

## **MI518 Religion, Magic, and Myth in Micronesia**

Course Syllabus and Calendar

Face-to-Face Course

Meetings: W, 5:30-8:20 pm

Classroom: HSS 110

### **Instructor Information**

David Atienza

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Office Hs120

Office Hours: MW 3:00 – 4:00 pm / T 9:00 – 1:00 pm

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### **COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

This course surveys the traditional religions of Micronesia, with an emphasis on myth, ritual, and Christianity. Analysis of select samples of traditional rituals and myths from primary sources. Critical analysis is emphasized.

### **COURSE CONTENT**

The course studies religious beliefs and practices, mythology, medicine, the supernatural, and so-called magic in Micronesia. The course focuses on the social science study of Micronesian religious practices, rituals, healing practices, trance, relation to and communication with the ancestors, and related social topics.

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ALIGNMENT MATRIX**

<b>Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)</b>	<b>Program (PLO)</b>	<b>Institutional (ILO)</b>
Comparing and contrasting Micronesian religions with Asian and Euro-American ones.	PLO1: Compare and contrast the unique characteristics of the peoples, histories, geography, cultures, and political and social structures of Micronesia.	IGLO 1: Demonstrate mastery of critical skills, theories, methodologies, and other content knowledge at a level that will enable them to address fundamental questions in their primary area of study
Applying social science theories and methods of analysis in the study of religion,	PLO2: Apply different theoretical and analytical frameworks to the study of Micronesia with an emphasis on Micronesian indigenous epistemologies and perspectives.	IGLO 1: Demonstrate mastery of critical skills, theories, methodologies, and other content knowledge at a level that will enable them to address fundamental questions in their primary area of study IGLO2: Plan, conduct, and complete a significant research or creative project

Communicate proficiently both written and oral.	<p>PL03: Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, theories and issues using an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the Micronesian region.</p>	<p>IGLO 1: Demonstrate mastery of critical skills, theories, methodologies, and other content knowledge at a level that will enable them to address fundamental questions in their primary area of study</p> <p>IGLO3: Exercise oral and written communication skills sufficient to publish and present work in their field</p>
Design research projects or papers that integrate service to the region through the study and analysis of regional indigenous religions in contemporary contexts.	<p>PL04: Design original, independent research that makes a valuable contribution to the Micronesian region.</p> <p>PL05: Integrate research with community engagement in service to the island communities in Micronesia.</p>	<p>IGLO2: Plan, conduct, and complete a significant research or creative project</p> <p>IGLO3: Exercise oral and written communication skills sufficient to publish and present work in their field</p> <p>IGLO4: Adhere to ethical principles of academia and their respective disciplines in coursework, fieldwork, and other appropriate situations</p>

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **PART I. GENERAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

#### **1 Introduction**

***August 21***

Readings:

Petersen, Glenn. *Traditional Micronesian Societies: Adaptation, Integration, and Political Organization*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, pp. 12-36.

Henninger-Rener, S. (2017). Religion. In N. Brown, L. T. de González, & T. McIlwraith (Eds.), *Perspectives: An open invitation to cultural anthropology* (pp. 286–303). American Anthropological Association.

#### **2. Syncretic experiences in Micronesia**

***August 28***

Readings:

Lessa, William A. "Micronesian Religions: An Overview." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, 7:498–505. London: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1987.

Dobbin, Jay D. *Summoning the Powers beyond: Traditional Religions in Micronesia*, 1-21. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011.

Barker, John. "Religion." In *The Pacific Islands: Environment & Society*, edited by Moshe Rapaport, 214–24. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2013.

#### **3. Anthropology of Religion: Classic Studies.**

***September 4***

Readings:

Taylor, Edward Burnett. "Religion in Primitive Culture." In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, edited by Michael Lambek, 2nd ed., 23–33. Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

Freud, Sigmund. "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis." In *Myths and Mythologies: A Reader*, edited by Jeppe Sinding Jensen, 158–66. Place of publication not identified: Taylor and Francis Ltd, 2016.

Durkheim, Emile. "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life." In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, edited by Michael Lambek, 2nd ed., 34–47. Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

#### **4. Anthropology of Religion: Field Work Developments**

**September 11**

Readings:

Malinowski, Bronislaw. "Myth in Primitive Psychology." In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, edited by Michael Lambek, 2nd ed., 168–75. Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

Turner, Victor Witter. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 94-130. Transaction Publishers, 1995.

Castro, Eduardo Viveiros de. "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 1998): 469–88.

