

**INTR 565 FOLK RELIGIONS**  
**DR. PAUL HIEBERT**  
**ROOM BGC 255**  
**6:30-9:45**

Lisa

Keays  
 Mungali  
 Sophie  
 A. Sui  
 Jagan

	NAME	STUDENT ID
1	Bowden, Casey L.	70587
2	Bremer, Nathan D.	65488
3	Ceria, Jeffrey P.	67566
4	Chevalier, Laura A.	70337
5	Davis, Lara N.	70494
6	Dugan, Donovan M.	69133
7	Gallagher, Jayna L.	68090
8	Goble, Laura N.	55740
9	Hamm, Douglas C.	68124
10	Inwin, Chris N.	70398
11	Larson, Nikki L.	69735
12	Lee, Grace	69636
13	Nichols, Annie L. Confidential	68947
14	Omungu, Habil R.	52148
15	Paulson, Theodore R.	63655
16	Zagami, Daniel M.	69696

Lisa -  
 Jeff - Russia - Andruan  
 Marc Mungali  
 Harald Naendin  
 Chris - Egeleen  
 Laura - Barund - Mexico  
 Daley - Europe  
 Juna -

Dominyan  
 Robert By Mexe  
 Daniel - Lesita  
 Grace - Korea  
 Ted  
 Nate - Norway  
 Philip -

## ME/DME 834: CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO POPULAR RELIGIONS

Wheaton College

Paul G. Hiebert

Spring 2006

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### Description:

This course deals with tribal and folk religions from an anthropological point of view. Particular attention is given to the structures of religious beliefs and symbols, the nature of religious rituals, the functions of religion in society, the types of religious practitioners, and the dynamics of religions movements. Topics dealt with include totemism, ancestor veneration, magic, mana, spirit possession, divination, witchcraft, sorcery, and shamanism. The course also deals with questions of human crises and death, guidance and success, and meaning and purpose as these relate to folk religion. Attention is given to how all these affect the planting of indigenous churches that are vital and alive in faith, and to responses to real situations missionaries and church leaders face.

### Format:

The class is a seminar in which the focus is class reports and participant critiques. The first weeks will be used to set the theoretical foundations for the course.

### Texts and Readings:

#### Required Texts:

Hiebert, Paul, Daniel Shaw and Tite Tiéno. *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1999.  
Lehmann, A. C. and J. E. Myers. *Magic, Witchcraft and Religion*. (2nd edition). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company. 1985

#### Recommended Readings:

Morris, Brian. 1993. *Anthropological Studies of Religion: An Introductory Text*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Lessa, William A. and Evon Z. Vogt. 1979. *Reader in Comparative Religion*. 4th ed. New York: Harper and Row.  
Keyser, Christian. *A People Reborn*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1980  
Stein, Philip. *God's of Power*. Dallas: Touch Outreach Ministries. 1989

#### Reading Reports:

One of the values of college studies is to share what we find in our readings. Read widely in the literature, and be ready to share in class articles or chapters that you find valuable on the subject at hand.

### Course Requirements:

In this course we assume that each student is pursuing his or her own studies based on personal interest. Consequently, while a basic body of materials is covered in class, participants in the class is encouraged to pursue research in areas of their interest. In class we deal with specific problems in the field and the debate surrounding these problems, and do not necessarily relate directly to the textbooks. Material in print is more rapidly and thoroughly assimilated by reading rather than by lecture.

This course requires one major research paper which is to be presented in class. Please choose a particular people or region as the focus of your paper.

- 1) Trace the essential characteristics of religious beliefs and practices in the area. After a general survey, you may focus on one or two aspects of the religion, such as witchcraft, sacrifices, divination, and so on.
- 2) Note the major missiological concerns that these beliefs and practices raise, and discuss how the church and mission **are** dealing with these issues, if at all.
- 3) Conclude by making recommendations on how the church/mission might respond to the challenge of the local religion.

Please be ready to make a preliminary presentation of your research in class. Revise your paper and submit it by the end of the course. Use Turabian. Write addressing an academic audience (do not 'teach' readers the basics--assume they know this). If possible, write it as a 20 page article that can be submitted to a journal for publication. This requires rewriting the paper several times for clarity, conciseness, and logical progression. Such articles have: 1) a brief introduction to the problem at hand with citation of key authors who have dealt with it, 2) your presentation of the data on the religion of a people or area, and 3) how the church/mission has dealt with the problem [if at all], and 4) your conclusions and recommendations.

