
Term Information

Effective Term Spring 2023

General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area Near Eastrn Lang and Cultures
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org Near Eastern Languages/Culture - D0554
College/Academic Group Arts and Sciences
Level/Career Undergraduate
Course Number/Catalog 3667
Course Title Messages from Beyond: Divination, Prophecy, and the Occult in Religion and Culture
Transcript Abbreviation Messages fm Beyond
Course Description In this course, we will explore how people from antiquity to our time have sought to find meaning in the complexity and uncertainty around their physical and social environment to access what they perceived as hidden realms as sources of meaning. Students will learn how messages from beyond guide their daily lives, provide them with sources of authority or companionship for their art of philosophy
Semester Credit Hours/Units Fixed: 3

Offering Information

Length Of Course 14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week
Flexibly Scheduled Course Never
Does any section of this course have a distance education component? No
Grading Basis Letter Grade
Repeatable No
Course Components Lecture
Grade Roster Component Lecture
Credit Available by Exam No
Admission Condition Course No
Off Campus Never
Campus of Offering Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark, Wooster

Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites None
Exclusions Not open to students with credit for Religious Studies 3667
Electronically Enforced Yes

Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings Cross-listed in Religious Studies

Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code 16.1199
Subsidy Level Baccalaureate Course
Intended Rank Sophomore, Junior, Senior

Requirement/Elective Designation

Lived Environments

The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

Course Details

Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes

- Examine the way people from diverse cultures interact with their lived environments through unique occult phenomena
- learning how these ways of interacting with the world have changed over time, both in how we view and understand the world, and how we see the world interacting with us
- seeking to understand the personal, social, and psychological dynamics that drive and inspire these efforts at deriving meaning and certainty.
- thinking about what these phenomena say about social structure, authority, religious institutions, and politics that humans interact with every day.
- learning to express our understanding of why humans rely on unreliable systems such as astrology to understand their place in their environment through in-class discussions, well-argued essays, and analyses.

Content Topic List

- occult
 - divination
 - Greek oracles
 - astrology
 - necromancy
 - the diviner
 - dreams
 - dream interpretation
 - prophecy
 - possession
- No

Sought Concurrence

Attachments

- Messages from Beyond syllabus proposal-LE-final.docx: Syllabus
(Syllabus. Owner: Blacker, Noah)
- submission-lived-environments-Messages from Beyond-LE-text.docx: GE Lived Environments Form
(GEC Model Curriculum Compliance Stmt. Owner: Blacker, Noah)
- Hebrew and Jewish Studies (HJS) Major Sheet - Language Track Major Sheet (Revised 10-7-22).docx: Major Curriculum Map
(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Carmichael, Phoebe Cullen)

Comments

- Included as an elective in the Hebrew and Jewish Studies Major. *(by Carmichael, Phoebe Cullen on 10/07/2022 02:45 PM)*
- If this course will be able to count in one of your majors (even as an elective), please upload updated curriculum map(s). *(by Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal on 07/20/2022 08:45 AM)*
- New Course *(by Blacker, Noah on 05/11/2022 03:09 PM)*

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Blacker, Noah	06/14/2022 01:27 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Levi, Scott Cameron	06/14/2022 03:12 PM	Unit Approval
Revision Requested	Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal	07/20/2022 08:45 AM	College Approval
Submitted	Carmichael, Phoebe Cullen	10/07/2022 02:45 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Liu, Morgan Yih-Yang	10/07/2022 03:06 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal	10/17/2022 04:18 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Cody, Emily Kathryn Jenkins, Mary Ellen Bigler Hanlin, Deborah Kay Hilty, Michael Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal Steele, Rachel Lea	10/17/2022 04:18 PM	ASCCAO Approval

Course Proposal:

**MESSAGES FROM BEYOND:
DIVINATION, PROPHECY, AND THE OCCULT IN RELIGION AND CULTURE**
NELC 3667/ Religious Studies 3XXX

Michael D. Swartz, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
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A majority of the world's people believe in a reality beyond our observable mundane existence—whether or not they are affiliated with an organized religion. The effects of this worldview are all around us, from preachers and prophets who claim to speak the word of God to daily horoscopes in newspapers and the Internet. How do people act on the idea that the unseen world can communicate with us humans? How do those practices contribute to their mental health, way of life, and relationship to the natural world? What do they tell us about our attitudes to technology, expertise, and the subconscious?

Messages from the Beyond is a course in human behavior. **We are not going to ask whether anything exists beyond our material world, or whether human beings are actually able to predict the future or communicate with the dead.** In this course, we will explore how people from antiquity to our time have sought to find meaning in the complexity and uncertainty around their physical and social environment to access what they perceived as hidden realms as sources of meaning. Students will learn how messages from beyond guide their daily lives, provide them with sources of authority or companionship, as inspiration for their art of philosophy.

