

Anthropology of Religion  
**Chapter 1 Lecture Notes**

## **Religion: A Multi-Faceted Phenomenon**

Religions have many facets that can be studied by anthropologists.

### **I. Beliefs**

Recognizing if a belief is religious or not is not a simple process.

***Most religions treat spiritual things as a part of daily life.***

Most religions do not segregate them into a special day that is set apart from the mundane work. The lack of a word "religion" in most languages make it hard for researchers to simply ask, "Is that religion".

**Outsider questioning Bigfoot, UFO's, Loch Ness Monster, Tooth Fairy, Santa Claus as beliefs or religious belief**

**Shoshone Water Baby**

**Star Wars and Luke Skywalker's "Force"**

**Mana in Christianity**

### **II. Special Feelings**

Religion involves special feelings that religious things evoke – like reverence, awe, and dread.

***Connected to strange or unusual parts of natural environment***

**Deep caves for Maya of Central America.**

### **III. Special Behaviors**

***Rituals – doing religious things***

They are done with careful attention to detail and with important feelings that do not attend mere habitual behavior.

## **Christian sacrament of the Lord's Supper**

### **IV. Social Bonds**

***Religion fosters loyalty to one's community, tribe, or nation.***

**Fourth of July celebrations in U.S. Christian denominations**

### **V. Psychology of the Religious Life**

#### **Trance in Shoshone Curing ceremony**

Puhakanti performed curing ceremonies by smoking tobacco during ritual to help him enter a trance state and connect with his spiritual partner.

### **VI. Symbolic Content**

***Examine "Texts" such as written scriptures, oral stories, symbolism in rituals, symbolism in architecture.***

#### **Christian Cathedrals**

When seen from above, they take the form of a cross – a symbol of great meaning in their religion.

#### **Jewish Mikvah**

Mikvah involves immersion in water – a natural symbol of life and cleansing.

#### **LDS Creation Story**

Symbolism of free will versus coercion has center stage and is repeatedly emphasized, thereby communicating the importance of right choice.