Witches, Druids, Modern Vikings and other Contemporary Pagans in a course,

PAGAN STUDIES – A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Summer term, 30 hrs. 4 ECTS credits
Every Tuesday, 11:30 – 13:00 Room 13, Institute of Religious Studies

Course description

The course covers some crucial topics in the emerging sub-discipline of Religious Studies, namely “Pagan Studies”, from the cultural psychology of religion perspective. Some classes will be devoted to historical aspects of contemporary Paganism or Neo-Paganism (Romantic revival, Pagan inspirations in Germany in the early XXth century, history of Wicca and Druidry), and other will present the image of Pagan diaspora all around the World, including cultural and local peculiarities (Contemporary Druidry, Neo-Paganism in Poland, Lithuania and Scandinavia, Paganism in the USA and Europe: similarities and differences, recognition of contemporary Paganism in various social context). The emphasis will be put not only on the cultural history, but also on the psychosocial aspects of the movement, therefore during our classes a socio-psychological image of contemporary Pagans will emerge, as we will discuss such topics as: converting to Paganism, Pagan ethics, Paganism and ecology, Pagan themes in Pop-culture. The course aims at providing participants with general knowledge about contemporary Paganism; participants will acquire knowledge on Paganism in all major aspects of the phenomenon – from historical roots to the psychological portrait of a follower; also, an emphasis will be put on the practical skills: how to conduct research in the field of New Religious Movements (field research, analysis of the cultural material: movies, fiction etc.).

About the Lecturer

DR ADAM ANCZYK, PH.D.

Researcher and lecturer in psychology of religion and religious studies. His academic interests include cultural psychology of religion and spirituality (conversion, religious discrimination), new religious movements (esp. contemporary Druidry), dream studies, religions of ancient Europe and methodology in psychology of religion. Enjoys a good book (preferably a horror or a crime novel), ethnic and neo-folk music, and board games.

Enroll via the Secretary: Institute of Religious Studies, Grodzka Str. 52
Methods of assessment

1. Class participation (if all “present” = 0.1 points, 1 absence is allowed during the semester*) and active participation in the course, homework done for tutorials (if all “done” = 0.1 points, if not 0.0 points).

2. Written essay/empirical work on a subject chosen by the student (the best papers will be considered for publication) submitted until the end of the semester or summer exam session (a paper approx. 2000-5000 words, academic research paper or an essay with proper methodological apparatus and appropriate references; citation format as in the Chicago Manual of Style). Topics should be presented and discussed during methodological classes. There is a possibility of working in teams of 2. (0.3 – 0.6 points).

3. Meeting the Pagan: an empirical fieldwork exercise (0.1 – 0.2 points).

Course grading. The passing grade is over 50%.

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Outcomes

The course aims at providing students with general knowledge about contemporary Paganism; students will acquire knowledge on Paganism in all aspects of the phenomenon – from historical roots to the psychological portrait of a follower; also, an emphasis will be put on the practical skills: how to conduct research in the field of New Religious Movements (field research, analysis of the cultural material: movies, fiction etc.).

Course outline

The course consist of class hours and readings & empirical exercises done at home. Most of the classes will follow a schema of 1hrs (45 minutes) lecture & 1hrs (45 minutes) seminar on the readings. Each seminar has keywords on which we will concentrate our analysis and discussion. They will form a thread linking the discussion over presented Pagan topics with psychological theories and research.


Keywords: research methodology


Keywords: typology & taxonomies

3. Which witch is which? Cultural history of modern witchcraft and Wicca.


Keywords: stereotypes, the occult, initiation, secret societies


5. Conducting research in the field of Pagan Studies: project discussion, methodology & methods.


9. Druidry in Great Britain and USA: rituals, beliefs, organizations.
Ibid., 141–184; 208–230.

Keywords: ritual, religious leaders, new religious movements

10. Converting to Paganism: the homecoming hypothesis and coming home experience. The notion of a religious conversion in the psychology of religion.

Adler, Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America, 13–21.


Keywords: conversion, narrative psychology, proselytism

11. Psychological characteristics of followers. Paganism and ecology, pagan ethics. The need of (poly) theology?


Keywords: Pagan theology, ethics, spirituality, deep ecology


Keywords: gender, women’s studies, sexuality and psychology

13. Paganism and Occulture: pop-cultural images of contemporary Paganism, Paganism and music, art, movies.


Keywords: pop-culture, reception of new religious movements, religion & literature

14. Finding Paganisms in Kraków (a guided tour for students).