

ANTH 393: Contemporary Topics in the Anthropology of Religion

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Religion is often thought of as incompatible with modern life. One legacy of both secularism and liberalism is the presumption that religion is a strictly private matter, separated from most other domains of human activity. But is this in fact the case? This course argues that religious ideas and practices can be found in many domains of contemporary life, even those that appear to be devoid of religion or completely secular. This course will survey a number of domains in which religiosity is evident including business, work, finance, popular culture, sports, fashion, health, architecture, and more.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Understand how anthropological approaches are useful in uncovering the cultural assumptions embedded in everyday activities.
- Develop skills to critically analyze how the role religion plays in society, culture, and politics in different global contexts.
- Develop the ability to understand ideas and behaviours in specific cultural and social contexts.
- Learn to recognize that social phenomena, such as religion, are not natural outcomes of some pre-given order but are instead deeply shaped by history and culture, and in turn shape histories and cultures.
- Develop critical thinking and reading skills.