University of Gdańsk

Subject card

Subject name and code	Mysticism and Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, PG_00200633		
Field of study	Religious Studies		
Date of commencement of studies	October 2026	Academic year of realisation of subject	2026/2027
Education level	Bachelor's studies	Subject group	Obligatory subject group in the field of study Subject group related to scientific research in the field of study
Mode of study	full-time studies	Mode of delivery	at the university
Year of study	1	Language of instruction	Polish
Semester of study	1	ECTS credits	2.0
Learning profile	academic	Assessment form	credit
Conducting unit	Division of Religious Studies -> Institute of Anthropology -> Faculty of History -> Rector		
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor	dr Andrzej Migda	
	Teachers	dr Andrzej Migda	

Lesson types	Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
	Number of study hours	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30
	E-learning hours included: 0.0						

Learning activity and number of study hours	Learning activity	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan	Participation in consultation hours	Self-study	SUM
	Number of study hours	30	2.0	18.0	50

Subject objectives	In this course, students will be introduced to the fascinating world of religious phenomena, focusing on archaic methods of achieving altered states of consciousness. The programme includes a detailed description of shamanism, including its history, definition and phenomenology of rituals, as well as the symbolism of dress, initiation processes and shamanic equipment. Participants in the class will gain an understanding of the social roles, functions and responsibilities of shamans, as well as their importance as a cultural, religious and social element in various traditions. Both traditional and contemporary shamanic practices will be discussed, as well as the structure of the mystical experience and its distinctive features, ranging from the Greek mysteries to modern aspects of mystical religiosity, especially in the context of the dynamic development of the pentecostal movement, which currently plays a key role in Christianity worldwide.

Learning outcomes

Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
[RELL3_W07] Knows and understands research methods and tools of the religious studies research framework, including methods of analysing and interpreting various cultural products.	Knows the typology of ritual experiences associated with states of altered consciousness and can describe the development of such phenomena over the centuries in different cultures around the world.	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written
[RELL3_W02] Has structured general knowledge covering terminology, theoretical issues and methodology in the field of the study of culture and religion.	Has a structured, advanced general knowledge, including terminology, theoretical issues and methodology in the field of archaic techniques of ecstasy and mysticism. Knows the typology of ritual experiences associated with states of altered consciousness, and can describe the development of such phenomena over the centuries in different cultures around the world.	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[RELL3_W01] Has structured knowledge of the place and significance of the humanities within the system of sciences, including their terminology and subject-specific and methodological characteristics.	The student knows the extent of his/her knowledge and skills, understands the need for continuous learning and professional development. He/she is open to new ideas and is ready to reformulate his/her position. Correctly identifies and resolves dilemmas related to the profession of religious studies. Participates in cultural life using a variety of media and its various forms.	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written
[RELL3_U06] Is able to construct well-founded arguments with reference to the views of other authors and formulate conclusions.	The student independently acquires and consolidates knowledge in a structured and systematic manner using modern techniques to obtain, classify and analyse information, following the guidance of the supervisor. Applies basic research skills in Religious Studies using the recommendations and guidance of the supervisor.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work
[RELL3_U05] Is able to prepare written work in Polish and a selected foreign language, correctly using specialist terminology and academic apparatus.	Be able to prepare written work on the religious experiences in question, correctly applying professional terminology and scientific apparatus.	[SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[RELL3_U01] Is able to appropriately select sources and apply research methods appropriate to the religious studies research framework.	Has a structured, advanced general knowledge, including terminology, theoretical issues and methodology in the field of archaic ecstasy techniques and mysticism.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work
[RELL3_K01] Critically evaluates their knowledge, demonstrates readiness for its systematic development and seeks expert opinions in situations involving difficulties in independently solving problems.	He/she has the ability to argue substantively using the views of other authors and to formulate conclusions. The student independently acquires and consolidates knowledge in an orderly and systematic manner using modern techniques to obtain, classify and analyse information, following the guidance of the academic supervisor. Applies basic research skills in Religious Studies using the recommendations and guidance of the supervisor. Is able to use basic theoretical approaches, research paradigms.	[SK2] presentation/project/paper/ report [SK8] observation of student's independent or team work

Subject contents

This course offers an in-depth study of a variety of ecstasy techniques, covering trances that are integral to traditional cultures and hunter-gatherer communities. We will examine shamanic phenomenology and rituals, as well as mystical aspects of religious experience in the context of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. We will engage in a detailed description of particular religious phenomena, focusing on their historical contexts and civilisational significance in different cultures around the world. In the study of mysticism, we will also address questions concerning the emergence of human consciousness and its neurobiological underpinnings, providing a deeper understanding of spiritual phenomena and their impact on civilisational development.

<table>
<tr><td>Prerequisites and co-requisites</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Assessment methods and criteria</td><td>
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<tr><th>Subject passing criteria</th><th>Passing threshold</th><th>Percentage of the final grade</th></tr>
<tr><td>oral colloquium</td><td>55.0%</td><td>55.0%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Participation in discussion, ability to analyse source texts, knowledge of readings, compulsory attendance.</td><td>55.0%</td><td>45.0%</td></tr>
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<tr><td rowspan="3">Recommended reading</td><td>Basic literature</td><td>All literature helpful for the course has been edited in Polish.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Supplementary literature</td><td>All literature helpful for the course has been edited in Polish.</td></tr>
<tr><td>eResources addresses</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed</td><td colspan="2">
• A comparative analysis of ecstatic techniques in Siberian shamanism, Sufism and Christian mysticism.
• Rites of passage and mystical experience: shamanic initiations, Zen meditation, Sufi practices.
• Research on the neural correlates of mystical states: EEG, fMRI and experiments with psychoactive substances.
• Controversy over the concept of the religious brain: does ecstasy have a biological basis?
• Mythology and ecstatic practices: the role of myths in legitimising rituals (e.g. the myth of Orpheus in Greek mysteries).
• Religious syncretism: the combination of shamanism and Christianity.
• Modern adaptations of archaic techniques (e.g. use of drums in trance therapy).
• Mystical visions as inspiration for art: from Byzantine icons to contemporary multimedia installations.
• Mystical experiences of oneness with nature in deep ecology philosophy and New Age movements.
• Shamanism as a tool for nature conservation: indigenous rituals and contemporary environmental activism.
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<tr><td>Work placement</td><td colspan="2">Not applicable</td></tr>
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