

# FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction to Religion

REL 2011-U014

Summer A 2020

Remote/Online

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*To me there's no real difference between a fortune teller or a fortune cookie and any of the organized religions. They're all equally valid or invalid, really. And equally helpful.*

WOODY ALLEN, "Woody Allen on Faith, Fortune Tellers and New York", *New York Times*, September 14, 2010

## ***Why Should I Care about Religion?***

Why do bad things happen to good people? Is religion irrelevant in our fast-paced technological world? Does the sacred look the same across traditions? How can the study of religion help us understand current events? Is religion a creative or destructive force? How does the study of religion relate to your major? These are just some of the questions that we will explore throughout the semester.

- This course is interested in examining the different expressions, practices and interpretations of religion from an interdisciplinary perspective. Although no particular tradition will be favored, materials from several traditions will be chosen to exemplify thematic topics in the experience of the Sacred. We will also focus on the tenets of religions, dispelling common misconceptions and assumptions and looking into the emergence of new practices among the post-denominational generation.

## ***How can this course help you advance in your career?***

You do not need to be personally religious, majoring in religious studies, or in a field within humanities to benefit from this course. Whatever your academic field is, this course will train you to make important connections between your career and the world of the sacred and the profane. You will be able to understand the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization, and the role religion plays in local and international affairs.

- Religious illiteracy can greatly impact our ability to understand personal and social motivations behind financial decisions, political engagement, science and technological advancement, environmental and migration policies, family planning, diet and food production, gender relations, war and terrorist attacks, and more. Whether you notice or not, religion is a universal phenomenon that continues to transform and be transformed by our societies.
- Our approach is interdisciplinary, which means you will be critically reflecting from many fields of study such as anthropology, philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, history, economics, gender studies, among others. This enhances your ability to think critically, communicate effectively, respond sensitively, collaborate with others and creatively resolve conflict.

### ***Course Prerequisites***

There are no prerequisites for this course. More information about prerequisites can be found in the [FIU course catalog](#).

### ***Course Goals***

- Foster tolerance of and appreciation for differences in human culture and diverse religious expressions.
- Develop fluency in ancient and contemporary religious history.
- Expand ability to apply different methodologies to the study of religion.
- Create an atmosphere of self-exploration and self-understanding.
- Nurture creative and critical thinking.
- Identify the relevance of studying religion to contemporary life, human thought, and professional development.

### ***Course Objectives***

- Classify and utilize various approaches to the study of religion, including but not limited to ethnographic, psychological, anthropological, ethical, phenomenological, and so on.
- Compare and contrast the key underlying beliefs and principles of the major Eastern, Western, indigenous and shamanic religions.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
- Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, film, and so on.
- Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.
- Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs outsider/academic sources, and scholarly vs journalistic sources.

### ***Expectations***

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

### ***Students are expected to:***

- Introduce yourself to the class during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion forum and an appropriate photo
- Take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with Canvas
- Interact online with instructor/s and peers
- Review and follow the course syllabus. Be aware of changes.
- Log in to the course on four (4) times per week
- Respond to discussion board postings within one (1) business days
- Respond to emails/messages within one (1) business days
- Submit assignments by the corresponding deadline
- Check official FIU email and Canvas Messages daily

***The instructor will:***

- Log in to the course three (3) times per week
- Respond to emails/messages within two (2) business days (excluding holidays and weekends)
- Grade assignments within three (3) business days of the assignment deadline

Assignments are listed for each class session in the syllabus. Students are expected to pace their learning according to the posted course assignments.

It is expected that interactive learning and teaching will enrich the learning experience of all students, and that each student will work in partnership with the professor to create a positive learning experience for all. Student engagement is a necessary condition for an effective learning experience and includes contributions to debate and discussion (if any), positive interactive learning with others, and an enthusiastic attitude towards inquiry. Everyone is expected to be a positive contributor to the class learning community, and students are expected to share the responsibility of teaching each other.