This exploration will take us to a wide range of cultural phenomena. We will become acquainted with forms of divination, such as astrology, and chance operations; ways of accessing the subconscious and the inner self; and ways people try to read the natural world in the conviction that it will reveal supernatural truths. Each of these forms of knowledge will lead us to analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence interactions in the human environment.

I. GE Education Goals and Expected Learning Outcomes

This course fulfills a GE requirement in the theme of Lived Environments. The University's expected learning outcomes (ELO) for fulfilling these requirements are as follows:

GOAL 1: Successful students will explore a range of perspectives on the interactions and impacts between humans and one or more types of environment (e.g. agricultural, built, cultural, economic, intellectual, natural) in which humans live.

ELO 1.1 Engage with the complexity and uncertainty of human-environment interactions.

ELO 1.2 Describe examples of human interaction with and impact on environmental change and transformation over time and across space.

GOAL 2: Successful students will analyze a variety of perceptions, representations and/or discourses about environments and humans within them.

ELO 2.1 Analyze how humans' interactions with their environments shape or have shaped attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior.

ELO 2.2 Describe how humans perceive and represent the environments with which they interact.

ELO 2.3 Analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence discourses around environments.

- Course learning outcomes By examining the way people from diverse cultures interact with their lived environments through unique occult phenomena;
- By learning how these ways of interacting with the world have changed over time, both in how we view and understand the world, and how we see the world interacting with us, including:
- By seeking to understand the personal, social, and psychological dynamics that drive and inspire these efforts at deriving meaning and certainty.
- By thinking about what these phenomena say about social structure, authority, religious institutions, and politics that humans interact with every day.
- And by learning to express our understanding of why humans rely on unreliable systems such as astrology to understand their place in their environment through in-class discussions, well-argued essays, and analyses.

How the course fulfills GE goals

Successful students will explore a range of perspectives on the interactions and impacts between humans and their natural, cultural, and intellectual environment by exposure to how diverse cultures interpret those environments to find personal and social meaning. They will analyze those perspectives through methods developed in such disciplines as anthropology, religious studies, and history.

II. Course readings:

A. Textbook:

Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*. Available at the OSU Barnes and Noble Bookstore and from online vendors.

B. Other readings are available for download on Carmen on the Modules page. These marked with an asterisk (*) in this course schedule

C. Occasionally you will be asked to watch a film or media presentation online. Details will be given in class.

III. Course requirements:

A. **Class attendance is required for this course.** You are allowed **two unexcused absences**. Every additional unexcused absence will lower your grade by half a grade. If you have any questions, please discuss them with me.

B. **Preparation** of assigned readings, recordings, or films is an essential requirement of this course. Most class sessions will include an in-class discussion of a text or a film. You will be required to be familiar with the material so you can participate with informed questions and observations.

- C. Together with this requirement, **participation** in discussion and readings and your **willingness to learn** are essential requirements of this course. Your level of participation in discussions can make a significant difference in your grade.

What does class participation mean?

1. Of course, it means **regular attendance** in class. The textbook and readings will not give you the whole story. Lectures and films will provide essential information. You are also responsible for assignments given in class, such as the written reflection essays. Just reading someone else's notes won't help much—without seeing how the instructor fits the facts into a larger point or how the class arrived at an insight in the course of a discussion, your grade will suffer. Your essays will look like a collection of catch phrases without coherence or logic.
2. It means **preparing readings** each week and having them available during live class sessions. Because we will be discussing the reading material in every class, you are required to have those readings in front of you so we can look at them together.
3. It means **speaking up when you have a question**. Make a habit of writing down questions that occur to you in the course of your reading. If you have prepared the assignment, you don't need to be afraid that your questions might sound "dumb" or that other students came into this course knowing more than you. Sometimes the so-called "dumb" questions are the most insightful. You may email those questions to me or raise them in our class discussions.
4. It means **good citizenship** during class sessions and online discussions. This means **listening** quietly to the person who is talking (instructor or student), **being respectful** of other people's opinions and cultures and not forcing your own on them.

Remember that this class is a course about the academic study of religion as human behavior (and human environment interaction or some such?) and the history of cultures. Remember as well that this class (and OSU in general) includes students from a wide diversity of backgrounds. Our discussions therefore will not be about the validity or moral value of any religion or culture.

5. It means arriving to class **on time, staying for the whole class session** (and **staying awake**—see below on health and food security). It also means **not using any electronic devices** during class sessions (see below).
6. Most important, it means **contributing to group discussions**. In class I will pose questions to discuss about an idea or text, like: What's going on here? Or: Why would somebody do this? Other times, especially at the end of a unit, I will ask a general question about what we've learned, such as: "What do Freud and Artemidorus have in common?" "Why do people consult horoscopes?" There are

many good ways to answer these questions, and I expect you to give me your informed opinion and discuss it with your classmates and me in class.

