

# SOCI 2853 COIN1: The Anthropology of Magic and Religion

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## Syllabus

### Course Overview

This course will focus on ways anthropologists have attempted to understand, define and study belief systems cross-culturally. Emphasis is on the role of ritual, myth, and symbol in small-scale societies with examples ranging from witchcraft beliefs to syncretic religious traditions (Vodou). The course does not focus on the world's major religious traditions, per se; however, there is some discussion of these traditions. The whole category of 'religion' is challenged, but the overriding question students should keep in mind is: "what makes magic and religion such a remarkably powerful social force in human life?"

### Instructor

**Contact Information:**

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### Course Materials

*\*If a student chooses to use an earlier, older edition of the required text books, it is their responsibility to check that topics/chapter titles align with the course syllabus.\**

Rebecca Stein and Philip Stein, *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft (4th ed)* Pearson, 2017. ISBN-13: 9781138692527

Karen McCarthy Brown. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. University of California Press, 2011. ISBN-13: 9780520268104

\*Selected Readings from: Hedges, Paul, *Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods of Studying Religiously Diverse Societies*. Univ. of Calif. Press, 2021. This book is available for students as an e-book from the Vaughan Memorial Library.

**Required Reading:**

URL Links will appear under Required Reading in some of the Units, as well as links to some scanned articles. Students are expected to read these articles, also.

### Course Requirements and Evaluation

Each of the 12 Modules has assigned readings, which are required. The syllabus outlines each topic, including a brief introduction to the material covered in the readings, the objectives of the lesson, and some PowerPoint slides to guide you through the lesson. Each assignment has a series of questions for you to respond to.

**It is expected that students will read all of the required materials before writing their responses.** Assignments will be graded on how well you integrate the reading materials into your responses, as well as on style, analysis and overall thoughtfulness. You are strongly urged to proofread and edit your assignments before submitting them for grading.

**Each assignment should cite the required readings, be written in Microsoft Word (you have access to Word online via Office 365), be double-spaced and include include footnotes and references, where appropriate.**

**Note:** There is a **Glossary of Terms** in the back of the Stein and Stein book, which defines technical terms and meanings. You should refer to this as often as necessary.

The web links noted throughout the syllabus are designed to supplement the reading material by offering a database of bibliographic sources, more in-depth descriptions, or interactive tutorials. They are presented to enhance your learning experience.

### Evaluation

12 Essay Assignments at 5 points each	60%
Book Review of Mama Lola	20%
Take home final exam (sent upon completion of all other course requirements)	20%

The assignments are delivered to the instructor via assignment drop-boxes. Please remember to put your name, student number, course number, and assignment number on the assignment and keep a copy in the event the original is lost. While outside sources can be used for assignments, students must use the required reading materials listed for this course. The penalty for not doing so will result in a grade of 0.

### Course Examination Policy

**Please note: the (mandatory) final exam for this course is a take home exam**, which will be sent to you upon receiving the last assignment. Students are required to complete the final examination (unless otherwise instructed) to complete all course requirements. A grade will not be assigned until all course requirements have been completed to the instructor's satisfaction.

## Course Schedule

You have 6 months to complete this course. This course is self-paced, meaning that you can decide how quickly or how slowly to complete the course within that 6-month timeframe. I suggest devising a schedule for yourself, similar to the one below, to ensure you keep pace with the course and finish in a timely fashion.

Please do not leave all of your course work until a few weeks before your completion date. Keep in mind that your Instructor has up to two weeks to read and mark your assignments.

### [Suggested schedule for SOCI 2853 COIN1](#)

Fill in your start date and use the recommended timeline to plan out when you will do readings and assignments. This is a tool to help you time manage this course. If you get off-track, make sure to revisit your schedule and re-evaluate the dates you've set for yourself. This course can be completed quicker or slower than the 15 weeks outlined in the schedule depending on your time commitment to the course.

**Please note:** the **final exam** for this course is a **take home exam**, which will be sent to you upon receiving the second to last assignment (Assignment 11).

## Student Handbook

You are responsible for becoming familiar with the contents of the Student Handbook. It contains important information about scheduling examinations (if applicable), applying for extensions, withdrawing from your course, ordering books, and computer and library services available to you. If you have questions about the policies outlined in the handbook (<https://courseware.acadiau.ca/openacadia/studenthandbook.html>), contact:

Open Acadia  
21 University Avenue (Rhodes Hall)  
Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6  
Phone: 1-800-565-6568  
Fax: 1-902-585-1068  
Email: [openacadia@acadiau.ca](mailto:openacadia@acadiau.ca)

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity demands responsible use of the work of other scholars. It is compromised by academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism. A student who is uncertain whether or not a course of action might constitute cheating or plagiarism should seek in advance the advice of the instructor involved.

- Cheating is copying or the use of unauthorized aids or the intentional falsification or invention of information in any academic exercise
- Plagiarism is the act of presenting the ideas or words of another as one's own. Students are required to acknowledge and document the sources of ideas that they use in their written work.
- Self-plagiarism is also a form of plagiarism. It is the presentation of the same work in more than one course without the permission of the instructors involved.
- A student who knowingly helps another to commit an act of academic dishonesty is equally guilty.
- Penalties are levied in relation to the degree of the relevant infraction. They range from requiring the student to re-do the piece of work, through failure on that piece of work, to failure in the course, and to dismissal from the university.

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[◀ Course Introduction Video \(hidden\)](#)

[Suggested schedule for SOCI 2853 COIN1 ▶](#)

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