TRADITIONAL MEDICINE, SHAMANISM AND FOLK ILLNESS
IN LATIN AMERICA
M264 Latin American Studies/Community Health Sciences/Anthropology
Wednesdays, 10:00am-12:50pm, CHS 41-235
Spring 2010

Dr. Bonnie Taub
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This course examines the role of traditional medicine and shamanism in Latin America. We will explore how indigenous and mestizo groups throughout the region diagnose and treat folk illness and Western defined diseases with a variety of methods. Culturally defined illnesses such as soul loss, aire, nervios and evil eye will be explored. Several case examples of shamanistic traditions and healing practices of midwives, bonesetters, healers of witchcraft, soul loss and other medicine men/women will be explored through lecture, readings, film. We will examine the use of art, music and ritual as well as psychotropic plants as part of the very heart of many Latin American cultural traditions.

READINGS

Weekly reading assignments will be required (see later). The course reader will be available for purchase from Westwood Copies on Gayley Avenue in Westwood village. Books will be available for purchase at the Health Sciences Bookstore.

Books:

Meyerhoff, B. Peyote Hunt, Cornell University Press, 1976


Wilbert, Johannes. Tobacco & Shamanism in South America, Harvard Press, 1993


Recommended:
ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. **Class participation and weekly attendance (10%)**
   Readings Discussion Leader- students to prepare discussion questions and a 1 to 2 page summary about books and lead a discussion with others, during one of the following sessions:
   - Week 4: Peyote Hunt
   - Week 5: Way of the Shaman
   - Week 7: Tobacco & Shamanism

2. **Animal Guide Paper**- write a two page paper describing, from an animal’s point of view, how as a shaman you might transform into that animal, move and sound like it, and the meaning associated with it. Choose an animal that you feel a kinship with. Be prepared to discuss paper and attach a photo or drawing of your animal and turn in to class. Due **Week 5** (10%)

3. **Summary Discussion** (5 pages long, double spaced) of an Interview you Conduct with a traditional or alternative health practitioner in Los Angeles, of Latin American or other origin (ie: curandero, bonesetter, herbalist, masseuse, priestess, shaman, oriental medicine doctor, etc.) Attach notes/ & topic guide. Due **Week 7** in class (20%)

4. **Final Paper** on a topic of your choice related to traditional medicine, folk illness and shamanism in Latin America. Paper to be 12-14 pages long, double-spaced. Paper due finals week, no later than Wednesday, June 9 by noon to Taub mailbox and A level, CHS (50%). Your interview and paper topic may coincide. A **one paragraph description** of your paper topic with list of two references is due **Week 5**, April 28.

5. **Oral Presentation** to the class about your final paper topic, lasting 10 minutes, including a **one page handout** summary. Student presentations to be given during class, weeks 9 and 10 (10%).
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<td>March 31</td>
<td>Introduction to the study of Traditional Medicine, Folk Illness and Shamanism in the Americas</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Shamanic Traditions &lt;br&gt; <em>Eduardo the Healer</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>Huichol Sacred Pilgrimage to Wirikuta</em>&lt;br&gt; Powell Media Lab</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Traditional Healers, Folk Illness and Indigenous Health</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>Hallucinogenic Plants &amp; Shamanism in Mexico:&lt;br&gt; Mushrooms/ Mazatec &amp; Peyote/Huichol;&lt;br&gt; <em>Peyote Hunt Discussion</em></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>Trance and Altered States of Consciousness;&lt;br&gt; Shamanism and Nahuales&lt;br&gt; <em>Way of the Shaman Discussion</em>&lt;br&gt; Animal Guides Paper Due</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Afro-Brazilian and Caribbean Spiritism&lt;br&gt; <em>Healing States</em></td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>Shamanism in South America;&lt;br&gt; Warao &amp; Yanomamo; RainForest, <em>Magical Death</em>,&lt;br&gt; <em>Tobacco and Shamanism Discussion</em>&lt;br&gt; Interview Paper Due</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>Healing Artifacts-Class will meet at&lt;br&gt; UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History</td>
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<td>May 26</td>
<td>Andes, Film: <em>The Spirit Possession of Alejandro Mamami</em>&lt;br&gt; Course Summary; Student Presentations</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>June 2</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
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REQUIRED READINGS

Week 1 Introduction
Eliade, Mircea, Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy
Chapters 1,2

Week 2 Shamanic traditions
BOOK – Meyerhoff, B. Peyote Hunt (first half)

Week 3 Traditional Healers/Folk Illness


Week 4-Hallucinogenic Plants/Discussion
Meyerhoff, B. Peyote Hunt- finish


Recommended: Schultes, Plants of the Gods, (Peyote/Mushrooms sections).

Week 5 Trance and Altered States
Eliade, Mircea, Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, Chapters 3, 4, 9
Week 6  Spiritism/Candomble

Furst, P. Hallucinogens and Culture, Chandler and Sharp Publishers, Tenth Printing, 2000
Introduction, pp. 1-18; Chapter 10: The Diabolic Root.

Chapter from Voeks, Robert, Candomble Medicine in Sacred Leaves of Candomble: African Magic, Medicine, and Religion in Brazil, U of Texas Press, 1997


Week 7 South America-Shamanism

Wilbert, Johannes. Tobacco & Shamanism in South America, Harvard Press, 1993


Furst chapter
Plants of the Gods: on ayahuasca, datura, etc.

Week 8- Healing Artifacts/Fowler Museum

Pollack, Donald, “Health Care Among the Culina, Western Amazonia, Cultural Survival Qly (12) 1.

Califano, Maria & Fernandez Distel, Alicia, “The Use of a Hallucinogenic Plant among the Mashco (South western Amazonia, Peru)”, Zeitschrift fur ethnologie 107 (1) 129-143.

Week 9 and 10 Student Presentations