Failure to comply with these rules could result in a significant difference in your grade or even disenrollment from the course.

- D. **Five short (10-15 minute) quizzes**, in which you will be asked to identify important concepts and persons briefly. Each quiz will be held **at the beginning of class. No allowances will be made for taking it afterward.**
- E. Alternating with those quizzes will be **reflection essays** in which you are to consider the themes and materials we are studying and think through your responses to them. The topics for those essays will be listed under the class sessions when they are due. These essays will be graded with a check (✓) for satisfactory work; a plus (+) for an exceptionally insightful essay, and minus (-) for unsatisfactory work.
- F. There will be a **midterm exam** and a **final exam** in which you are to identify and write about major facts and ideas learned in the course. The midterm exam will be held in class in Week 7. The final exam will be held on the day designated by the registrar for our class. The exact timeframe and details will be announced during the semester.
- G. **One 5-page essay** on a subject to be assigned by the instructor. The essay will give you an opportunity to apply the skills you have learned to a specific case. Further details about the essay will be provided by the fourth week of class. The essay is due at the beginning of first class of the tenth week of the semester.

You are responsible for an assignment whether or not you were present in class when it was announced. If you missed class, you may try to get in touch with me—you can email me or leave a message at the phone number listed above.

IV. Grading

Grading follows standard OSU grade system:

- 93 - 100 (A)
- 90 - 92.9 (A-)
- 87 - 89.9 (B+)
- 83 - 86.9 (B)
- 80 - 82.9 (B-)
- 77 - 79.9 (C+)
- 73 - 76.9 (C)
- 70 - 72.9 (C-)
- 67 - 69.9 (D+)
- 60 - 66.9 (D)
- Below 60 (E)

Distribution of grades:

1. Participation and willingness to learn: 20%
2. Quizzes and reflection essays: 20%
3. 5-page Essay: 20%
4. Midterm and final: 20% each = 40%

V. Policies:

- **Ohio State's academic integrity policy:**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations.

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. When you do use readings and other sources in your work, you must acknowledge your sources with footnotes in your writings, or orally in class. More than this, good academic work involves evaluating the work of others, relating them to other ideas, arguing for or against them, giving your own examples illustrating them, and so on.

Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

- This course is designed so that much of our learning will take place through recorded lectures and media, live class sessions and discussions. Therefore, **your attendance at live class sessions will be critical to your success in the course.** You are responsible for information and assignments given in class, whether you were present or not. Late papers will not be accepted.
- So that we can all engage directly with the texts and class discussions, **all other personal electronic devices** (besides what you are using for our Zoom sessions or reading materials) **must be turned off—not simply put on silence or vibrate.** This includes laptops, cell phones and smart phones, tablet computers, e-book readers, and iPod/MP3 players. Please advise your contacts that you will not be available during class hours.
- Please check your OSU email account regularly or be sure that you have forwarded your OSU email to your personal account. You may receive important announcements about the course and the class schedule through that account. I will not contact you through your private email account (such as Gmail).

- Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor and may include the student's legal name unless changed via the University Name Change policy. **I will gladly honor your request to address you by another name or gender pronoun.** Please advise me of this early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

- **Copyright disclaimer:**

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

- **Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities:**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

- **Accessibility of course technology:**

This course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor. [Carmen \(Canvas\) accessibility](#)

- **Resources for Success and Well-Being**

1. **Talk to me:** My approach to teaching is to facilitate student learning and success. I am not interested in penalizing students who are making a good-faith effort to produce high-quality work. If, due to personal circumstances or academic scheduling issues (e.g., three things due the same day), you anticipate or find yourself struggling with the course policies, please consult me *as soon as possible*. We can make a plan for ensuring you can meet course requirements.
2. **Academic well-being:** There are many resources available at OSU for students who would like academic support, including the Writing Center, Dennis Learning Center, and other services. If you find yourself in circumstances that pose a serious challenge to your ability to keep up academically (e.g. ongoing family crisis, chronic illness, hospitalization, financial crisis, or being a victim of

violence), Student Advocacy is available to help you manage the situation.

