

Anthropology 522
Sacrifice, Violence, Immortality

Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University
Instructor: Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi
Class time: Tuesday, 3:55-6:55 o'clock.
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Location of course: RAB 305

Credits: 3

Semester: Fall 2010

Pre-requisites: 101

This course explores the significance of ritual and religion in modern society. It focuses particularly on sacrifice as a variation on the theme of death in ritual, belief, and modern formations such as the nation. In diverse forms such as ritual exchange, witchcraft, spirit possession, renunciation, religious and national identification, sacrifice is either a rhetorical device, or, a deep structure of human symbolic action. Sacrifice is minimally defined as the constitution of a loss in order to constitute the sacred of a community. What is the value of sacrifice as an analytical concept? How to think the sacred? What is society? The course will engage classic formative texts in anthropological theory of ritual and investigate ethnographic examples in the contemporary world—including anti-Jewish pogroms in Poland, witchcraft, possession, carnival, and violence in diverse forms -- where frequently a sacrificial logic comes into play. The emphasis in this course is not providing stale definitions but to propose avenues for creative and original analysis. In providing an introduction into ritual technologies, students will also learn to identify and critically appraise their deployment as rhetoric, metaphor, or logic in religious and quasi-religious contexts.

Books for Purchase

Agamben Giorgio. 1995. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press.

Bloch, Maurice. 1992. *Prey into Hunter: The politics of Religious Experience*. Cambridge University Press

Favret-Saada, Jeanne. 1980 *Deadly Words. Witchcraft in the Bocage*. Cambridge University Press.

Gross, Jan. 2001 *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton University Press.

Hammoudi, Abdellah. 1993. *The Victim and Its Masks. An Essay on Sacrifice and Masquerade in the Maghreb*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hubert, Henri and Marcel Mauss. 1964 *Sacrifice. It's Nature and Function*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Movies

Jean Rouch, *LES MAITRES FOUS*

Pier Paolo Pasolini, *MEDEA*, selections

Gilbert Herdt *THE GUARDIANS OF THE FLUTES*

Lene Riefenstahl *TRIUMPH DES WILLENS*, selections

If time and discussion allow: Micheal Haneke, *CACHÉ*; Robert Duvall, *THE APOSTLE*, Nouri Bouzid, *THE MAKING OF*; all selections.

Reading load: Approximately 150-200 pages/week

Course objectives:

To provide students with an introduction to theories of sacrifice, which pay particular attention to symbolic form, by focusing on symbolic technologies such as surrogacy, abnegation, substitution, consecration, incorporation, externalization, mimesis, and identification cross-culturally. The students will learn to identify and apply, as well as critically appraise, sacrificial procedures in ritual and religious practices, rhetoric and/or metaphor, concrete violent acts, or in deep structure, including contexts which lie outside the usual sphere of religion and ritual proper such as the juridico-political order, nationalism, democratic form, gender and sexuality, war, genocide, and ethnic conflict. The seminar will also introduce advanced students to case studies, which deal with mass violence and xenophobia, and thus enable comparison in relation to the theoretical texts addressed.

To help students gain proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills in their assessment of analytical texts on violence, ritual and religion, anthropological and ethnographic writing, psychoanalysis, history, political science, reports, media, and documentary film.

To provide students with the training of reading and presentation skills, the use of central concepts and approaches to society and culture, and a comparative approach to cultural and social difference in the context of violence.

Readings:

Readings will be on reserve at the Reserve Desk in Mabel Smith Douglas Library (8 Chapel Drive, Douglas Campus) and/or on electronic reserve on Sakai.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

Take Home Mid Term Exam (30%), max. 5-7 pages. Final paper (40%), max. 10-12 pages, which will be due on the last day of classes. Class Participation and Précis (30%). Attendance in *each* class is required. Students have to complete all the readings and participate actively in class discussion. Students have to hand in a précis (max. 2 pages) six times during the semester summarizing or/or commenting and synthesizing all the readings (preferably *without* the use of secondary literature). The précis should be available to the instructor at least eight hours before class (which means: Monday evening or Tuesday morning the latest). See instructions for the proper preparation of a précis on Sakai.

Week 1. Theoretical approaches to sacrifice and violence (Tues. 7th Sept)

Frazer, J.G. 1960. *The Golden Bough*, abridged edition, Vol I, London: Macmillan and Co., pp. ix-xi, contents, Chapter XXIV, *The Killing of the Divine King*, pp 348-373, Chapter XXV, *Temporary Kings*, pp.373-381, and Chapter XXVI, *Sacrifice of the King's Son*, 381-386.
Smith, William Robertson. 1889 *Religion of the Semites*, London: Adam and Charles Black, Lecture VII, pp. 244-268 and Lecture VIII, pp.268-311, and from Lecture IX, pp. 312-324.

Recommended

Mizruchi, Susan L. 1998 *Sacrificial Arts and Sciences*. In *The Science of Sacrifice*. American Literature and Modern Social Theory, pp. 25-88.

Week 2. Theoretical approaches to sacrifice and violence (Tues 14th Sept)

Freud, Sigmund. 1950 *Totem and Taboo*, Chapter IV, London: Routledge&Kegan Paul, pp. 125-200, with particular emphasis on pp. 164-200 or Norton&Company 100-161 with esp. emphasis on pp. 132-161.
Bataille, Georges. 1989 *The Accursed Share*, New York: Zone Books, Vol.1, Part II, pp. 45-61 and 61-77.
Girard, René. 1977 *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Chapter I-II, pp. 1-69.

