

Bialecki, Jon (UCSD) - Ethnography of Global Christianities: Lecture/Quarter Version

ETHNOGRAPHY OF GLOBAL CHRISTIANITIES

Jon Bialecki (jbialecki@ucsd.edu)

Spring Quarter 2010

Tuesday and Thursday 5:00-6:20, SOLIS 110

Office Hours: SSB 275, Tuesday and Thursday, noon - one

COURSE GOALS

While, since the very beginning of anthropology as a discipline, there have been ethnographies of self-described Christian populations and anthropological works that have addressed themes often associated with Christianity, it is only very recently that the anthropology of Christianity has developed into a sub-field; one of the hallmarks of this newly emerging subfield has been the richness and sophistication of many of the ethnographies associated with it. This course serves as an introduction to this new body of literature, and includes such topics as: as what is the anthropology of Christianity and why has it taken so long to develop; what are the world-historical conditions that have given rise to the sub-field's object of study; how are we to theorize conversion, both of individuals and of social units; what is the role that representation and language ideology plays in Christian religious practice; and what forms of subjectivity does Christianity engender?

GRADING

Grades will be assessed based upon three sets of material, all of which will be given equal weight:

- **Research Paper:** The first set will be an eight to ten page mid-term research paper, due in class on May 18th; this paper, while based on independent reading, should incorporate applicable course readings and address course themes.

- **Take-home Final:** The second set will be a take-home, open-book exam, which will address the course readings; unlike the research paper, this should not include independent research.
- **Response Papers:** The third will be short response papers, which will consist of a) a one paragraph synthesis of the arguments and evidence present the day's reading, and b) a question that you feel arises from this material. While they have no particular 'due date,' you will be expected to turn in six of them over the course of the class, the top five of which will be graded; all responses are due at the beginning of the class who's assigned readings they are addressing, and no late papers will be accepted. No more than one response paper may be turned in per week.
- **Extra Credit:** There will be opportunities for substantial extra credit, including the possibility of making a class presentation based upon one's research paper.

REQUIRED TEXTS

This class has four required texts, all of which should be available both at the bookstore and at Geisel Library reserves; they are:

- Joel Robbins (2004) *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and moral torment in a Papua New Guinea society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Matthew Engelke (2007) *A Problem of Presence: beyond Scripture in an African church*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kevin Lewis O'Neill (2010) *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- James S. Bielo (2009) *Words Upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study*. New York: New York University Press.

The course readings will also include various articles and book chapters, all of which will be made available as PDF files via the course's UCSD WebCT portal (<https://webctweb.ucsd.edu>).

SCHEDULE OF READINGS FOR THE QUARTER

March 30th

RECOMMEND READING: Jon Bialecki et. al., (2008) 'The Anthropology of Christianity' *Religion Compass* 2(6):1139-1158 [AVAILABLE ON WEBCT].

April 1st

Phillip Jenkins (2002) "The Next Christianity" *The Atlantic Monthly*, 290(3): 53-68
[AVAILABLE ON WEBCT]

April 6th

Joel Robbins (2003). "What is a Christian? Notes toward an anthropology of Christianity." *Religion* 33(3): 191-199; Susan Harding (1991). "Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other." *Social Research* 58(2): 373-393 [AVAILABLE ON WEBCT]. RECOMMENDED READINGS: Marshall Sahlins (1996) "The Sadness of Sweetness: Native Anthropology of Western Cosmology" *Current Anthropology* 37(3):395-428; Talal Asad (2002 [1993]) "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category" in Michael Lambek, editor, *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (New York: Blackwell Press). [AVAILABLE ON WEBCT].

April 8th

Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners*, Prologue, Introduction, Chapter 2

April 13th

Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners*, Chapter 3, Chapter 4

April 15th

Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners*, Chapter 5, Chapter 6

April 20th

Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners*, Chapter 7, Chapter 8, Conclusion

April 22nd

Webb Keane (1997) "From Fetishism to Sincerity: On Agency, The Speaking Subject, and Their Historicity in the Context of Religious Conversion" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39(4):674-693 [AVAILABLE ON WEBCT].

April 27th

Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence*, Introduction, Chapter 1

April 29th

Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence*, Chapter 2, Chapter 3

May 4th

Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence*, Chapter 4, Chapter 5

May 6th

Matthew Engelke, A Problem of Presence, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Conclusion

May 11th

Kevin Lewis O'Neill, City of God, Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1

May 13th

Kevin Lewis O'Neill, City of God, Chapter 2, Chapter 3

May 18th

Kevin Lewis O'Neill, City of God, Chapter 4, Chapter 5

May 20th

Kevin Lewis O'Neill, City of God, Chapter 6, Conclusion

May 25th

Tanya Luhmann (2007) "How Do You Learn To Know That It Is God Who Speaks?" in David Berliner and Ramon Sarró, eds., Learning Religion: Anthropological Approaches New York NY: Berghan Books. [AVAILABLE ON WEBCT].

May 27th

James Bielo, Words Upon the Word, Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2

June 1st

James Bielo, Words Upon the Word, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5

June 3rd

James Bielo, Words Upon the Word, Chapter 6, Conclusion