

# **Bialecki, Jon (UCSD) - Anthropology of the Devil**

**ANSC 100: Anthropology of the Devil**

**Spring 2011, T-TH 3:00 pm - 4:50 pm, SEQ 147**

**Jon Bialecki, Lecturer**

**OFFICE: SSB 275**

**OFFICE HOURS: TBA**

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## **Course description:**

One of the surest ways of fixing an idea of the good is by juxtaposing it with a countervailing idea; as a figure of ethical inversion, a sign of social alterity, as an explanatory or causal mechanism, as a form of social commentary, or as a possible source of power, numerous cultures as well as global and local forms of religiosity have posited some kind of hypostatization of evil - usually one with a supernatural charge. In Christian tradition, this figure is often called the Devil.

This course investigates how the figure of the devil and figures associated or resonate with the evil (such as demons, witches, and unclean spirits) are used in such diverse arenas as religious texts, political imaginaries, and ritual practices. Using analytics that range from historical narrative, to political economy, and cultural anthropology, we will see how people, communities, and institutions construct themselves through this figure of an occult, morally antithetical other.

## **Grading:**

Grades will be based on three criteria

## **In-class participation and WebCT postings:**

Class participants will be expected, over the course of the quarter, to both participate in class discussions on a regular basis, and to make a minimum of six postings regarding the readings on WebCT. While you are allowed to make as many postings as you like, and they will be counted for your grade, you can only post once per book or movie when it comes to meeting the six posting minimum requirement. Postings should be roughly a paragraph in length, and must be posted to WebCT page before the day's class discussion to receive credit; they

ideally should not be summaries, but thoughts or questions that you wish to bring to the table (or, alternately, responses to other student's postings).

### **Final:**

During finals week, students will be given a take home, open book exam; it will be no longer than five pages, single space.

### **Paper/Midterm:**

Students may opt for either a take-home, open book exam, or for a ten to twelve page research paper. Regardless of whether the paper or the midterm is elected, the paper/midterm will be due in class on November 22nd. While either paper or midterm will fulfill the course requirements, those who opt for papers may be awarded extra credit in the case of exceptional submissions. If you elect for the paper, you are strongly encouraged to discuss possible ideas with the course instructor early in the quarter.

During the last week of class, students who elected to write papers will also be allowed to make presentations regarding their paper topics for extra credit.

### **Required texts:**

There are four required (and one recommended) texts

1. Elaine Pagels, *The Origins of Satan*, New York, Vintage, 1995
2. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*
3. Michael Taussig, *The devil and commodity fetishism in South America*, (30th Anniversary Edition), Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press (2010)
4. Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*, Trenton, Africa World Press (1999)
5. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press (1988) (RECOMMENDED)

All other additional required and recommended texts will be available as PDF files at the course's WebCT portal ([webctweb.ucsd.edu](http://webctweb.ucsd.edu)).

### **Schedule of Readings**

### **INTRODUCTION**

## **September 22nd AV MATERIAL:**

“Treehouse of Horror IV, The Devil and Homer Simpson” (1994)

RECOMMENDED: Russell, The Prince of Darkness, Chapters 1 & 2

## **PART ONE - THE ORIGIN OF THE DEVIL**

### **September 27th**

REQUIRED: Elaine Pagels, The Origins of Satan, Introduction & Chapter One

RECOMMENDED: Russell, Darkness, Chapter 3

### **September 29th**

REQUIRED: Pagels, Origins, Chapters 2 & 3

RECOMMENDED: Russell, Darkness, Chapters 4

### **October 4th**

REQUIRED: Pagels, Origins, Chapters 4 & 5

RECOMMENDED: Russell, Darkness, Chapter 5

### **October 6th**

REQUIRED: Pagels, Origins, Chapters 6 & Conclusion

RECOMMENDED: Russell, Darkness, Chapters 6 & 7

### **October 11th**

REQUIRED: Paul S. Boyer, Stephen Nissenbaum, Salem possessed: the social origins of witchcraft, Prologue, Chapters 1 & 2

RECOMMENDED: Russell, Darkness, Chapter 8

### **October 13th**

REQUIRED: Boyer & Bussebaum, Salem, Chapters 3 & 4

RECOMMENDED: Russell, Darkness, Chapter 9

### **October 18th**

REQUIRED: Boyer & Bussebaum, Salem, Chapters 5, 6, & 7

RECOMMENDED: Russell, Darkness, Chapter 10

### **October 20th**

REQUIRED: Boyer & Bussebaum, Salem, Chapter 8, Epilogue

RECOMMENDED: Russell, Darkness, Chapter 11

## **PART TWO - THE DEVIL TODAY**

### **October 25th**

REQUIRED: Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, Preface, Chapters 1 & 2

RECOMENDED: Russell, *Darkness*, Chapter 12 AV MATERIAL: "The Devil's Miner" (2005)

### **October 27th**

REQUIRED: Taussig, *Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, Chapters 4, 5, 6 & 7

RECOMENDED: Russell, *Darkness*, Chapter 13

### **November 1st**

REQUIRED: Taussig, *Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, Chapters 8, 9, 10, & 11

RECOMENDED: Russell, *Darkness*, Chapter 14

### **November 3rd**

REQUIRED: Taussig, *Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, Chapters 12, 13, & 14, Conclusion  
RECOMENDED: Russell, *Darkness*, Chapter 15

### **November 8th**

AV MATERIAL: "The Impaler" (2007)

RECOMMENDED: Jesper Aagaard Petersen, "'Smite Him Hip and Thigh": Satanism, Violence, and Transgression,' in James Lewis (ed) *Violence and New Religious Movements* (AVAIABLE ON WEB CT)

### **November 10th**

AV MATERIAL: "Hell House" (2001)

RECOMENDED: Russell, *Darkness*, Chapters 16, 17

### **November 15th**

REQUIRED: Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana*, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2

### **November 17th**

REQUIRED: Meyer, *Translating*, Chapters 3 & 4

### **November 22nd**

REQUIRED: Meyer, *Translating*, Chapters 6 & 7, Epilogue

TAKE HOME MID-TERM/PAPER DUE

### **November 29th**

Class Presentations

**December 1st**

Class Presentations