REL 3185

Healers and Mediums

Section: U01

Hybrid/Certified

Spring Term 2027

Course Meeting Information

Class meets on Tuesdays 10:00 - 11:15AM in GL 250

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

This hybrid course investigates healing outside the norm of the USA through mediumship, channeling, shamans, animals and plants and offers a unique experience through alternative global practices that are studied through the use of texts, electronic readings, video streaming, artwork and resources information. In addition, the skeptic viewpoint that questions the validity of such healing experiences is included. An overview of accepted global alternatives in health and religious practices of categories that were considered taboo in Western medicine for many years, are currently being investigated and implemented by institutions of higher learning, universities and research laboratories in the US and world-wide. "Healers and Mediums" (through religious and cultural practices) treat diseases, maladies, and physical-emotional-spiritual problems encountered by human beings. Many treatments have been used for hundreds or thousands of years, and lie outside the normative practice of Western science, technology and medical practices.

Textbook and Course Materials

No Textbook Required

Required/Recommended: Recommended

Authors: N/A

Publisher: N/A

Publication Date: N/A

Copyright Date: N/A

ISBN 10: N/A

ISBN 13: N/A

Chapters/Pages: N/A

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for $22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop.

Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

1. **Fadiman, Anne.** *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (1997).
    - Suggested reading: Chapters 1–3 and 5, focusing on Hmong spiritual understandings of illness, healing traditions, and encounters with Western medicine.
2. **Kopenawa, Davi, and Bruce Albert.** *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman* (2013, English translation).
    - Suggested reading: Part I, selected excerpts from Chapters 1–5, exploring shamanic initiation, spirit relationships, and Indigenous cosmology.
3. **Somé, Malidoma Patrice.** *The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding Life Purpose Through Nature, Ritual, and Community* (1998).
    - Suggested reading: Selected excerpts on ritual, ancestral relationships, community healing, and the role of nature in Dagara spiritual traditions.
4. **Csordas, Thomas J.** *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (1994).

- Suggested reading: Chapter 2, "Ritual Healing: Affliction and Transformation," and Chapter 3, "Therapeutic Process and Experience," examining embodiment, ritual healing, and religious experience.

Suggested Videos and Media

1. **T. M. Luhrmann.** *When God Talks Back* — TEDxStanford.
   - Exploring spiritual voice-hearing, religious experience, and the cultivation of communication with the divine.
2. **T. M. Luhrmann.** *Voices of Spirit, Voices of Madness* — American Philosophical Society.
   - Examining cultural interpretations of voice-hearing, spiritual experiences, and the boundaries between religious practice and psychiatric classification.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- • Define the terms healer/s and medium/s using the glossary of terms for the course. GLI
- • Develop an understanding of the role that healers, mediums and shamans play in cultural and cross-cultural societies and describe some of their alternative methods of healing. GLI

- • Recognize patterns of evolutionary change past rituals and practices used in healing that may play a role in reshaping future traditions of aesthetics and cultural values. GLI
- • Recognize shamans exist within in specific community and that shamanism per se is not considered a specific religion or denomination within a religious realm in western concepts even though some shamanic beliefs have similar practices. GLI
- • Demonstrate knowledge of some alternative methods of healing and how they are being incorporated into medical practices of western medicine, i.e. meditation, yoga, acupressure and acupuncture. GLI
- • Describe healing methods that include ethnobotany: the use of plants in healing, and describe some plants used in healing. Note the indigenous cultures use of plants. GLI
- • Explain in definitive terms how animal are healers and used in the healing process through analysis of their importance today. GLI
- • Distinguish global perspectives that shape trends in dealing systems like reincarnation or past-life regressions. GLI

- • Gain an appreciation for the diversity of healing methods for life on Earth as well as concluding ways to heal the maladies of the body from global perspectives the lie outside the Western medical practices. GLI
- • Relate the above objectives in problem solving regarding healing methods from the course beginning with the pre-course survey and connecting the solutions through the post course survey.

Expectations of this Course

This is a hybrid course, meaning half of the coursework will be conducted in class, on campus, with the remaining half conducted out of class, including in this Canvas course. Expectations for performance in hybrid courses are the same as in a traditional course. Hybrid 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:

- **review the getting started page** located in the course modules;
- **introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- **take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is

compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;

- **interact online** with the instructor and peers;
- **review and follow the course calendar** and weekly outlines;
- **Attend class sessions** in person as scheduled;
- **log in** to the course 3 **times** per week;
- **respond to discussions** by the due date specified;
- **respond to emails** within 2 **days**;
- **submit assignments** by the corresponding deadline.

The instructor will:

- **log in** to the course 3 **times** per week;
- **respond to emails** within **24 hours**;
- **grade assignments** and/or provide feedback within 7 **days** of the assignment deadline.

Assignments & Assessments

You will have a series of assessments throughout the course to evaluate your progress. These will include a series of assignments, discussion boards, papers and other activities. Note that there are no exams in this course, as I am interested in deep engagement with the material from a variety of perspectives. As such, it is very necessary that you pay close attention to the various moving parts as these assessments build on each other and one missing piece could lead to failure. Always refer to your course modules for more information.

