Department of Sociology & Anthropology, BGU

Course: Anthropology of Religion

B.A. Lecture – 2nd and 3rd year. 4 credit points

Taught 2007/8, 2009/10

Lecturer: Dr. Jackie Feldman

Description:
This class will discuss questions related to the religious experience and to the functioning of religion in various cultural and social milieus. In the first semester, we will survey various approaches to the anthropology of religion, integrating other approaches from psychology, sociology or phenomenology, where necessary for our comprehension of religious phenomena.

Most of the second semester will be devoted to contemporary religious phenomena, applying several of the theories learned in the first semester. We will apply various theories to the analysis of the following phenomena: messianic movements, civil religion and its relation to traditional religion, feminist critique of religion and its scholars, religion in the colonial encounter, fundamentalisms, religiosity and secularism, and more. Several films will be shown and guest speakers invited to share their current anthropological research on religion. In the course of the second semester, we will go on a Friday excursion to Jerusalem to see sacred sites and rites and speak with religious.

Requirements:

1. Attendance in class and on the excursion(s) is mandatory. Attendance, reading of article and class participation (10%).
2. Exam at the end of the first semester on material learned to date (25%).
3. A (4-5 page) summary of a book in anthropology religion, structured around several key questions (15%). Students who do superlative work will be asked to present their paper in class for extra credit.
4. Short assignment applying approaches learned to the material of the excursion (10%).
5. Final exam – both fact-based and analytic/comparative (40%).
Readings:

**General recommendations:**


**Required texts:**


Rafael Patai, *Water*, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, pp. 48-51 (Hebrew).


Evan-Pritchard, *Theories*, pp. 60-89.


Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System", in *Interpretations of Culture*, Keter, Jerusalem, 1990, pp. 89-122 (Hebrew).


Susan Sered, "Women's Spirituality in a Jewish Context", in Israel: Local Anthropology, pp. 641-654 (Hebrew).


Alex Weingrod, "The Saints Gallop Forward: A Comparison between North Africa and Israel", in Israel: Local Anthropology, pp. 625-639 (Hebrew).


Yehuda Goodman and Yoram Bilu, "In the Five Minutes When You Pray – They Aim the Missile: Anxiety, Ultra-Orthodoxy and Israeliness in the Homilies of Rabbis on the Gulf War", in *The Whirlpool of Identities*, pp. 165-215.


Michal Kravel, "To See the Unseen; To Believe the Unbelievable: The Project of Messianic Faith in Habad following the Death of the Rebbe". Draft of article for *Soziologia Israelit*, 2009 (Hebrew).


Ido Tabori, "The Rainbow and Babylon: Dynamics of Antagonism and Continuity", in *Dancing in Fields of Thorns*, pp. 89-119.