- Writing Center: <http://cstw.osu.edu>
 - Dennis Learning Center: <http://dennislearningcenter.osu.edu>
 - Student Advocacy: <http://advocacy.osu.edu>
 - An overview of student academic services and other direct links can be found here: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>
3. **Personal well-being:** OSU also has resources to help with emotional and bodily health. Counseling and Consultation Services (<http://ccs.osu.edu>, 614-292-5766), located in the Younkin Center on Neil Avenue and in Lincoln Tower, provides mental health care, referrals, counseling groups, wellness workshops, and substance abuse resources. They can help with feeling down, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, lack of motivation, interpersonal relationship problems, and substance abuse. CCS has an after-hours crisis line that can be reached at their main number, 614-292-5766 (ext. 2) outside of office hours. During work days, emergency consultations are also available. Outside resources include the **National Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-TALK)** and the **Crisis Text Line**, which can help you talk through any kind of crisis, including self-harm, domestic abuse, depression, sexual assault, family and friend problems, substance abuse, grief, and other situations (**text START to 741-741**). An overview of student well-being services can be found here: <http://ssc.osu.edu>.
 4. **Healthcare** is available for all students at the Wilce Student Health Center on campus and accepts many insurance plans; it is mostly free for those on OSU student health insurance. If you are ill, they can give you an absence excuse as well as treatment. Same-day weekday appointments are available. After hours and on weekends, there are OSU urgent care facilities near campus that accept insurance; see <https://shs.osu.edu/emergencies/after-hours-care/>.
 5. **Food security:** Increasing numbers of students are finding themselves without adequate food. The Buckeye Food Alliance (<https://www.buckeyefoodalliance.org>, 614-285-4067) runs a free food pantry for OSU students in Lincoln Tower, Suite 150, that is open four days a week.
 6. **Sexual assault** crisis services are available to people of all genders and orientations through the local SARNCO hotline (614-267-7020) and area hospitals. Ongoing support is available through Counseling and Consultation and Wilce Student Health. OSU Hospital, CCS, and SARNCO are confidential. You can also find support and ways to report sexual assault or harassment through the University's Title IX office (<http://titleix.osu.edu>), which does not guarantee confidentiality. Be aware that many other OSU academic and coaching staff are mandatory reporters (required to convey reports of assault to the University) and also cannot guarantee confidentiality. (To be clear, I absolutely will help you get assistance, but you have a right to be aware of OSU's reporting policies.) Choose the support system that is right for you. Being a

victim/survivor of sexual assault is never your fault, and you have the right to compassionate help.

Please reach out if you want to talk and need help finding assistance.

VI. Class Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. You will of course be notified in advance. In this schedule, individual class sessions are represented by Arabic numerals (1, 2, etc.). Main sections of the course are designated with letters (A, B, etc.). Updates to the syllabus will also be posted on Carmen. As discussion of the class material is an important element in this course, you should write down any questions about words, facts, or issues that arise in your reading and raise them in class.

A. Introduction

In this unit we will begin our orientation to the academic study of religion and culture. This orientation will set the tone for our exploration of how diverse peoples respond to their environment and their inner lives by formulating world views and cosmologies

WEEK 1

1. Do witches fly?
 - In-class readings
2. The Reality of the Unseen
 - James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, chapter 3
 - REFLECTION ESSAY: What do you have that you would like to explore in this course?

B. Divination

Divination is the traditional practice of predicting the future and looking into secrets that would ordinarily be hidden from mundane sight. Divinatory traditions usually rest on the assumption that the natural world, or the cosmos, or supernatural forces embed meaning in our world or our minds that can be decoded, often by a trained practitioner. This unit is an introduction to the study of that practice.

WEEK 2

1. Why Divination?
 - Johnston, chapter 1
2. The Healing Event
 - *Richard Gordon, “The Healing Event in Graeco-Roman Medicine.”

WEEK 3

3. Generating Irrationality
 - *Swartz, *The Signifying Creator*, chapter 4
 - QUIZ #1: The Study of Religion
4. The Science of Prediction
 - *Paul Halpern, *The Pursuit of Destiny* chapter 1

- *Pascal Boyer, “Why Divination? Evolved Psychology and Strategic Interaction in the Production of Truth”

C. Inductive Divination: Reading the World

Ancient and modern peoples have believed that the natural and supernatural world contain secrets that hold the key to people’s destinies. In many societies, this belief is manifest in institutions and social circles organized around unlocking these secrets for the benefit of individuals and social organizations. In this unit we will study these practices in the context of the history of Western and non-Western cultures.

WEEK 4

5. Oracles in Ancient Greece
 - Johnston, chapter 2
6. Oracles in West Africa
 - *William Bascom, *Ifa Divination*, 3-39.
 - Film: “Ifa divination among the Yoruba”
 - REFLECTION ESSAY: What, in your opinion, motivates people to consult supernatural sources of knowledge?

H. Astrology

Astrology, the practice of predicting the future by observing the movements of the stars, is probably the best-known form of divination, and certainly one of the oldest. In this unit we will survey the ancient roots and historical development of astrology.