Recommended:

Bataille, Georges. 1989 *Theory of Religion*, New York: Zone Books, Chapter III, esp. 43-61; Carter, Jeffrey (ed.). 2003 *Understanding Religious Sacrifice: A Reader*. London: Continuum, for selective readings; Mizruchi, Susan L. 1998 *Sacrificial Arts and Sciences*. In *The Science of Sacrifice*. American Literature and Modern Social Theory, pp. 25-88; Kierkegaard, Søren. 1985 *Fear and Trembling*. Dialectical Lyric by Johannes *de silentio*. Penguin Books.

Week 3. Theoretical approaches to sacrifice (Tues. 21st Sept)

Hubert, Henri and Marcel Mauss. 1964 *Sacrifice. It's Nature and Function*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Recommended:

E.E. Evans-Pritchard. 1956. *Nuer Religion*. Chap. VIII-XI, pp. 197-286;

Week 4. Ethnographic approach to sacrifice (Tues. 28th Sept.)

Hammoudi, Abdellah. 1993. *The Victim and Its Masks. An Essay on Sacrifice and Masquerade in the Maghreb*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Recommended:

Bloch, Maurice. 1992 *From Prey into Hunter. The Politics of Religious Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 5. Structure and Liminality (Tues. 5th Oct)

Douglas, Mary. 1966 *Purity and Danger. An analysis of concept of pollution and taboo*. Selections, TBA

Turner, Victor. 1969 *Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage*. *In The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, pp. 93-111.

Durkheim, Émile. 1995 *Origin of the Notion of Totemic Principle, or Mana*. *In The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Chap. 7, pp. 207-241.

Recommended: Van Gennep, Arnold. 1909 *Rites of Passage*

MID TERM TAKE HOME EXAM!

Week 6. Liminal communities (Tues. 12th Oct)

Hsia, R. Po-chia. 1988 *Introduction: Ritual, Magic, and Murder*, *In The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dundes, Alan (ed.). 1991 *The Blood-libel Legend. A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore*. U. Wisconsin P, TBA

Recommendation:

Gross, Jan T. 2001 *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton University Press.

Week 7. Witches (Tues. 19th Oct.)

Freud, Sigmund 1923 *A Neurosis of Demoniactal Possession In the 17th Century*. *In Collected Papers, Vol. IV*, Joan Riviere (ed.) 1956. Hogarth Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude 1963 *The Sorcerer and his Magic*. *In Structural Anthropology*, pp. 167-185.

Recommended:

Michelet, Jules. 1939[1862] *Satanism and Witchcraft. A Study in Medieval Superstition*. New York: Citadel Press. Freud, Sigmund. 1960 *The Sense of Symptoms*, pp. 318-337, *Fixation to Traumas – The Unconscious*, pp. 338-353. *In Introductory Lectures on to Psycho-Analysis*. New York: W.W.Norton;

Week 8. ... in contemporary France (Tues. 26th Oct)

Favret-Saada, Jeanne. 1980 *Deadly Words. Witchcraft in the Bocage*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 9. ... in Indonesia and Cameroon (Tues. 2nd November)

Siegel, James T. 2006 *Naming the Witch. Selections*, TBA.
Geschiere, Peter. 1997 *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. Selections, TBA.

Week 10. Ritualized Violence (Tues. 9th November)

Taylor, Christopher. 2002 "The Cultural Face of Terror in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994." *In Annihilating Difference. The Anthropology of Genocide* (ed. by Alexander Laban Hinton).
Patterson, Orlando. 1998 *Feast of Blood: "Race," Religion, and Human Sacrifice in the Postbellum South*, pp. 169-232. *In Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*. New York: Basic Civitas.

Recommended:

Malkki, Liisa H. 1995 *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among the Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. University of Chicago Press.

Final Paper Abstract is Due and Brief Topic Discussion in Class!

Week 11. Secularization, Feast, and Carnival (Tues. 16th November)

Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White. *Bourgeois Hysteria and the Carnevalesque*. *In The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Cornell University Press. Pp. 171-190
Luckman, Thomas. *The Invisible Religion*. Selections, TBA

Recommendation:

Bakhtin, Michael. 1987 *Rabelais and his World*.

Week 12. Death, Nation and Immortality (Tues 23rd November)

Anderson, Benedict. 1991, *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso, Chapter 1, pp. 1-9, Chapter 2, pp. 9-36.
Geyer, Michael. 2002 "There is a land Where Everything is Pure: Its Name is Land of Death": Some Observations on Catastrophic Nationalism. *In Sacrifice and National Belonging in Twentieth-Century Germany*, Eghigian and Berg (eds.), pp. 118-147.

Siegel, James. T. 1998 A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: The Nationalization of Death. *In A New Criminal Type in Jakarta. Counter-Revolution today*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 90-119.

Recommended:

Benjamin, Walter. 1978 Critique of violence. *In Reflections*; Anderson, Benedict. 1999 The Goodness of Nations, *In Specters of Comparison, Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, London: Verso, pp. 360-368.

Thanksgiving Recess!

Week 13. Sacrifice or *Homo Sacer*? (Tues. 30th November)

Caillois, Roger 2001 [1939]. *Man and the Sacred*. Chap. IV, pp. 97-127.
Agamben, Giorgio. 1995 *Homo Sacer*. Sovereign Power and Bare Life.
Selections, TBA

Recommended:

Lefort, Claude. 1986 *The Political Forms of Modern Society*. Cambridge; Schmitt, Carl. 1985 *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. UCP; De Vries, Hent and Lawrence E. Sullivan. 2006 *Political Theologies. Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Week 14. (Tues. 7th December)

Concluding discussion and FINAL PAPER DUE DATE!