***Technical Requirements and Skills***

One of the greatest barriers to taking an online course is a lack of basic computer literacy. By computer literacy we mean being able to manage and organize computer files efficiently and learning to use your computer's operating system and software quickly and easily. Keep in mind that this is not a computer literacy course; but students enrolled in online courses are expected to have moderate proficiency using a computer. Students will be expected to have reasonable proficiency in Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. Please go to the "[What's Required](#)" webpage to find out more information on this subject.

***Privacy Policy Statements for Partners and Vendors***

[Canvas](#) [Microsoft](#) [Google](#) [Turnitin](#) [NBC Learn](#) [Adobe](#) [OpenStax](#) [Zoom](#)

Please visit our [Technical Requirements](#) webpage for additional information.

***Evaluation Criteria***

**1. Canvas:** All students are required to regularly utilize Canvas for this course. Through this website, students will be able to access course information and materials, upload the assignments, view course announcements, send and receive messages, and access grades.

**2. Weekly Summaries:** (Instructions and guidelines are found in CANVAS under the ASSIGNMENTS tab) Weekly summaries of 150 – 200 words, will briefly analyze key terms and concepts from the assigned weekly topics and readings, multi-media resources, and discussions. This tool is used to ensure that the student is reading the materials and grasping our weekly topic.

**3. Critical Film Review:** This assignment fulfills the Gordon Rule Requirement and is detailed at the end of this document in **Appendix I**.

***\*Students are encouraged to make use of FIU's Center for Excellence in Writing at:***

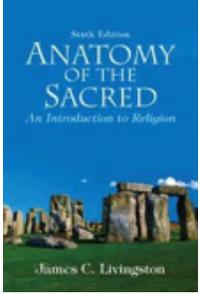
<https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/index.html>

**Grading Criteria**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	WEIGHT BY POINTS
Class attendance/check-ins	15
Discussion Forums	25
Weekly Summaries	25
Critical Film Review	35

**Grading Grid**

LETTER GRADE	RANGE	LETTER GRADE	RANGE	LETTER GRADE	RANGE
A	95-100	B-	81-83	D+	67-70
A-	91-94	C+	77-80	D	64-66
B+	87-90	C	74-76	D-	61-63
B	84-86	C-	71-73	F	>61

	<p><b><i>Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion</i></b>  <b>By: James C. Livingston</b></p> <p>MLA (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) citation:          Livingston, James C. <i>Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion</i>. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2009. Print.</p>
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***\*Additional readings are assigned weekly by the instructor***

***Gordon Rule Requirement***

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write a minimum of two major assignments. Each paper will be at least 1500-2000 words, double spaced – approximately four (4) pages – 12-Pt Font, Times New Roman Font, and will be submitted through **Turnitin**. All source material must be cited correctly using Times New Roman Style and long quotes should be avoided. Please be aware that papers with an originality score of over 35% on Turnitin similarity will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur additional penalties, up to and including receiving an F (0 points).

***Global Learning Objectives***

As a Global Learning course, students will be meet the following objectives through text readings, assignments, and class discussions:

- Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
- Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions

- Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

\*This course fulfills the **Gordon Rule requirement**; a “C” or better must be earned to receive credit for this course.

\*This course fulfills the **Global Learning Foundations requirement**.

To learn more about Global Learning requirements, please visit: <https://goglobal.fiu.edu/courses/graduation-requirement/>

### ***Plagiarism***

Do you know what plagiarism is? Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by asking me, a representative from the writing center or our library to explain. Many students end up plagiarizing material because they do not know what it entails. In short, plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

- A written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
- Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
- Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations.

Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity at <http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm> if you need further clarification. Offenders will receive a grade of F (0 points) for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly for the course. Please be aware: Previously submitted papers are not allowed, even if it is your own work and even if you are retaking this class. You may not “reuse” papers.

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***Accessibility and Accommodation:*** The Disability Resource Center (DRC) collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at (305) 348-3532 or visit its office at the Graham Center (GC) 190.

