

The Prehistory of Religion: Shamans, Sorcerers and Saints

Archaeology 226

Section: C100

Term: 2005 Fall

Instructor: Dr Brian Hayden

Discussion Topics: Religious phenomena have always been important in human cultures in terms of their oral history, personal experiences, and their major architectural achievements and social institutions. Religions constitute important forces in the emergence of early states, yet their ultimate validity is widely questioned in contemporary Industrial Society. Why is religion and the supernatural so important for all human societies? Can belief be viewed as adaptive? And if so, is religion still adaptive for people? When did religion emerge and why did it change? These are the basic questions that this course will deal with.

A comparative cultural approach will be used. The inquiry will begin in the Paleolithic and trace developmental stages through the Neolithic, the early civilizations, and into the present. Religions will be treated in a comparative fashion. No specific religion will be singled out as being more valid than any others. The emphasis will be on tribal and traditional religions, thus comparatively recent religions such as Christianity will only be touched on briefly.

Grading: Grades for the course will be assigned on the basis of a mid-term exam (40%), a term paper (40%), and exercises (20%).

Required Texts: Hayden, Brian. 2003. Shamans, Sorcerers and Saints. Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington, D.C.

Recommended Texts: none

Materials/Supplies: none

Prerequisite/Corequisite: Any lower division archaeology or anthropology course. (prerequisite)

Notes: This course may be applied toward the Certificate of Liberal Arts (Set 6).

Deferred Grades: Only given on basis of authenticated medical disability.

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