In addition to the completion of writing assignments, discussions,

quizzes, and exams, a key requirement for successful completion of this course will be an open mind. Students are expected to exhibit respect to all religious traditions and peoples at all times. Thus, disrespectful or derisive commentary will not be tolerated in this course. Religion is, after all, a very personal and sensitive subject for many.

On the other hand, class participants can expect academic freedom to express their views. Although religion can be personal, this is an academic course taken for college credit and thus students are expected to examine the topics rigorously. Religion shall not be exempt from the scrutiny placed on any and all academic subjects.

Class Discussions and Posts

We will rely heavily on class discussions to determine your participation. Below is the rubric I will be using to assess your participation in said discussions.

Discussion Rubric:

CATEGORY	1	5	8	10
Promptness and Initiative	Does not respond to most postings; rarely participates	Responds to most postings several days after initial discussion with limited initiative	Responds to most postings within a 24 hour period	Consistently responds to postings in less than 24 hours; demonstrates good self-initiative
Delivery of Post	Utilizes poor spelling and grammar in most posts; posts appear “hasty”	Errors in spelling and grammar evidenced in several posts	Few grammatical or spelling errors are noted in posts	Consistently uses grammatically correct posts with rare misspellings

Relevance of Post	Posts topics which do not relate to the discussion content; makes short remarks	Occasionally posts off topic; most posts are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic	Frequently posts topics that are related to discussion content; prompts further discussion of topic	Consistently posts topics related to discussion topic; cites additional references related to topic
Expression within the post	Does not express opinions or ideas about the topic	Unclear connection to topic evidenced in minimal expression of opinions or ideas	Opinions and ideas are stated with occasional lack of connection to topic	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to topic
Contribution to the Learning Community	Does not make effort to participate in learning community; appears indifferent	Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with the discussion	Frequently attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration; interacts freely	Aware of needs of community; frequently attempts to motivate the group discussion; presents creative approaches to topic

Discussion Rubric altered by Mary Lou Pfieffer from California State University at Hayward: Assessing Effectiveness of Student Participation in Online Discussions

Grading

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Attendance and Participation	1	100	100	15%
Research Progression	4	50	200	20%
Reflective Journal	1	100	100	20%
Create Your Own Oracle	1	100	100	20%
Final Project	1	100	100	25%
Total	**8**	**—**	**600**	**100%**

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A	93 to 100

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A-	92 to 89
B+	88 to 85
B	84 to 80
B-	79 to 75
C+	74 to 70
C	69 to 65
D	64 to 60
F	0 to 60

Proctored Exams

Please note that the information contained in this section applies only if your course requires a proctored exam.

Through a careful examination of this syllabus, it is the student's responsibility to determine whether this online course requires proctored exams. Please visit our Student Proctored Exam Instructions webpage for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.

Schedule of Topics

Course Outline*

Module 1: Critical thinking and illness

A definition of illness and its origins (body over mind or vice versa)

Read: “Critical Thinking” pdf (discussed in class)

Module 2: The social origins and expressions of illness

Core reading: Singer, M. (2004). The social origins and expressions of illness. *British Medical Bulletin*, *69*(1), 9-16.

Module 3: The believing brain: what do we believe and why?

Read: excerpts of the *The Believing Brain: from Ghosts and Gods to Policies and Conspiracies.*

Module 4: The Shaman as Healer

- Shamans, Herbalism, Ritual and Animals

Excerpts from "Health, Healing and Religion: A Cross-Cultural Perspective" by David Kinsley (Chapters 1-3); "The Shaman: A Siberian Spiritualist" by William Howells; "Religious Specialists" by Victor Turner

Module 5: Mediumship in varying cultural perspectives and systems

- Mediumship and Divining as "keeping balance"
- Mediumship and Divining as "communication"

Final readings forthcoming

Module 6: Other considerations/types of healing

- “alternative” vs. “modern medicine”

Read: excerpts of *Between Heaven and Earth: A Guide to Chinese Medicine*

- Miracles and their origins

Read: Coyle, J. K. (2010). 6. Hands and Imposition Of Hands In Manichaeism. In *Manichaeism and its Legacy* (pp. 89-99). Brill.

- Self-healing; is it possible?

Read: Musyimi, C. W., Mutiso, V. N., Nandoya, E. S., & Ndetei, D. M. (2016). Forming a joint dialogue among faith healers, traditional healers and formal health workers in mental health in a Kenyan setting: towards common grounds. *Journal of ethnobiology and ethnomedicine*, *12*(1), 4.

Module 7: What has changed and what remains the same

Open discussion of reflective journals with particular emphasis on progression of thought and approach

*Course outline subject to change. When in doubt, ask.

Also note that outline contains only select readings. Please refer to module for a full list of required readings and sources.

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via **the Canvas Inbox**. Check out the Canvas Guide to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using the Canvas Inbox.

I will respond to all correspondence within 2 **days**.

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies, such as:

- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Zoom Video Conference

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities.

Zoom meetings can be accessed via the Zoom link in the course

navigation menu. Once you click on the Zoom link, it will route you to join the meeting for the respective class session. You will also be able to view upcoming meetings, previous meetings that you have already joined, and meeting recordings. Before joining an actual class session:

- Reference the Zoom Student Tutorials to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.
- Access the Zoom Test Meeting Room to test out the software before joining an actual session.

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact the FIU Canvas Help Team. Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights (OCR)** is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the OCR team through report.fiu.edu.