***\*\*\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE!!! Because teaching and learning are creative and fun processes, I reserve the ABSOLUTE right to amend, alter, change, transform, adapt, modify, readjust, and/or revise this syllabus AT ANY TIME.***

### ***WEEKLY SCHEDULE***

DATE	COURSE CONTENT: TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS
<p><b>WEEK 1:</b> May 11 – May 15</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS!!!</i></b></p> <p>In-depth review and discussion of syllabus. If you have any questions, please email me – do not feel confused or lost! I am here to help you!</p> <p><b>Preliminary written assignment:</b> Who are you? Where are you from? What is your status as a student and what is your major? What are your goals? Why are you taking this class? What do you expect to gain from this class?</p> <p><b><i>What is Religion?</i></b> Video clip: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHLLeZksZro">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHLLeZksZro</a></p> <p><b><i>Hermeneutic</i></b> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wPTV5hyB0Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wPTV5hyB0Y</a></p> <p><a href="http://faculty.trinity.edu/mbrown/whatisreligion/PDF%20readings/Livingston-AnatomyOfTheSacred-Ch1.pdf">http://faculty.trinity.edu/mbrown/whatisreligion/PDF%20readings/Livingston-AnatomyOfTheSacred-Ch1.pdf</a></p> <p><b>May 15: Summaries due QUIZ 1</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 2:</b> May 18 – May 22</p>	<p><b><i>Ways of Studying Religion</i></b> Video clip: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VAx4jZbBr8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VAx4jZbBr8</a></p> <p><a href="https://religion.ua.edu/links/the-students-desk/what-is-the-academic-study-of-religion/">https://religion.ua.edu/links/the-students-desk/what-is-the-academic-study-of-religion/</a></p> <p><b><i>Students will submit choice of film/documentary for final project, Critical Film Review with a brief (150 words) abstract.</i></b></p> <p><b>May 22: Summaries and film abstract due QUIZ 2</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 3:</b> May 25 – May 29</p>	<p><b><i>Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine</i></b> Article: <a href="https://norse-mythology.org/introduction-mircea-eliade/">https://norse-mythology.org/introduction-mircea-eliade/</a></p> <p><b><i>Sacred Ritual</i></b> <a href="https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/voices/culture/article/2016/06/27/why-rituals-are-still-relevant">https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/voices/culture/article/2016/06/27/why-rituals-are-still-relevant</a></p> <p><b>May 29: Summaries due QUIZ 3</b></p>

<p><b>WEEK 4:</b> <b>June 1 – June 5</b></p>	<p><i>Deity</i> Article: <a href="https://www.patheos.com/library/pagan/beliefs/ultimate-reality-and-divine-beings">https://www.patheos.com/library/pagan/beliefs/ultimate-reality-and-divine-beings</a></p> <p><a href="https://atlantablackstar.com/2016/01/19/8-interesting-african-creation-myths-the-world-should-know-about/">https://atlantablackstar.com/2016/01/19/8-interesting-african-creation-myths-the-world-should-know-about/</a></p> <p><i>Cosmogony</i> Article: <a href="https://www.learnreligions.com/creation-myths-117867">https://www.learnreligions.com/creation-myths-117867</a></p> <p><a href="https://atlantablackstar.com/2016/01/19/8-interesting-african-creation-myths-the-world-should-know-about/">https://atlantablackstar.com/2016/01/19/8-interesting-african-creation-myths-the-world-should-know-about/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.encyclopedia.com/science-and-technology/astronomy-and-space-exploration/astronomy-general/cosmogony">https://www.encyclopedia.com/science-and-technology/astronomy-and-space-exploration/astronomy-general/cosmogony</a></p> <p><b>June 5: Summaries due QUIZ 4</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 5:</b> <b>June 8 – June 12</b></p>	<p><i>Secularism</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dA3YF73SNuY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dA3YF73SNuY</a></p> <p><i>Secularization or Pluralism</i> Article: <a href="https://credohouse.org/blog/which-will-it-be-secularism-or-religious-pluralism">https://credohouse.org/blog/which-will-it-be-secularism-or-religious-pluralism</a></p> <p><b>June 12: Summaries due QUIZ 5</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 6:</b> <b>Jun 15 – Jun 19</b></p>	<p><i>Songs of Songs: Religion in Musical Pop Culture</i> Article: <a href="https://thenewtropic.com/beyonce-ibeyi-yoruba-cuba/">https://thenewtropic.com/beyonce-ibeyi-yoruba-cuba/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-43547436">https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-43547436</a></p> <p><a href="https://colbyandawu.com/spiritual-rap-10-hip-hop-songs-that-explore-religion-god-and-spirituality/">https://colbyandawu.com/spiritual-rap-10-hip-hop-songs-that-explore-religion-god-and-spirituality/</a></p> <p><b>June 19: Summaries due QUIZ 6</b> <b>FINAL PROJECT IS DUE</b></p>
	<p><b>!!!!!!! THANK YOU FOR AN AWESOME CLASS !!!!!!!</b></p>

