

**Department of Anthropology
Boston University
CAS AN 568: *Symbol, Myth, and Rite*
Spring 2004**

W 1:00-3:50PM in PLS 312A

Professor Augustus Richard Norton

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Courseinfo page: http://courseinfo.bu.edu/courses/04sprgcasan568_a1/

152 Bay State Road

This graduate-level course is designed to understand ritual behavior, the role of symbolism in cultural studies, and the connections between ritual and politics. Following an introductory lecture and discussions of seminal approaches to symbolism and ritual, the course will draw on ethnographic material from the Caribbean, the United States, the Middle East and Central Asia. Several established scholars asked to discuss their work with the seminar. Classes will customarily begin with critical comments by the professor and a discussion of the assigned reading. Periodically, seminar time will be devoted to research papers, and each student is required to make a formal ten minute presentation to the seminar summarizing a key article relevant to their research paper. Active student participation is expected and this implies a careful reading of assigned materials. The readings have been chosen to present a broad variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives for the interpretation of ritual behavior, symbolic acts, and mythic enactment.

Requirements:

- Regular attendance and participation (15%)
- Formal presentation to the seminar (15%)
- Mid-term examination (35%)
- Seminar paper (35%, of which five points turns on the quality of the topic description and annotated bibliography).

Attendance: Attendance is required. Unexcused absences and chronic tardiness will be considered in calculating the grade for participation.

Academic integrity: Please read the Boston University Academic Conduct Code. Handing in someone else's work or ideas as your own (even if you worked on it together as a group) constitutes plagiarism, as does using someone's ideas without attribution. You must give a citation when you use an author's ideas in your paper, even if you do not quote the text word-for-word. I will go over in class the correct procedures for quoting and referencing the work of other authors. If you miss that class or if you have any questions, please ask. Any infraction **MUST** be reported to the Dean for resolution by the Academic Conduct Committee. Be informed and be careful.

The syllabus, course descriptions, and handouts created by Professor Norton, and all class lectures, are copyrighted by Boston University and/or Professor Norton. Except with respect to enrolled students as set forth below, the materials and lectures may not be reproduced in any form or otherwise copied, displayed or distributed, nor should works derived from them be

reproduced, copied, displayed or distributed without the written permission of Professor X. Infringement of the copyright in these materials, including any sale or commercial use of notes, summaries, outlines or other reproductions of lectures, constitutes a violation of the copyright laws and is prohibited. Students enrolled in the course are allowed to share with other enrolled students course materials, notes, and other writings based on the course materials and lectures, but may not do so on a commercial basis or otherwise for payment of any kind. Please note in particular that selling or buying class notes, lecture notes or summaries, or similar materials both violates copyright and interferes with the academic mission of the College, and is therefore prohibited in this class and will be considered a violation of the student code of responsibility that is subject to academic sanctions.

Communication: The CourseInfo page is an excellent device for conveniently providing course materials, schedules, grades and announcements. Access is limited to enrolled students in the course. Class members are urged to check the page twice weekly using the Boston University user name and password. The URL for our page is: http://courseinfo.bu.edu/courses/04sprgcasan568_a1/index.html but you may also enter through the Boston University web page by clicking "Resources" and then following the trail to the CourseInfo page for AN 568.

Routine communications and announcements will often be made by email and you are invited to send paper questions, admin questions and other questions by email, which is checked daily (arn@bu.edu): Your default email address is your xxx@bu.edu address. If you would like email sent to another address as well, simply send an email to Professor Norton with your address. The additional address(es) will be added to the alias file.

Consultation and office hours: 152 Bay State Road (IR), fourth floor, Rm. 440. Feel free to come by and chat. Office hours are Tuesday/Thursday, 1:30-3:00 p.m., and Wednesday, 4:00-5:00 p.m., and at other times by appointment (tel.353-7808 or 9279; email: arn@bu.edu).

Texts:

G. Whitney Azoy, Buzkashi: Game and Power in Afghanistan (Waveland Press)

Ray B. Browne and Michael T. Marsden, eds., The Cultures of Celebrations (University of Wisconsin Press)

Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (Basic Books)

_____, Local Knowledge (Basic Books)

Frank Korom, Hosay Trinidad: Muharram Performances in an Indo-Caribbean Diaspora (University of Pennsylvania Press)

Benson Saler, et. al., Ufo Crash at Roswell: The Genesis of a Modern Myth (Smithsonian Institution)

Victor Witter Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society (Cornell University Press)

The Department of Anthropology publishes a short and inexpensive style manual that you may find helpful:

Parish, Steven M., The Student's Practical Guide: Writing Term Papers for Anthropology (and Related Subjects) (Boston: BU Dept. of Anthropology, 1994). This is available in the bookstore for a three or four dollars.

Seminar Schedule and Topics

Week 1 (January 14): **Introductory lecture and course overview**

Week 2 (January 21): **Signs, Symbols and “Thick Description”**

- Reading: Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, chaps. 1, 5, 6, 7 and 15.

Week 3 (January 28): **Rescheduled for April 21**

Week 4 (February 4): **The Analysis of Ritual**

- Reading: Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors
- Optional reading: Turner, The Ritual Process (on reserve [MG1 SE204](#))

Week 5 (February 11): **Ritual and Religion**

- Reading: Rapoport Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity (on reserve)
- Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” in The Interpretation of Cultures

Week 6 (February 18): **No class** (this class is to be rescheduled as a guest lecture in conjunction with the Department of Anthropology Humanities Foundation Symposium; final arrangements depend on U.S. visa requirements since the speaker is from outside the U.S.)

- Reading Assignment: TBD

Week 7 (February 25): **Religion and Worldview: The Case of ‘Ashura**

- Norton and Safa (CourseInfo page)
- Canetti, selection from Crowds and Power (reserve)

Week 8 (March 3): **Interpreting Public Ritual Through Film: “Hosay Trinidad”**

- Reading: Korom, Hosay Trinidad

Week 9 (March 17): **Mid-term Examination (60 minutes)**

Remainder of class: **Modern Mythmaking**

- Reading: Saler, et. al., Ufo Crash at Roswell

Week 10 (March 24): **Games and worldview**

Refined paper topics and annotated bibliography due at the beginning of class.

- Reading: Azoy, Buzkashi
- Reading: Stanley Tambiah. "A Performative Approach to Ritual" (on reserve)

Week 11 (March 31): **Capturing the Inner Self: Sufism**

- Reading: Valerie Hoffman, Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt (on reserve)
- Reading: Paulo Pinto, TBD.

Week 12 (April 9): Comparative Ethnographic Approaches to Ritual

- Reading Assignment: Geertz, Local Knowledge
- Reading: Barth, Balinese Worlds, preamble and part one.

Week 13 (April 14): **Research Paper Presentations**

Week 14 (April 21): **Research Paper Presentations.** There is no regularly scheduled class—since this is a Monday class schedule; HOWEVER, WE WILL MEET AS A MAKE-UP SESSION AT A TIME TO BE DETERMINED.

Week 15 (April 28): **Research Paper Presentations**
Concluding discussion

Papers are no later than April 30th at 5 P.M.

Key Dates

Summary of Deadlines:

February 4
February 18

March 17
March 24

April 13 (optional)
April 21
April 28
April 30

Initial Topic Selection (by email)
No class
Topic and annotated
bibliography due (by email AND
hard copy)
Mid-term exam
Refined topic and annotated
bibliography due
Lecture at the Castle, 5 p.m.
Make-up session
Last class
Paper due by five p.m.