JANUARY 2012
SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

MODULE CODE: SA3063

MODULE TITLE: Anthropology of Religion

EXAM DURATION: 3 hours

EXAM INSTRUCTIONS: Candidates should answer THREE questions. Do not overlap your answers to different questions. Ethnographic examples should be used to illustrate all your answers.

PLEASE DO NOT TURN OVER THIS EXAM PAPER UNTIL YOU ARE INSTRUCTED TO DO SO.
1. ‘An attempt to link the context of ritual to the world of society directly does not work because in secular terms religious rituals are mis-statements of reality’ (Bloch). Discuss.

2. Discuss critically the approach to religion taken by TWO of the following: Durkheim; Weber; Marx. Who do you think offered the most productive insights for anthropology?

3. Can anyone learn to be a shaman or a spirit medium? Or is it just that anyone can learn to fake it?

4. Evaluate the view that the anthropology of religion must be based in ‘methodological atheism’?

5. EITHER
   Evaluate the claim that the modern world has become ‘secular’.
   OR
   Critically assess the claim that New Age religions are simply a response to the inevitable advance of secularisation, and are therefore inherently trivial.

6. EITHER
   How has the anthropology of religion addressed the question of personal (individual) meaning?
   OR
   What is the significance accorded to religious experience by different anthropologists?

7. “Our [i.e. anthropologists] problem is not to define religion but to find it” (Geertz). Do you agree?

8. How have anthropologists conceived of the relationship between religious beliefs and economic activity?

9. Is spirit possession a bargaining from weakness?

10. Critically evaluate the significance of the body in the anthropology of religion.