**APPENDIX I**  
**Introduction to Religion**  
**REL 2011-U05**  
**Spring 2020**  
**Critical Film Review**

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The film report is designed to get you to think and evaluate the religious material presented to you. You may not be familiar with the religion or culture so how can you know if the film is accurate or even fair? Whose voices are we hearing? Who are we not hearing from? Are we being led to form a particular opinion, that of the film maker, or are we left to make our own opinion? Finally, does the film do a good job in helping us to understand a religious or spiritual practice that isn't our own?

- Any audiovisual recording should be approached critically and respectfully as it is the product of a series of decisions or choices made by its maker(s).

Students should write four (4) double-spaced pages, approximately 1000 words – not including citations page, 12-Pt Font, Times New Roman Font, and it should explicitly address the following 6 points presented below:

1. Write one or two short paragraphs about the central issue or principal target of the film. What was the point of the film? Any film, particularly documentary or nonfiction, has a principal target, an audience in mind, or a central issue that an educated or critical reader/viewer should be able to identify.
2. Write one or two short paragraphs about the filmmaker(s)'s argument developed in the film about the central issue or principal target. In other words, you need here to summarize the claims made by the filmmaker(s) about the central issue or topic.
3. As we all know, nobody—in mainstream society or in academia—makes claims about a particular issue without presenting data used as evidence in support of, or to back up these claims or ideas. From watching the film, what can you say about the data used as evidence by the filmmaker(s) to support their claims?
  - Include in your report the types of data used: verbal data (interviews, conversations between various people, etc.); observed actions; primary sources (archival documents, newspapers, books, records); secondary sources (essays or other nonfiction films written/produced by other scholars/filmmakers); participant observation; etc., where applicable.
4. Write briefly about the organization of the film. It will have a particular structure; it presents the argumentation, some background information/history, and the claims, or interpretation of the filmmaker in a particular organized way. We, as educated viewers or “readers” of films, must be able to reflect upon the choices made by a filmmaker to present his or her film in a particular way. The filmmaker's selection of a particular film structure is connected to theoretical and political considerations and how the maker wants it to be interpreted. Keep in mind that these points are of course closely related. Is the film maker present in the film? Do we see, hear, or otherwise get to experience the human behind the camera making the film?
5. Discuss the film in whatever way you want. Here, you could state why you like or dislike the film, comment upon one of its aspects, or focus most specifically on the relation between the filmmaker's claims and the data he or she used as evidence, for instance. Was there anything that surprised you or moved you?
6. A three (3) slide PowerPoint. Each slide should be a freeze-frame from three (3) scenes in the documentary/film that you found impactful and relevant to any of the topics we have reviewed in class. This review is graded on a 50 point scale, 25 of those points are assigned to this PowerPoint.

**On your review, be sure to write:**

- Your name/PID
- The film's full title
- The geographical area/s where the film is based and the religious or spiritual tradition it is documenting (i.e., Vodou in Haiti, Candomble in Brazil)
- Submit it through Canvas
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***LIST OF DOCUMENTARIES/FILMS:***

**Releasing the Spirits: A Village Cremation in Bali**

<https://fiu.kanopy.com/video/releasing-spirits-village-cremation-bali>

Cremation rites are the most elaborate rites of passage performed by Balinese householders. Poor families may wait years before accumulating enough resources to cremate their dead, who are buried in the meantime. In 1978, many more cremations than usual were carried out because of the great purification ceremony Eka Dasa Rudra held at Bali's main temple, Besakih, in 1979. Religious officials recommended that all Balinese cleanse the island by cremating their dead as part of the preparations for the great Besakih ceremony.