#### Expectations:

Participants are expected to complete the reading of assigned text books and search out related materials before topics are discussed in class. They are expected to participate in the discussions, and to make presentations on their research.

**Class Discussion:** It is essential to read the materials ahead of time. Chapter assignments will be made at the beginning of the course. Be sure to have read the materials and be ready to discuss and debate the issues at hand before coming to class.

**Class Reports:** Hopefully we will have time for brief research reports during the last weeks of the class. Be ready, also, to raise questions and critique the class report

#### Assessments:

Assessments: 15% reporting outside readings and major paper findings in class, 15%, attendance and participation in class, 70 % major paper and class reports.

**CLASS ASSIGNMENT**  
**March 23, 2006**

**1. Readings:**

- Read the textbook: chapters 1 - 3
- Read Myers and Moro, sections 1 and 8

**2. Research:**

- Buy two or three 'folk' papers at the grocery or drug store: eg. Star, National Observer, etc.
- look at the various items and organize them into larger themes such as 'healing', 'guidance', 'paranormal', etc.
- look for deep underlying 'myths'
- be prepared to share your findings in class next week.

**3. Reflections:**

- make one page notes on how people find meaning in their every day lives. Talk to other students if you wish.
- make one page notes on how as Christians we offer answers to the question of finding meaning in life here and now.
- make one page notes on how people find 'meaning' in death, and answer its challenge.
- make one page notes on how as Christians we give meaning to death to the living who remain behind.

## ASSIGNMENT FOR MARCH 30<sup>TH</sup> CLASS

### 1. Readings:

- in the textbook read the chapter on well being and misfortune: question 2.
- in the reader read sections 6 and 7
- look at the library and web for materials on a theology of 'healing and prosperity' and a theology of 'sickness and suffering.'

### 2. Assignment:

- select one of the topics for your major paper, and prepare an outline
- look up bibliographic sources on the topic you choose
- review the case on 'Auntie Mansah'
- continue to do research on folk religion in America
- continue to 'study people' where ever you go.

### 3. Reflections:

- how do people define 'a good life', and seek to get it?
- how does Scripture define 'a good life,' and what is a Christian theology of wealth, prosperity, health, and the 'good life?.'
- what do people see as 'misfortunes' and how do they explain these different misfortunes?
- what does the Gospel see as 'misfortune, and what is a Christian theology of sickness, suffering, poverty, oppression and other misfortunes?
- how should we minister to people who are suffering deep misfortunes such as serious illness, accidents, poverty and oppression?

## ASSIGNMENTS FOR APRIL 6<sup>TH</sup> CLASS

### 1. Readings:

- in the textbook read chapters 7, 8 and 14
- in the reader read sections 4, 5.
- read other materials on ‘discerning the future,’ and ‘dealing with poverty, suffering, oppression and the collapse of societies and states.

### 2. Assignment:

- review your outline for your paper. Make sure to include headings to show the progression of your argument, and that they are at the appropriate levels (L1, L2, L3, etc.). The outline helps you and the reader see the development of the paper.
- read and reflect on the case “Family Gods.”
- study people wherever you go.

### 3. Reflections:

- how do people seek to discern the future in order to plan and live their lives?
- how does God reveal his will, his plan for their lives, to his people?
- how do people explain and deal with oppression, corruption, poverty and moral evils around them?
- what is a Christian response to deal with these moral evils?

## MISSION WEBSITES

<http://www.missiology.org>

<http://www.godoor.org>

<http://www.ccim.org>

<http://www.brigada.org>

<http://www.mislinks.org>

<http://www.askamissionary.org>

<http://www.globalmission.org>

<http://ethnicharvest.org>

<http://strategicnetwork.org>

<http://www.sacredtribes.com>

<http://www.asmweb.org>

<http://www.missiology.org/EMS/default.htm>

<http://missionstudies.org>

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/8409/>

<http://centerce.org>

<http://www.quozi.com/anthropology>

<http://en.groundspring.org>

## American Myths

Hughes, Richard T.

2003. *Myths America Lives By*. Univ. of Ill.

1. The Myth of the Chosen Nation
2. The Myth of Nature's Nation
3. The Myth of the Christian Nation.
4. The Myth of the Millennial Nation
5. The Mythic Dimensions of American Capitalism
6. The Myth of the Innocent Nation