

21A.211

Essay on Spirit Possession and Visitation

Due in class October 21

Write an essay about altered states and contact with the spirit world, using as your primary examples the Pentacostalists from “The Holy Ghost people” and *Salvation on Sand Mountain*; the 19th century spiritualists; and the Spanish case from *Visionaries*. You may also use, as appropriate, the articles by Ong and Slyomovics and late 20th century channeling. You may consider some or all of the following, and/or other issues that seem important.

-How do the examples of spirit contact reflect or bear on the social position and circumstances of participants? What rewards or benefits do they offer participants? How, if at all, do/did they change or affect those positions and circumstances?

-How are possessing spirits or visitations related to the individual identities of participants?

-In what ways are they concerned with issues and problems in society such as gender relations, marriage, morality, social class, urban/rural tensions, race, and class? In what ways, overtly or covertly, do they comment on, deal with, or attempt to modify those problems or issues?

-What does the ritual do for participants? What messages does it send? How does the frame of spirit contact and communication by invisible beings affect the message and its reception? How do others shape the experience and meaning of spirit contact? How do believers deal with opposition or skepticism?

Write 5-6 pages, typed, double-spaced (ordinary sized type, no extra spaces between paragraphs). Strive for a good balance between fact and interpretation. Support your claims with citations from our authors. The preferred citation form is the one used in social science, in parenthesis at the end of a sentence, as in the following example: (Jones 1923: 37-45).

Extensions of a day or two possible, but they must be negotiated ahead of time.