**Barbara and Her in Candombleland**

<https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/watch/barbara-and-her-friends-in-candombleland>

In the Afro-Brazilian Candomble religion, an initiation tradition centered around possession, the filmmakers concentrate on children who introduce and guide us through this world. The children are anxious to participate in Candomble rituals. Passing from simulation of the representation, the children touch on the possession dance. Many are eager to be possessed. The film explores what Candomble may offer them.

**Jinns and Witchcraft: The Hidden World**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygg2\\_SkPJHM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygg2_SkPJHM)

Both the Quran and hadith make reference to witchcraft and the evil eye as well as to supernatural beings known in Arabic as jinn (the origin of the English word genie).<sup>22</sup>To gauge how widespread belief in these supernatural forces is today, the survey asked Muslims separate questions about witchcraft, jinn and the evil eye (defined in the survey as the belief that certain people can cast curses or spells that cause bad things to happen). In most of the countries surveyed, roughly half or more Muslims affirm that jinn exist and that the evil eye is real. Belief in sorcery is somewhat less common: half or more Muslims in nine of the countries included in the study say they believe in witchcraft. At the same time, however, most Muslims agree that Islam forbids appealing to jinn or using sorcery.

**Trembling before G-d**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ts7bhOau0Wc>

A documentary built around personal stories of gay and lesbian Hasidic and Orthodox Jews. Portrays people who face a profound dilemma - how to reconcile their passion for Judaism with the biblical prohibitions against homosexuality. Includes interviews with closeted and out gay Orthodox and Hasidic Jews, including the first openly gay Orthodox rabbis, Steven Greenberg.

**Divine Horseman: The Living Gods of Haiti**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YIO\\_dxyJio&t=31s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YIO_dxyJio&t=31s)

Although best known as a pioneer of independent experimental cinema, Maya Deren (born 1917 as Eleanora Derenkowsky in Kiev, Ukraine, died in 1961 in New York City) was also a Vodoun initiate,

and hence able to take her camera and recorder where few have gone before or since. The film captures the rituals of Rada, Petro and Congo cults, whose devotees commune with the cosmic powers through invocations — ritual offerings, song and dance. The Vodoun pantheon of deities, or loa are introduced as living gods, actually taking possession of their devotees. Also featured are the Rara and Mardi Gras celebrations.

### **The Goddess and the Computer**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGE-FSn\\_aNo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGE-FSn_aNo)

For centuries, rice farmers on the island of Bali have taken great care not to offend Dewi Danu, the water goddess who dwells in the crater lake near the peak of Batur volcano. Toward the end of each rainy season, the farmers send representatives to Ulun Danu Batur, the temple at the top of the mountain, to offer ducks, pigs, coins and coconuts in thanks for the water that sustains their terraced fields. Outsiders have long considered the rituals of Agama Tirtha, "the religion of holy water" an interesting but impractical way to grow crops. Development companies have spent millions trying to improve on the ancient system. With the help of an ingenious computer program, anthropologist Steve Lansing and ecologist James Kremer have shown that the Balinese rice growers have been practicing state-of-the-art resource management. Besides placating the goddess, it turns out, the island's ancient rituals serve to coordinate the irrigation and planting schedules of hundreds of scattered villages. And as a new computer model makes clear, the result is one of the most stable and efficient farming systems on the planet.

### **The King Does Not Lie**

[https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/watch/the-king-does-not-lie?utm\\_source=aspresolver&utm\\_medium=MARC&utm\\_campaign=Video](https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/watch/the-king-does-not-lie?utm_source=aspresolver&utm_medium=MARC&utm_campaign=Video)