WEEK 5

1. Messages from the Stars: Astrology in the Ancient Near East
 - *Francesca Rothenberg, “Heaven and Earth: Divine-Human Relations in Mesopotamian Celestial Divination”
2. “What’s Your Sign?”: Astrology in Popular Culture
 - Contemporary astrological websites. Details to follow.
 - QUIZ #2: Oracles and Astrology

WEEK 6

1. The Biblical Necromancer
 - Hebrew Bible: 1 Samuel 28, Deuteronomy 18
2. The Learned Necromancer
 - Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, chapter 7
 - REFLECTION ESSAY: What does necromancy say about our conceptions of life and death?

F. Who is the Diviner?

In many societies, a diviner is a professional or semi-professional who may be called upon or hired to give advice to individuals or hegemonic classes. Such people are valued for their abilities in interpreting the subtle clues that, according to their cultures, are embedded in the natural world and in everyday occurrences. In those times and places,

the skill, training, and personality of the diviner qualifies confers a special status—sometimes honored and sometimes marginalized.

WEEK 7

1. Becoming a diviner
 - Henry Callaway, “The Initiation of a Zulu Diviner”
2. The Mantis
 - Johnston, Chapter 4
 - REFLECTION ESSAY: Where do divination practitioners derive their authority?

G. Dreams

Most cultures, from the Bible to Freud, have believed that dreams carry special meaning—either about the future or about a person’s soul or psyche. This belief has ancient roots and still influences daily life in the modern world. In dreams, the outside world—the people, objects, and sensory stimuli that surround us—penetrate into our inner, subconscious life and we feel compelled to assign them meaning. Systems of dream interpretation claim to make sense of that inner world.

WEEK 8

1. What is a Dream?
 - Film: “The Science of Sleep”
2. Dreamtime in Australia
 - *W. E. H. Stanner, “The Dreaming”

WEEK 9

3. The Dreams of Artemidorus
 - Artemidorus, *Interpretation of Dreams* (excerpts)
4. Dreams of Interpretation
 - Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (excerpts)
 - REFLECTION ESSAY: How do people use dreams in daily life?

H. Prophecy

Prophets claim that their teachings and messages come directly from supernatural inspiration. Prophecy is central to many religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. At the same time, historians and social scientists argue that prophets respond to their social and cultural environment, often crafting their messages to a specific audience. In this unit we will examine the role prophecy plays in classical and modern contexts, from the Bible to Star Trek.

WEEK 10

1. What is Prophecy?
 - Thomas W. Overholt, *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 1-19
 - QUIZ #3: Dreams

ESSAY DUE

2. Prophecy in Ancient Israel
 - Hebrew Bible: Exodus 1-4; 2 Samuel 11-12; Jeremiah 18-20.

WEEK 11

1. Prophecy as Cultural Critique?
 - Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (selections)
2. Gifts of the Spirit
 - New Testament: Acts ch. 2, 1 Corinthians 12-14
 - Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain* (excerpt)
 - Film: *Holy Ghost People*
 - REFLECTION ESSAY: In your opinion, does prophecy have a social function besides predicting the future?

WEEK 12

3. The Seal of the Prophets
 - Michael Sells, *Approaching the Quran* (selections)
4. From Prophet to Text
 - Geo Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*
 - QUIZ #4: Prophecy

WEEK 13

5. Prophecy in Space
 - Video: Episodes of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*
6. Waiting for the End of the World
 - Leon Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails* (excerpt)
 - REFLECTION ESSAY: How has technology changed the way we look at the look at the world beyond our earth?

I. Possession

WEEK 14

Spirit possession is a phenomenon that occurs around the world—from the Delphic Oracle to Afro-Caribbean dance rituals to American Pentecostal churches. Spirit possession is when a person or community believes that someone’s body and consciousness has been taken over an unseen being—perhaps a god, a demon, or the spirit of a dead person. In many cultures, people cultivate spirit possession as a way of contacting their god or supernatural forces directly. Often that entity must be exorcised from the person possessed, but sometimes that entity has a message for people around them. One way or another, spirit possession has serious ramifications for the social world of the communities that believe in it or practice it.

1. Rituals of Possession
 - Film: *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*
2. The Possessed Women of Tzfat
 - Jeffrey Chajes, “Jewish Exorcism: Early Modern Traditions and Transformations”

- Erika Bourguignon, “Suffering and Healing, Subordination and Power: Women and Possession Trance, *Ethos* 32 (2004), pp. 557-574.

J. Conclusion

WEEK 15

What do the phenomena we have studied say about the way people related to their social, physical, and conceptual environments? What can we learn about human nature and our relationship to our world by these examples?

