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Office Hours: email for on-line chat appointment

Course Information:
This course is 4 credit hours and fulfills Linfield Curriculum requirements in Individuals, Systems, and Societies (IS). For students entering Linfield Fall 2010 or later, in order to earn Linfield Curriculum credits for this course, you must complete the electronic submission of exemplar work and supporting descriptions by the last day of finals week, as discussed in the Linfield College Course Catalog.

Course Description:
This course looks at various so-called paranormal beliefs—UFOs, alien abduction, ghosts, chupacabra, Bigfoot, etc.—and applies an anthropological gaze to the cultures that surround them, while critically evaluating popular distinctions between standard religious beliefs vs. the “paranormal.” Drawing from anthropological insights ranging from religious ritual studies to structuralism, we explore why people believe in certain phenomena and the cultural forces that shape these beliefs. We also explore the cultural power dynamics that explain why some people do not believe in these phenomena, or go so far as to denigrate them.

Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes:
This course may be taken for IS Linfield Curriculum credit. The learning objectives and how we will meet those objectives in this course are listed below. It is recommended that the Research Report assignment be submitted to Taskstream as an exemplar for the IS LC.

| IS Designation | LEARNING OBJECTIVE | HOW OBJECTIVE IS MET |
- Understand individual, systemic, and/or social processes.
- We will investigate how “paranormal” beliefs have been shaped by social, cultural and economic forces and how individuals have responded to and adapted “paranormal” belief.

- Analyze individuals, systems, and/or societies through multiple frames of reference.
- We will be investigating “paranormal” belief systems from a variety of cultures, as well as the culture of skepticism that emerges to challenge these beliefs.

- Articulate how key theoretical principles can be used to explain individual and social processes, inform public policy and/or develop practical approaches to human problems across local, regional, and/or global contexts.
- We will explore a variety of “paranormal” beliefs from across cultures and use theoretical insights to help make sense of how these beliefs function and what roles they fill in a particular cultural context. We will draw from social and cultural theory to explore the ways in which the “paranormal” is used to build communities, shape identities and influence culture. We will investigate how the “paranormal” forces us to reflect on deep social and cultural issues.

**Required Texts:**


Thomas, Jeannie. 2015. *Putting the supernatural in its place: folklore, the hypermodern, and the ethereal*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press.

**Requirements:**

In addition to reading assigned course material and actively participating in class discussions, you will be able to demonstrate mastery of course materials through the following assignments: class participation, exams, quizzes, and 2 papers.

Your grade in this course will be based on the following measures of your performance:

1) Discussion Participation  
2) Choosing a Research Topic Paper  
3) Annotated Bibliography  
4) Research Report  
5) Research Presentation  
6) "Paranormal" Experience Reflection  

1000 total pts

100% - 93% = A  
below 93% - 90% = A-  
below 90% - 87% = B+  
below 87% - 83% = B  
below 83% - 80% = B-  
below 80% - 77% = C+  
below 77% - 73% = C  
below 73% - 70% = C-  
below 70% - 67% = D+  
below 67% - 60% = D  
below 60% = F

**Discussion Participation**

The majority of our interaction will occur in the discussion board, or forum. Each week (Sunday evening) a discussion question will be posted on the class discussion board. The question will address the topics for the week and ask you to draw from your experiences to apply aspects of the readings in a critical and analytical way. You will be expected to post a response to the question posted, which includes a discussion and application of the assigned readings for that week. You will also be expected to respond
to at least two other student's postings.

Your main post should be made by the end of Thursday, and responses by the end of the week (Sunday). This is designed to be an interactive forum. Follow-up questions may be asked and conversations between students are encouraged. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers; rather there are issues to be discussed, investigated, and debated and social science concepts to be thought through, debated, and applied.

Your postings should be substantial – at least a minimum of a longer paragraph or two in length is a good rule of thumb. They should demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings and taken the time to think about them seriously. Please feel free to incorporate personal views and experiences, but be sure to connect them to specific readings, and support your arguments with reasoning and evidence.

To ensure quality posts, you can ask yourself the following questions: Does this post help further or deepen the class conversation about these readings? Does my post sound like something I could have written without ever reading these particular assignments, or just by skimming them? If so, revise and go deeper. Your postings should demonstrate that you’ve read the assignment and are familiar with -- and thought about -- the main insights, arguments, and themes.

If you need help coming up with things to write about, use the following questions to prompt your responses: How do the insights and analyses from the readings challenge or deepen my own perspective? What am I learning? In what ways are my ideas changing?

Weekly posting should always be grounded in the specific ideas and insights of that week’s readings. A higher quality weekly reflection requires serious engagement with the social scientific insights and analyses you encounter, rather than falling back on previously held notions and familiar perspectives – learning, after all, is about the broadening and deepening of understanding. I will closely attend to both the number and the quality of your posts.

Your responses to each other’s posts should go beyond “I agree” or “I disagree” or "I like your post." The thoughtfulness and quality of your responses to each other will to a large degree determine what kind of learning community you help create on-line, and how this learning community can further your understanding and over-all experience this term. Dialogue is the soul of learning, and certainly any sense of belonging to a real learning community, where the ideas matter and relate to your own life, is partly dependent on your willingness to initiate or enter into on-line conversations with your classmates.

