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**EMP 753: Introduction to Shamanism: Practices and Beliefs
(3 Credits)**

Overview of Course: This is an introductory course exploring the practices and beliefs of traditional indigenous shamans and their contribution to our knowledge of the healing arts.

Course Topics: Shamans Past and Present, The Life of a Traditional Shaman, Shamanic Cultures Clash and Assimilation with Christianity, Women and Shamanism, False Shamans, The Value of Shamanism in Our Modern World.

Learning Objectives: After completing this course students will have a broader knowledge of shamanic cultures, traditions and practices from around the world. They will also have acquired a thorough knowledge of the history of shamanism, how shamanism is the ancestor of modern healing arts, and they will have formed their own opinion on shamanism's relevance today.

Audience:

Open to all students in the Certificate, Masters or PhD program.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Shamanism is the oldest healing practice known on the planet. Petroglyphs found in France may prove that shamanism was practiced as far back as paleolithic times. But what is shamanism? This course gives the student a thorough overview, as well as in depth study of the ancient to modern day traditional shaman.

This course will invite students to consider controversial topics such as the survival of shamanic traditions through incorporating christianity, modern culture's bias towards male shamans, and spiritual consumerism's co-opting of shamanism. Students will be asked to consider their own calling to follow the path of the healer and how their journey compares and contrasts to a traditional native shaman's life experience.

Students will engage with research on shamanic cultures, traditions and practices from around the world through a reflective writing practice, concluding the semester with a final paper inviting the student to dive deeper into the life of one specific traditional shaman, and then a final integrative oral exam.

NEED STATEMENT

Students will:

- 1) Develop an in-depth awareness of shamanic practices and beliefs from around the world. This will give students an understanding of, and respect for, shamanism as the origin of modern healing and the source of modern medicine.
- 2) A graduate student in a healing profession needs to understand the assumptions and values at the core of their knowledge – in order to fully communicate their own knowledge, critically assess the work of other professionals, and extend their own

research and therapeutic methods. This course will give students the background and healthy curiosity required to participate in academic as well as cultural discourse on the topic of global shamanism and its value in modern society. As well, students will understand where their own personal journey as a healer falls in the spectrum of shamanism.

- 3) Develop skills needed in identifying essential factors pertaining to non-ordinary or shamanic states of consciousness. Also in identifying false shamans and true healers as they engage in the wider world of energy medicine.
- 4) Be able to assist clients in understanding non-ordinary or shamanic states of awareness, how to build and invoke healing power, and how to live in a positive flow of energy.
- 5) Develop the critical skills needed to identify the markers of shamanic initiation in their own lives and in the lives of their clients, giving them a foundation from which to discern appropriate next steps.

FACULTY-STUDENT COMMUNICATION

- **Telephone Contact:** Students should arrange all telephone communications with the instructor by email beforehand. There will be a required one hour telephone communication with the instructor to clarify course objectives and create an individualized support plan should be made prior to beginning the course. There will be a one hour telephone communication in month four to discuss the topic of the final paper/project and arrange for schedule of support around this. All telephone calls will be at student's expense.
- **Email Contact:** Every other week communication via e-mail is required for progress reports and support. Students are always encouraged to contact the instructor via email whenever a problem arises.
- **Communications:** It is requested that students stay in weekly or every other week correspondence with the instructor using email. The student should also set up periodic telephone conversations, at their expense, to discuss problems, concerns, or determine the direction of their course work. Students are always encouraged to contact the instructor by email, fax, or telephone whenever a major concern may arise. It should be understood that as mature students, it is the responsibility of the students to stay in contact with their instructors. The instructor may be able to set up one-on-one discussions with the student using Skype. Students should check email frequently for professor and EMU messages.
- All lessons, coursework and papers must be copied to lessons@energymedicineuniversity.org from both the student and professor.

Students will normally send communications via email and submit papers as MSWORD format files attached to email messages. Synchronous Internet sessions may be used for “chat sessions” using Yahoo Messenger Chat or Skype. Check with your instructor on the type of communications she uses.

Internet Forums: Please contact our Registrar to be included in the EMU Internet forums.

Length of Course:

Length of this Energy Medicine course is five (5) months or one (1) semester.

COURSE DELIVERY STYLE

Distance Education - Coursework is completed at a location determined by the student utilizing a computer that has the ability to play audio and video clips, with Microsoft Office Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe Reader, along with a current web browser, internet connection and email address. Contact and communication with distance students is typically conducted by telephone, Internet, Skype, text chat, and email. Students are also encouraged to contact the University by facsimiles, and postal mail, and by personal visit to the University.

