New Textbook on *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion*

Table of Contents and Sample Topics

Section I The Anthropology of Belief

Guiding Question: What do Anthropologists Mean by Belief?

This section will encourage students to think critically about how researchers study religion. It explores ideas like belief, secularism, and ethics, as well as the challenges of fieldwork. Students will be challenged to reflect on how knowledge about religion is produced. This strengthens their ability to think analytically and reflexively.

Proposed Topics

1. Tradition of Disbelief: Secularism and the Myth of Neutrality
2. The Anthropology of Atheism
3. Ethics of Studying Religion
4. Fieldwork, Encounter, and Transformation
5. When Anthropologists Become Believers

Section II Ontology, Epistemology, Worldview and Lived Experiences

Guiding Question: What Counts as Real?

This section introduces students to a key shift in contemporary anthropology: taking seriously the realities that people experience, rather than reducing them to 'beliefs.' By examining spirits, witchcraft, dreams, and altered states, students learn how different cultures define what is real. It challenges Western assumptions about rationality and encourages students to consider multiple ways of knowing. This section grounds the study of religion in lived experiences.

6. Taking Spirits Seriously: The Spectral Turn in Anthropology
7. Witchcraft as Explanation: Misfortune, Morality, and Social Life
8. Possession, Trance, and Altered States of Consciousness
9. Dreams, Visions, Prophecies, Revelations

Section III Power, Politics, and the Sacred

Guiding Question: What is the relationship between power, politics, and the sacred?

This section illustrates how religion is deeply connected to power, authority, and social control. Through topics like nationalism, colonialism, state power, gender, and law, students explore how religious ideas shape political and social life. It emphasizes that religion is not neutral but actively involved in structuring inequality and resistance. This section should help students connect what they are learning to current global issues and conflicts.

10. Witchcraft Accusations and Social Regulation
11. Colonialism, Missionization, and Indigenous Resistance
12. Gender, Sexuality, and Moral Authority
13. Bodies as Sites of Political, Religious, and Social Control
14. Religion, Law, and the State
15. Sacred Violence and Martyrdom

Section IV Bodies, Emotions and the Sensorium

Guiding Question: How is religion experienced through the body and the senses?

This section shifts the focus to embodiment, showing how religion is experienced through the body and the senses. Students explore ritual, sound, food, touch, and emotion as ways of encountering the sacred. The concept of the sensorium helps explain how culture shapes sensory experience and meaning. This makes religion feel tangible and immediate rather than abstract.

16. Ritual and the Senses
17. Pain, Ecstasy, and Devotional Discipline
18. Food, Purity, and Sacred Consumption
19. Sound, Music, and Emotional Atmosphere
20. Material Religion and Tactile Devotion
21. Clothing, Aesthetics, and Religious Identity

Section V Magic, Religion and Science

Guiding Question: What is the role of enchantment in 21st century life?

This section reconsiders the traditional divide anthropologists have created between magic, religion, and science by examining how different knowledge systems intersect and interpret reality. Students explore alternative healing, divination, and Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) as ways communities understand relationships, illnesses, uncertainty, and healing. Special attention is given to shamanism as a practice that mediates between human and non-human worlds, offering insights into cosmology, healing, and relational models of the environment. Rather than treating magic as premodern or irrational, this section will demonstrate how magic, religion and science coexist and intersect to shape how people understand nature, knowledge, spirits, and reality itself.

22. Alternative Healing and Biomedicine
23. Traditional Environmental Knowledge and Natural Resources Management
24. Conspiracy Theories, Prophecies, and Knowledge Production
25. Technology and Enchantment
26. Rationality Revisited: Magic, Animism, and Science in Dialogue

Section VI Religion in Motion: Migration and Global Circulation

Guiding Question: How does religion move and transform across borders?

This section explores how religion moves and transforms across borders. Through examples of migration, diaspora, and conversion, students will see how religious practices adapt in new contexts. The readings will challenge the idea that religions are fixed or unchanging. This perspective will guide students to see religion in a globalized world.

27. Diaspora and Ritual Memory
28. Conversion and Identity Transformation
29. Transnational Pilgrimage
30. Global Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity
31. Syncretism, Hybridity, and Cultural Translation

Section VII Religion in the Digital Age: Virtual Ritual and Networked Belief

Guiding Question: How does religion exist in digital spaces and how is it evolving?

This section explores how religion exists and evolves in digital spaces. Students examine online rituals, digital communities, and the role of algorithms in shaping belief. It treats the internet as a meaningful religious environment rather than something separate from 'real' religion. This makes the material especially relevant to 21st century students' everyday lives.

32. Virtual Ritual and Online Worship
33. Digital Witchcraft and Online Occult Communities
34. Algorithms, Authority, and Religious Influence
35. Digital Mythmaking
36. Digital Afterlives and the Persistence of the Dead
37. Gaming, Virtual Worlds, and Sacred Play

Section VIII Religion, Crisis, and the Future

Guiding Question: What is the continuing role of religion in times of complex change and adversity?

This section examines how people rely on religion to navigate and respond to uncertainty, adversity, and crisis. Topics like climate change, pandemics, and apocalyptic movements show how belief shapes meaning in difficult times. It highlights religion as a tool for coping, a source of hope, and a means for imagining different futures.

38. Climate Crisis and Eco-Spirituality
39. Religion in Disaster and Recovery
40. Pandemic Rituals and Adaptation
41. Apocalyptic Movements and End-Times Imaginaries
42. UFO Religions and Cosmic Futures
43. Hope, Survival, and Futurity