3. Conclusions: Messages for Us?
 - Review and discussion

EXAM WEEK

Final Exam

GE THEME COURSES

Overview

Courses that are accepted into the General Education (GE) Themes must meet two sets of Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs): those common for all GE Themes and one set specific to the content of the Theme. This form begins with the criteria common to all themes and has expandable sections relating to each specific theme.

A course may be accepted into more than one Theme if the ELOs for each theme are met. Courses seeing approval for multiple Themes will complete a submission document for each theme. Courses seeking approval as a 4-credit, Integrative Practices course need to complete a similar submission form for the chosen practice. It may be helpful to consult your Director of Undergraduate Studies or appropriate support staff person as you develop and submit your course.

Please enter text in the boxes to describe how your class will meet the ELOs of the Theme to which it applies. Please use language that is clear and concise and that colleagues outside of your discipline will be able to follow. You are encouraged to refer specifically to the syllabus submitted for the course, since the reviewers will also have that document. Because this document will be used in the course review and approval process, you should be *as specific as possible*, listing concrete activities, specific theories, names of scholars, titles of textbooks etc.

Accessibility

If you have a disability and have trouble accessing this document or need to receive it in another format, please reach out to Meg Daly at daly.66@osu.edu or call 614-247-8412.

Course subject & number

NELC/RELSTD 3667

General Expectations of All Themes

GOAL 1: Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations.

Please briefly identify the ways in which this course represents an advanced study of the focal theme. In this context, “advanced” refers to courses that are e.g., synthetic, rely on research or cutting-edge findings, or deeply engage with the subject matter, among other possibilities. (50-500 words)

“Messages from Beyond: Divination, Prophecy, and the Occult in Religion and Culture” is an investigation into ways that people’s ways of life are influenced by their beliefs about natural and supernatural environments, how they seek to communicate with the world around them and, according to their world-views, realities beyond observable existence. This course avoids endorsing any particular beliefs about the supernatural or natural worlds. Rather, it is a course in the study of human behavior. Students will explore how people act on the idea that the unseen world can communicate with humans; how those practices way of life, and relationship to the natural world; and what they tell us about our attitudes to materiality, language, and the subconscious.

This course is based on the latest research on ancient and indigenous divination practices; recent developments in the study of mysticism; and contemporary research on the occult and nontraditional religious expressions in modern culture. Students will read key theoretical studies of divination, prophecy, and the occult in coordination with a wide variety of case studies drawn from Classics, Near Eastern cultures, contemporary indigenous and popular practices, and the history of religions.

ELO 1.1 Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met. (50-700 words)

Each unit of the course will include substantial discussions of the general topics of the unit combined with a close look at primary sources. For example, the unit on prophecy begins with the introduction to Thomas Overholt's *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective* and continues with sources from the Hebrew Bible and contemporary Pentecostal Christianity. One of our first readings will be an influential article by Richard Gordon, in which he established a new paradigm for the study of ritual expertise in the ancient Mediterranean for which what he calls the "healing event" in ritual encounters between practitioners and clients. This paradigm will set the tone for further explorations into the social dynamics of the phenomena we study.

Throughout the course students will engage in class discussion focusing on comparing cases and evaluating the relevance of the theoretical readings for the case studies in the units. The students will also have opportunities to think through the conceptual implications of their material through reflection essays, assigned about every other week, the midterm essay, and in essay questions in the midterm exam and final.

ELO 1.2 Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of the theme. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met. (50-700 words)

The readings for the class will be drawn from pre-modern and modern primary sources in translation. Other readings will be from sophisticated, scholarly books and articles by historians of religion, anthropologists, philologists, and scientists: for example, Bascom's *Ifa Divination* is a classic anthropological treatment of Yoruba ritual and cosmology; Sarah Iles Johnston's *Greek Divination* is the most comprehensive and up-to-date account of ancient mantic and divinatory practices. In addition, students will get to see these phenomena in practice through visual media, including ethnographic films and critical looks at Internet sites.

GOAL 2: Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.

ELO 2.1 Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met. (50-700 words)

The course will apply a wide variety of disciplines and methodologies, from the early psychology of William James and Sigmund Freud, to twentieth- and twenty-first-century anthropology, to classics in religious studies. Class lectures and reflection essays will be explicit about the history of those approaches and how they compare or challenge each other. In addition, students will learn to read and view primary sources with a critical eye through in-class reading, viewing, and discussion. For example, in our unit on dreaming, students will compare Artemidorus's ancient methods of dream interpretation with Freudian dream interpretation, interrogating both as forms of hermeneutics as well as analyzing the influence of the mythology and science of their times.

ELO 2.2 Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met.