1) Reading Assignments with Reflection Papers

Students will read the assigned texts and submit a 200 – 300 word (no longer than one page) type-written personal reflection paper on each one, via email, within the period assigned. Requirements for the paper: double-spaced, 12 Point font in Times New Roman.

2) Course Paper/Project

Write a 20 page double-spaced paper, 12 point, Times New Roman font. Students will make use of a library to complete the paper. Students must cite six references, four of which must be from written texts. Page length includes title page and reference pages. The topic of the final paper will be a compare and contrast one’s own spiritual journey as a healer to that of a traditional shaman. Student’s will read the biography of a traditional shaman, which they research and choose. They will utilize at least five other sources of information on the subject’s life and abilities. Students will include in their final paper: 1) Personal stories of their “calling” to be a healer. 2) Any initiation rites of passages they experienced, whether traditional or contemporary, held by a guide or done alone. 3) What kind of healer they experience themselves to be, i.e.: one who works with plants, one who walks between the worlds, one who holds and teaches sacred wisdom, ...

Students may also want to touch on these topics in their final paper: 1) Did the shaman being researched face a major life challenge or “dark night of the soul” that catalyzed them into their work as a healer? 2) How have you come to understand the relevance and value of “wounding” or “trauma” as an initiatory process into shamanic practice?

3) Oral Examination

Students are required to have a final oral exam in order to complete the course within which the instructor will be evaluating how well the student has integrated the course materials and allowed themselves to be transformed by it. Before the deadline, students schedule with the instructor the time and date for the face-to-face, telephone or Skype conference. During the examination, the instructor will make notations of the effectiveness, qualities, and weaknesses of the student's replies.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1

Write a one page reflection paper on the differences between the indigenous mind and the Western mind. Include in your reflection paper what was most poignant for you in the film *Brujo*.

Reading:

Spirit & Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader by Vine Deloria; Fulcrum Publishing, 1999. *Chapter 4: If You Think About It, You Will See That It Is True* (p. 40)

Documentary Film:

This film can be found on Amazon.com

Brujo

Brujo is an exploration of shamanism and curing among the Mazatec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexico, and among two groups of Maya Indians in southern Mexico and Guatemala.

- **Directed by:** Georges Payrastre, Claudine Viallon
- **Runtime:** 51 minutes
- **Release year:** 1977

Assignment 2

Write a one page reflection paper answering these questions:

What are the common themes on shamanic practices and beliefs that run through stories in this book?

Are there differences between women's practices and men's practices?

Reading :

Shamans Through Time: 500 Years on the Path to Knowledge edited by Jeremy Narby and Francis Huxley; Tarcher/Penguin, 2004.

Assignment 3

Write a one page reflection paper on your feelings about the lost shamanic heritages of the world. Can they be reclaimed? What are the dangers of trying to reclaim ancient traditions? What are the benefits?

Reading:

The Strong Eye of Shamanism: A Journey Into the Caves of Consciousness by Robert F. Ryan; Inner Traditions International, 1999.

Assignment 4

Write a one page reflection paper on the specific powers and abilities of women shamans. How are women naturally initiated into power and how has this been recognized or not by the dominant paradigm over the last 2000 years?

Reading:

The Woman in the Shaman's Body by Barbara Tedlock; Bantam Books, 2005.

Assignment 5

Write a one page reflection paper on your thoughts about non-Indians participation in the shamanic traditions of native cultures. What would be the benefits of Native wisdom keepers sharing ideas and healing technologies with non-Native healers and visionaries?

Reading:

The Bowl of Light: Ancestral Wisdom from a Hawaiian Shaman by Hank Wesselman; Sounds True Inc., 2011

Assignment 6:

Final Paper/Project

Write a 20 page double-spaced paper comparing and contrasting your own spiritual journey and experiences as an healing practitioner in your culture, with the life of a traditional native shaman. Choose one shaman/medicine person, living or Ancestor, and read their biography, interview people who knew or worked with them, research their journey as a healer. Students will include in their papers an account of the healing technologies used by the native shaman they've chosen to research. Also include photos of the shaman if possible. Students will utilize at least five other sources of information on the subject's life and abilities. Students will include in their final paper: 1) Personal stories of their own "calling" to be a healer. 2) Any initiation rites of passages they experienced, whether traditional or contemporary, held by a guide or done alone. 3) What kind of healer they experience themselves to be, i.e.: one who works with plants, one who walks between the worlds, one who holds and teaches sacred wisdom, ...

