, fun and useful things!

How to contact me

I look forward to meeting you all in the discussion forums online during the first week of classes. If you need to contact me before then (or during the class), my email address is steinrl@lavc.edu.

My campus phone number is 818-947-2538 and if you are on campus, my office is in AH&S 305.

I’ll see you online!

--Rebecca