(50-700 words)

This course stresses that examples of belief in communication with the non-mundane do not only occur in ancient or far-away civilizations, but are with us today. This idea will be reinforced by examining contemporary examples of astrology, charismatic worship, and visionary art. In addition, students will have the opportunity to think about sources of information and authority in their daily lives—especially by comparing traditional practices and practitioners with educators and experts, secular and religious authorities, and media sources that predominate in their own lives. This goal will be accomplished through all of the assignments in several ways: The quizzes will test the students' grasp of the details and main concepts of the units. The reflection essays will prompt the students to think through key questions in the course material and at the same time air their own personal responses to the material. The 5-page essay will be a provide them with an opportunity to apply their learning to a specific case study.

Specific Expectations of Courses in Lived Environments

GOAL 1: Successful students will explore a range of perspectives on the interactions and impacts between humans and one or more types of environment (e.g. agricultural, built, cultural, economic, intellectual, natural) in which humans live.

ELO 1.1 Engage with the complexity and uncertainty of human-environment interactions. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met. (50-700 words)

This course frames beliefs and practices in divination, prophecy, and the semiotics of the natural world as responses to “the complexity and uncertainty of human-environment interactions.” Readings, lectures, and discussions will show how diverse human cultures act on the assumption that the environment in which we live as perceived by the senses must be decoded or transcended to reveal hidden truths. At the same time, each of these processes require the agency and intervention of material bodies and things. For example, the reading from *The Signifying Creator* argues that forms of randomization, from ancient divination to indeterminacy in modern art and music, which are critical aspects of human-environment interactions, must rely on complex strategies of manipulation of objects and behavior. The unit on astrology shows that disciplines like astronomy that we now associate with scientific perception of the natural world have their roots in the conviction that the skies are alive and conscious. The entities that the astrologer observes—the stars, the planets, and the moon—are thus said to be interested in the fate of human beings and thus to affect their destiny directly, thus bearing on ideas of how humans and the environment interact.

ELO 1.2 Describe examples of human interaction with and impact on environmental change and transformation over time and across space. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met. (50-700 words)

This course covers a wide range of times and cultures, from the beginnings of recorded history in Mesopotamia to contemporary media, including *Star Trek* and the Internet. This range is built into the course for several reasons: One is to challenge students' understanding of differences between their approaches to transformation in world around them and those of other cultures; another is to prompt a conversation about how the physical world presents itself to human perception beyond mundane observation. For example, in the unit on dreams students will compare *The Science of Sleep*, Michel Gondry's fanciful cinematic meditation on the world of dreams with a classic ethnographic account of the indigenous Australian concept of dreamtime; then they will compare Artemidorus's ancient methods of dream interpretation with Freud's classic *Interpretation of*

Dreams. The reflection essays for each unit allow them to compare these disparate cases and see how approaches to human perception has changed over time, given historical changes in culture, science, and our physical environment.

GOAL 2: Successful students will analyze a variety of perceptions, representations and/or discourses about environments and humans within them.

ELO 2.1 Analyze how humans' interactions with their environments shape or have shaped attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met. (50-700 words)

One of the chief goals of this course is to examine how religion, traditional practices, and popular culture forge relationships with individuals beyond official institutional frameworks. Many of the examples studied in this course deal with the beliefs and careers of individual practitioners who claim to affect or improve people's lives through communication with unseen sources of inspiration and knowledge. This will give students the opportunity to think how authority and knowledge are mediated in their own worlds. It should also prompt them to think about cultural difference and worldview and how they affect individual action and relationships. For example, Richard Gordon's essay on the "healing event" frames ritual encounters in ancient society as a mediation between a patient and a ritual expert in ways that foreground the expert's performance of expertise and presumed relationship with the supernatural as essential contributors to the client's life. The unit on spirit possession explores both the psychological and social effects and origins of possession phenomena, especially on women in patriarchal societies.

ELO 2.2 Describe how humans perceive and represent the environments with which they interact. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met. (50-700 words)

This subject—representations and perceptions of environments—is the major theme of Messages from Beyond. In each unit, we will examine not only the world-view in each of our case studies, but how primary and secondary sources express and report those world-views. The class on prophecy examines the distinct ways narrative and prophetic utterances seek to portray relationships between messengers and divine sources, from the myth of Moses' theophany at Sinai to the poetry of Jeremiah and the Quran. This unit also explores how religious communities construct myths of sacred texts as mediators between the divine and human. The class will also analyze rituals in which signs embedded in material objects, celestial phenomena, and the activities of animals and humans are interpreted for personal and social goals.