Students may also want to touch on these topics in their final paper: 1) Did the shaman being researched face a major life challenge or “dark night of the soul” that catalyzed them into their work as a healer? 2) How have you come to understand the relevance and value of “wounding” or “trauma” as an initiatory process into shamanic practice?

Paper requirements:

- Double-spaced, type written paper with 12 pt. font in Times Roman.
- Research and factual reporting with personal storytelling.
- Reflection: Your paper must include a final page of reflection capturing your experience doing the research for this paper and any personal transformations that occurred while working on this paper.
- Reference Page: You must cite at least six references which you used support your topic. Four of these must be from written sources.

Assignment 7:

Course Review

Oral Exam via telephone or Skype. This final exam evaluates the students integration of the materials from the semester and will include a review of the students personal transformation while studying this topic. Students will negotiate the timing of the examination.

INDIVIDUALIZATION OF STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

Each research project will be chosen by the student to best support their individual professional goals, yet each student will also benefit from seeing the fruits of all fellow students’ research and providing professional criticism of each others work.

Each student will be afforded the opportunity of writing on a subject that is related to his or her field of interest. (The biography chosen for the final paper can be on a traditional shaman who practices healing modalities which the student is interested in.) This will assist the student in making the final paper individualized. Also the student is encouraged to go outside the field and obtain research data from other interdisciplinary areas. Each student, based on his or her background, will be encouraged to transfer that theoretical information which the course provides into a practical format in the final paper or project.

COURSE EVALUATION

Grades will be given on content, use of source material, timeliness, and also grammar, spelling, and originality.

COURSE GRADING DETERMINANTS

Grades are based on the following elements of a student's participation and accomplishment. In determining a grade for this course, the following formula will be used:

Reading required texts – 20%
Reflection papers – 15%
Research for final paper - 20%
Final paper – 25%
Essay examination – 20%

Using this technique, there will be 100 points assigned to the course. Final semester grades will be calculated as follows:

92-100 points = A range
86-91 points = B range
80-85 points = C range
70-80 points = D range
Under 70 points = F

COURSE COMPLETION TIMETABLE

- Week #1- 2 Assignment 1 due
- Week #3 – 5 Assignment 2 due
- Week #6 – 8 Assignment 3 due
- Week #9 – 11 Assignment 4 due
- Week #12 – 14 Assignment 5 due
- Week #15 – 18 Assignment 6 due
- Week #19 – 20 Oral Exam

SPECIAL NOTES AND INSTRUCTIONS

All coursework must be completed in a timely fashion. Students are encouraged to phone or email the instructor whenever they need advice, comments, or instruction.

REQUIRED TEXTS & FILM

Film: *Brujo*; directed by Georges Payraastre, Claudine Viallon, 1977. (51 min.)

Spirit & Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader by Vine Deloria; Fulcrum Publishing, 1999. *Chapter 4: If You Think About It, You Will See That It Is True* (p. 40)

Shamans Through Time: 500 Years on the Path to Knowledge edited by Jeremy Narby and Francis Huxley; Tarcher/Penguin, 2004.
ISBN: 1-58542-362-9

The Strong Eye of Shamanism: A Journey Into the Caves of Consciousness by Robert F. Ryan; Inner Traditions International, 1999.
ISBN: 0-89281-709-7

The Woman in the Shaman's Body by Barbara Tedlock; Bantam Books, 2005.
ISBN: 0-553-37971-2

The Bowl of Light: Ancestral Wisdom from a Hawaiian Shaman by Hank Wesselman; Sounds True Inc., 2011
ISBN: 978-1-60407-430-7

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED SOURCES

Biographies of Shamans and Medicine People:

The Wind Is My Mother: The Life and Teachings of A Native American Shaman by Bear Heart with Molly Larkin; Berkeley Books, 1996.
ISBN: 0-425-16160-9

Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream by Greg Sarris; University of California Press, 1994.
ISBN: 0-520-20968-0

Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman by Malidoma Some; Penguin Books, 1994.
ISBN: 0-87477-762-3

The Falling Sky: Words of A Yanomami Shaman by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert; President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2013.
ISBN: 978-0-674-72468-8