#### **5. Mimetic Theory and the Origin of Culture from Religion.**

**September 18**

Alison, James, and Wolfgang Palaver. *The Palgrave Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion*, 1-7. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017.

Girard, René, Jean-Michel Oughourlian, and Guy Lefort. *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 3-47. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987.

#### **6. Christianity in Micronesia**

**September 25 - October 2**

Hezel, Francis X. "Christianity in Micronesia." In *Introducing World Christianity*, edited by Charles E. Farhadian, 230–43. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

### **PART II. RESEARCH ON MICRONESIAN RELIGIONS**

#### **7. Research Methods: Ethnography and Anthropology**

**October 16**

Nelson, K. (2017). Doing fieldwork: Methods in cultural anthropology. In N. Brown, L. T. de González, & T. McIlwraith (Eds.), *Perspectives: An open invitation to cultural anthropology* (pp. 45–69). American Anthropological Association.

#### **8. Medicine, navigation, dance, and art as religious manifestations.**

### **October 23**

Nakayama, Masao, and Fredrick L. Ramp. *Micronesian Navigation, Island Empires, and Traditional Concepts of Ownership of the Sea*. Saipan, Mariana Islands: Congress of Micronesia, 1974.

Throop, C. Jason. “‘Becoming Beautiful in the Dance’: On the Formation of Ethical Modalities of Being in Yap, Federated States of Micronesia1.” *Oceania* 79, no. 2 (2009): 179–201.

## **9. Pre-contact Cosmogonies and Myths**

### **October 30**

Poignant, R. *Oceanic Mythology: The Myths of Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia, Australia*. Hamlyn, 1975.

Moral, Beatriz. “Erotic Legends and Narratives in Chuuk Micronesia.” *Micronesian. Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 1, no. 1–2 (2002): 26–38.

Dernbach, Katherine Boris. “Spirits of the Hereafter: Death, Funerary Possession, and the Afterlife in Chuuk, Micronesia.” *Ethnology* 44, no. 2 (2005): 99–123.

Dobbin, Jay D., and Francis X Hezel. “Posesion and Trance in Chuuk.” *ISLA: Journal of Micronesian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1995): 73–104.

## **10. Rituals in Micronesia**

### **November 6**

Driver, Marjorie G. *The Account of Fray Juan Pobre’s Residence in the Marianas, 1602*. Guam: Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, 1989

Atienza, David, and Alexandre Coello de la Rosa. “Death Rituals and Identity in Contemporary Guam (Mariana Islands).” *The Journal of Pacific History* 47, no. 4 (2012): 459–73.

## **11. Religion and identity in Micronesia**

### **November 13**

Iyechad, Lilli Perez. *An Historical Perspective of Helping Practices Associated with Birth, Marriage, and Death Among Chamorros in Guam*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001: 95–197.

## **12. Final Assignment Preparation and Presentation**

Students will present the analysis of a religious system in Micronesia, opening a discussion and presenting a final paper.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Dobbin, Jay D. *Summoning the Powers Beyond: Traditional Religions in Micronesia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011.

Haynes, Douglas E, and William L Wuerch. *Micronesian Religion and Lore: A Guide to Sources, 1526-1990*. Greenwood Press, 1995.

### **GRADING INFORMATION**

### **COURSE FINAL GRADES**

A+	98-100	Outstanding
A	93-97	
A-	90-92	
B+	89-87	Good
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Adequate
C	70-76	
D	60-69	Deficient
F	<60	Failure

## **GRADE CATEGORIES: ASSIGNMENTS AND PERCENTAGES**

ASSIGNMENT 1: PRESENTATION AND OPEN DISCUSSION	50
ASSIGNMENT 2: FINAL PAPER	30
PARTICIPATION	20

## **ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS**

### Assignment 1: Presentation and open discussion

Participants will present the analysis of a religious system in Micronesia facilitating the discussion in the classroom.

### Assignment 2: Final Paper

Participants will write a paper of no less than 2000 words and no more than 2500 reflecting the work done in the presentation.

## **PLAGIARISM**

The UOG Student Handbook prohibits plagiarism. I will not tolerate it. In this class, evidence of plagiarism in any assignment will result in an F grade for the whole course, and possibly a hearing at the Student Discipline Committee. Review handout on how to avoid plagiarism.

## **ADA Accommodation Services**

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community free of all forms of discrimination and harassment in all programs, activities, and employment practices as required by Title VII and Title IX and other applicable statutes and policies. If you experience harassment or discrimination, report it immediately to the Director of EEO/ADA & TITLE IX Office, at 671-735-2244, 671-735-2971, TOD 671-735-2243 or [eeo-ada@triton.uog.edu](mailto:eeo-ada@triton.uog.edu). For immediate assistance in an emergency call 911.