ELO 2.3 Analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence discourses around environments. Please link this ELO to the course goals and topics and indicate *specific* activities/assignments through which it will be met. (50-700 words)

By exploring how diverse cultures and religions mediate their need for knowledge with their daily public and private lives, students will be able to examine their own assumptions about how their own lives are affected by their worldviews, sources of authority, and personal histories. Since the emphasis on the course is on human behavior, students can draw these connections without focusing on ontological questions about the truth or falsehood of those beliefs. The reflection essays and class discussions will be the most important way for them to pursue these questions. For example, in the unit on dreams, students will draw on their readings of both pre-modern and psychoanalytic methods of dream interpretations to think about what criteria, if any, they and their contemporaries use to think about the unconscious. The reflection essay for the unit on necromancy should prompt them to consider what beliefs and practices of death and dying say

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about how people perceive the nature of life.

Hebrew and Jewish Studies (HJS) Major Sheet - Language Track

Prerequisites (12)	
Regular Track	Credits
Hebrew 1101.01 Elementary Hebrew I	(4)
Hebrew 1102.01 Elementary Hebrew II	(4)
Hebrew 1103.01 Intermediate Hebrew I	(4)

HJS Language Track Requirements

The HJS major language track consists of a minimum of 31 credit hours, but may include as many as 32 hours depending on course selection. A minimum of C- in any course counting toward the major is required. Half of the total hours in the minor must be acquired through instruction at OSU.

Major Language (4 credits total)	
Hebrew 2105 <i>Intermediate Hebrew II</i>	(4)

Major Literature & Culture (pick one course, 3 credits)			
Hebrew 2241/JEWSHST 2242 Culture of Contemporary Israel	(3)	Hebrew 2216/JEWSHST 2516 Medieval Jewish Experience	(3)
Hebrew/JEWSHST 2700 <i>Hebrew Bible in Translation</i>	(3)	Yiddish/JEWSHST 2241 Yiddish Culture	(3)
Jewish Studies 2201 Intro to Jewish Culture, Thought, Practice	(3)		

Major History (pick 1 course 3 credits)			
History 2450 Ancient and Medieval Jewish History	(3)	History 2452 Modern Jewish History	(3)
History 2451 Medieval and Early Modern Jewish History	(3)	History 2453 History of Zionism and Modern Israel	(3)

Language Track required course (pick one 3-4 credits)			
Hebrew 4101 <i>Advanced Hebrew</i>	(4)	Hebrew 5100 Introduction to Biblical Hebrew	(3)
Hebrew 4102 Hebrew and the Media	(3)	Hebrew 5601 Introduction to Hebrew Literary and Cultural Texts	(3)

Major Electives (pick 6 courses 18 credits; one course may be from any Arabic, NELC, Persian or Turkish course 3000-level or above or an approved elective outside of NELC)			
JEWSHST 3220 Jewish Travelers, Jewish Lives	(3)	Hebrew 5101 Biblical Hebrew Grammar	(3)
Hebrew/JS 3245 Israeli Film and Society	(3)	Hebrew 5105 History of the Hebrew Language	(3)

Hebrew/JEWSHST 3703 Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible	(3)	Hebrew 5601 Introduction to Hebrew Literary and Cultural Texts	(3)
Hebrew/JEWSHST 3704 Women in the Bible and Beyond	(3)	Hebrew 5602 The Bible as Literature: Selected Readings	(3)
Hebrew/JEWSHST 3708 Wisdom Literature in the Hebrew Bible	(3)	Hebrew 5603 Readings in Rabbinic Literature	(3)
Hebrew 3705 Israeli Society and the Holocaust	(3)	Hebrew 5691 Topics in Hebrew Literature and Culture	(3)
Hebrew 4101 <i>Advanced Hebrew</i>	(3)	Hebrew 5802 The Problem of Evil in Biblical and Post-Biblical Literatures	(3)
Hebrew 4102 Hebrew and the Media	(3)	Hebrew 5806 Studies in Biblical Law	(3)
Hebrew 4601 Modern Hebrew Short Story	(3)	NELC 4601 Israeli and Palestinian Literature	(3)
Hebrew 4602 Modern Hebrew Poetry	(3)	NELC 5120 Biblical Aramaic	(3)
Hebrew 5100 Introduction to Biblical Hebrew	(3)	NELC 5121 Jewish Aramaic	(3)
NELC 3667 Messages from Beyond	(3)		

Approved electives outside of NELC			
History 3353 Jewish Communities Under Islamic Rule	(3)	Religious Studies 2102.02 Comparative Sacred Texts	(3)
History 3450 History of Ancient Israel	(3)	Religious Studies 2370 Introduction to Religious Studies	(3)
History 3455 Jewish Life from the Early Renaissance to the Early Enlightenment	(3)	Religious Studies 3972 Theory and Method in the Study of Religion	(3)
Political Science 4327 Politics in the Middle East	(3)		