Choosing a Research Topic Paper
Throughout the semester you will be expected to conduct a research project focusing on some aspect of a culture surrounding the "paranormal." The "Choosing a Research Topic Paper" is a 2-3 page description of the topic you intend to study for the remainder of the course. Topics should be well defined and include a specific group of people. The paper will describe the topic and/or individuals, explain how the topic is relevant to the course, and propose interesting aspects to investigate.
Annotated Bibliography
An annotated bibliography is a list of sources with a short paragraph included about each source describing its potential use for your research. Annotations should succinctly identify the main content, methodology (how, when, where the research was carried out or what sources were used for the study), time period under study, theoretical approach (if an author identifies one), and key argument or aims of the work. It may conclude with a sentence or two representing your own perspective or interest in the work. Annotations should be no more than a few sentences long. This assignment will require annotations for at least 8 sources useful for your research project, as well as a 500 word discussion of what you learned during the annotation process.

Research Report
Your research project will culminate in a 8-10 page report. This paper should describe your topic, raise an interesting question to explore, develop a thesis, explain what you discovered, and use the tools and insights of your sources and course material to support your thesis and draw conclusions about your topic.

Research Presentation
At the end of the class you will post a summary of your research for the entire class to read and respond to.

"Paranormal" Experience Reflection
There will be at least 2 opportunities throughout the semester to experience the culture of the paranormal firsthand. You must participate in at least one of these experiences, which will occur late at night and most likely on a weekend. (Dates and specifics are still being planned.) After your experience, you will write a personal reflection touching on thoughts before the experience, how you felt during, and what may have changed after. Successful reflections will also use course material to supplement the discussion. This paper is due 1 week after your paranormal experience.

Academic Honesty:
Please see the college policy on academic honesty, as published in the Linfield College Course Catalog. This course adheres to all policies as explained in the Catalog.

Disability Statement:
Students with disabilities are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you are a student with a disability and feel you may require academic accommodations contact Cheri White, Program Director of Learning Support Services (LSS), as early as possible to request accommodation for your disability. The timeliness of your request will allow LSS to promptly arrange the details of your support. LSS is located in Loveridge Hall, Room 24, (503-413-8219). We also encourage students to communicate with faculty about their accommodations.
SECTION 1: THINKING ABOUT THE "PARANORMAL"

Week 1
- Review Syllabus and Course Objectives and Requirements
  - *Paranormal Nation*: Chapters 1 – 7

Week 2
- *Paranormal Nation*: Chapters 8 – 12

SECTION 2: GHOSTS

Week 3
- *Paranormal Nation*: Chapters 13 – 17
- *Putting the Supernatural in its Place*: Chapters 1, 5, 6 & 7
- Baker - “A Social Anthropology of Ghosts”
- Eaton - “Give Us a Sign of Your Presence”
- Bubandt - “A Psychology of Ghosts”
- Shore - “Ghosts and Government”
- Gibas - “Uncanny Underground”
- **Choosing a Research Topic Paper Due**

Week 4
- *Discourses of the Vanishing*: All

SECTION 3: WITCHCRAFT

Week 5
- *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*: Chapters 1 - 4
- *Putting the Supernatural in its Place*: Chapter 2
- *Modernity and its Malcontents*: Chapters 3 – 8
- *Modernity and its Malcontents*: Chapters 6 – 8

Week 6
- *Modernity of Witchcraft*: Chapters 1 – 7
SECTION 4: BIGFOOT

Week 7
- *Bigfoot Exposed*: Chapters 3 & 11
- *Coyote Was Going There*: Excerpts
- *Bigfoot: Life and Times of a Legend*: Chapters 1 – 6
- *Bigfoot: Life and Times of a Legend*: Chapters 4 – 6

Week 8
- *Bigfoot: Life and Times of a Legend*: Chapters 7 – 10

SECTION 5: ALIENS

Week 9
- *Lure of the Edge*: All
- *Aliens in America*: Introduction & Chapter 1

Week 10
- *Aliens in America*: Chapters 2 – Afterward
- Vandehey - "Taken"
- Annotated Bibliography Due

SECTION 6: ZOMBIES

Week 11
- *Zombies*: Chapters 1 – 8

Week 12
- *Putting the Supernatural in its Place*: Chapter 3
- Bourguignon – "The Persistence of Folk Belief"
- Guercio – "The Secrets of Haiti's Living Dead"
- Inglis – "Putting the Undead to Work"
- Bishop – "The Sub-Subaltern Monster"
- Datta & MacDonald – "Time for Zombies"
- Kordas – "New South, New Immigrants, New Women..."
- Hamako – "Zombie Orientals Ate My Brain!"
SECTION 7: VAMPIRES

**Week 13**
- Stevenson - "A Vampire in the Mirror"
- Arata - "The Occidental Tourist"
- Schepers-Hughes - "Theft of Life"
- Derby - "Imperial Secrets"

**Week 14**
- Martin del Campo - "The Global Making of a Mexican Vampire"
- *Tracking the Chupacabra, Chapters 1 – 8*
- **Presentation Due**
- **Research Report Due**