This film shows the Afro-Cuban religion, Santeria, whose New World practitioners have too often been maligned out of ignorance and prejudice and even harassed by authorities. In this intimate documentary we see a contemporary Puerto Rican community of "santeros" gather for the initiation of a priest of Shango, the "Thunder god" of the traditional Yoruba religion. As we follow the initiate through a series of ritual events, a new perspective on ancient rites is revealed. The religion originated in Africa and the chants are sung in Yoruba. Rituals like these are the basis of ceremonies performed in churches and temples of established religions. Sacred stones washed in sacred, leafy waters become the energy for ritual purification and empowerment. The anointment of head, feet and stones with the blood of sacrifice ensures atonement. On the third day the community gathers to witness the divination session in which the initiate receives his new name, "Oba Ko Puro", translated from Yoruba as "The King Does Not Lie." With the name, comes the story of the initiate's transfer of allegiance from an outer/worldly to inner/spiritual authority. Combining ritual narration with poetic translation from Lucumi/Yoruba chants provides the viewer with an understanding of the literal and figurative dimensions of the ceremony.

### **Mammy Water: In Search of the Water Spirits In Nigeria**

<https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/watch/mammy-water-in-search-of-the-water-spirits-in-nigeria>

Mammy Water is a pidgin English name for a local water goddess worshipped by the Ibibio, Ijaw, and Igbo speaking peoples of southeastern Nigeria. The water goddess traditionally gives wealth and children, compensates for hardships, and is sought in times of illness and need, especially by women. Her various cults are led, predominantly, by priestesses. This acclaimed documentary shows numerous rituals and ceremonies associated with Mammy Water, while devotees provide commentary. This is an important depiction of the strength of traditional religion in contemporary Nigeria and one of the few academically sound investigations of the role of women in an African spiritual movement.

### **Friends in High Places**

<https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/watch/friends-in-high-places>

"Buddhism and nat worship are like mangoes and bananas" Whether contending with a deceitful daughter-in-law, forecasting financial prospects for a tea shop, or freeing a husband from government detainment, Friends in High Places reveals the central role of nats and spirit mediums in alleviating the day to day burdens of modern Burmese

life. "Leprosy isn't as contagious as people's problems," notes one medium, "my clients bring their worries into my home. I don't need to go out on the street to learn how cruel life can be." Yet despite their skills in channeling good luck for others, the life stories of the mediums prove to be as poignant as the stories of those who seek their assistance.

### **To Serve the Gods**

<https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/watch/to-serve-the-gods>

To Serve the Gods is about the beliefs, rituals and performances of a week-long ceremony given by a Haitian family in honor of its ancestral spirits. We are told at the outset of the film that this sèvis loa only occurs every twenty to thirty years. This particular service takes place in a rural community in southern Haiti, on family land, where relatives have gathered to propitiate gods inherited by their ancestors. This celebration of one's birthright and obligations involve drumming, song, dance, possession, animal sacrifice and sharing of food with the gods and with friends, family and neighbors.

### **To the Land of Bliss**

<https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/watch/to-the-land-of-bliss>

To the Land of Bliss is an intimate portrayal of the Chinese Pure Land Buddhist way of dying and living. In 1998, the filmmaker/anthropologist Wen-jie Qin returned to her home region in Sichuan Province in southwest China to research the post-Mao revival of Buddhism. During her fieldwork on the sacred mountain Emei, an eminent monk named Jue Chang passed away. People in the community laughed and cried at the departure of their beloved teacher. They gathered to escort his body through a rite of fire and to observe his consciousness rise to a paradise known as the Land of Bliss of Amita Buddha. The filmmaker captured some of the wonders and mystery from her search with these Chinese Pure Land Buddhists for the door to Amita Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life.

### **Seven Young Gods of Fortune: Fertility Rite of Dosojin**

<https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/watch/seven-young-gods-of-fortune-fertility-rite-of-dosojin>

In Shimofukuzawa, Japan, the local men's youth association organizes the annual Dosojin deity festival. The festivities are characterized by paper decorations and pantomime, with sexualized symbols promoting marriage and fertility. Young men of the village play the roles of the seven lucky gods, traditional protectors embodying such blessings as health, prosperity, long life, wealth, respect for Buddhist law, and generosity. Those who have left the village to work in urban areas return every January to take part in the ritual, held for the benefit of newlyweds and for the purification of 42-year-old men, who are thought to be in especial danger from evil spirits. Filmmaker: Yasuhiro Omori