For individuals covered under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), if you are a student with a disability requiring academic accommodation(s), please contact the Student Counseling and Advising Service Accommodations Office to discuss your confidential request. Please

provide an accommodation letter from the Disability Support Services/Student Counseling and Advising Service Accommodation counselor. To register for academic accommodations, please contact or visit the Student Center, Rotunda office #6, [disabilitvsu000rt@triton.uog.edu](mailto:disabilitvsu000rt@triton.uog.edu), or telephone/(TDD) 671-735-2460.

For applicants or employees with a disability requiring employment or workplace accommodation(s), please contact the Director of EEO/ADA & TITLE IX Office to discuss your specific needs. Please provide documentation concerning your disability and the need for employment or workplace accommodation. Our office is located at the Iya Hami Hall, Dorm 2, right side entrance, first floor, Room 104, and our contact numbers are indicated above.  
T: +1 671.735.2244 F: +1 671.734.0430 TDD: +1671135.2243 E: [eeo-ada@triton.uog.edu](mailto:eeo-ada@triton.uog.edu)

## **Final Assignment**

### **1. Ethnographic Case Study: Rituals and Beliefs in Micronesian Societies**

#### **Objective:**

Students will conduct an in-depth ethnographic case study on a specific ritual, religious practice, or belief system within a Micronesian community.

#### **Instructions:**

- **Selection of Topic:** Each student will choose a particular ritual, religious ceremony, or belief system within a Micronesian culture to study. This could include topics such as spirit worship, traditional healing practices, or seasonal rituals.
- **Fieldwork and Research:** Students are encouraged to conduct interviews, observe practices (if possible), and gather secondary sources such as books, articles, and documentaries to gain a comprehensive understanding of their chosen topic.
- **Analysis:** Students will analyze how the chosen ritual or belief system reflects broader cultural values, social structures, and the community's worldview. They should connect their findings to theoretical concepts discussed in class, such as the role of myth in society or the function of rituals in community cohesion.
- **Final Report:** The final report should be 10-12 pages long and include an introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, analysis, and conclusion.
- **Optional Presentation:** Students may present their findings to the class, fostering discussion and peer feedback.

### **2. Comparative Analysis: Religion and Myth Across Micronesian Cultures**

#### **Objective:**

Students will compare and contrast the religious beliefs, myths, and practices of two different Micronesian cultures, examining similarities and differences in how they understand the world and the supernatural.

#### **Instructions:**

- **Selection of Cultures:** Students will select two Micronesian cultures to compare. They should focus on aspects like creation myths, ancestor worship, or the role of shamans and spiritual leaders.
- **Research:** Students will use primary and secondary sources to gather information on the religious beliefs and myths of the chosen cultures. This might involve reviewing ethnographic studies, historical accounts, and oral traditions.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Students will compare the religious practices and myths of the two cultures, analyzing how each reflects the environment, social structure, and historical context of the culture. They should also consider how contact with external influences (e.g., colonialism, Christianity) has shaped these practices.
- **Final Paper:** The final paper should be 8-10 pages long, presenting a clear comparative analysis with a focus on cultural and religious dynamics.
- **Reflection:** A brief reflective section on what students learned about the diversity and commonalities in religious thought within Micronesia.

### 3. Creative Project: Myth and Magic in Micronesian Storytelling

#### Objective:

Students will create a project that creatively explores a Micronesian myth, legend, or magical practice, demonstrating an understanding of its cultural significance.

#### Instructions:

- **Project Proposal:** Students will submit a proposal outlining their chosen myth, legend, or magical practice and how they plan to creatively explore it. This could be through a short film, a digital storytelling project, a piece of art, or a written creative work like a short story or play.
- **Research:** Students must research the cultural context and significance of their chosen topic, ensuring their project accurately reflects the beliefs and practices of the Micronesian culture they are studying.
- **Creative Execution:** Students will develop their creative project, incorporating elements of the myth or magical practice and demonstrating its relevance to the community's identity and worldview.
- **Accompanying Essay:** Along with the creative project, students will submit a 4-5 page essay explaining the cultural background of the myth or practice, their creative process, and how their project reflects the themes of the course.
- **Presentation:** Students will present their creative projects to the class, explaining their choices and the significance of their work.

These activities allow students to engage with the course material in diverse ways, combining research, analysis, and creativity to deepen their understanding of religion, magic, and myth in Micronesia.