**Prof. Pope Fischer**

Lpopefischer@citytech.cuny.edu

**ANTH 1102**

**Attendance/Participation Questions for Week 10: Magic**

**Attendance/Participation:** Your attendance/participation will be determined by your post in the discussion board on Blackboard. Read the entire article before answering the questions. Only answer one option each covering the topic, thesis, and cultural example (aim for 250 words).

Option 1: (Stanley Tambiah)

Tambiah, Stanley. 2017 “[Form and Meaning of Magical Acts](https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.14318/hau7.3.030),” Reprinted by HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 7 (3) 451-473.

A.(Topic) What is the main point of Tambiah’s article? (One sentence)

B.(Thesis) Tambiah talks about magic in terms of analogical pairs and illocutionary acts. He suggests magic is a persuasive transfer of property to recipient person by means of analogy, which plays on both similarity & differences between the analogically related pairs. Tambiah says

“While both “magic” and “science” are characterized by analogical thought and action, they comprise differentiated varieties whose validity would be inappropriate to measure and verify by the same standards. Magical acts, usually compounded of verbal utterance and object manipulation, constitute ‘performative’ acts by which a property is imperatively transferred to a recipient object or person on an analogical basis. Magical acts are ritual acts, and ritual acts are in turn performative” (Tambiah 2008: 311).”

After reading the entire article, explain the above quotation in your own words and how it contributes to his overall argument. What does science have to do with magic? What does he mean by analogical pairs? What is a verbal or illocutionary act? (This should be at least 3 sentences)

C.(Cultural example) He draws on ethnographic work on the Zande, particularly magic spells used in healing rituals. Can you think of least one example of his understanding of magic as 1. Analogical pairs, 2. Illocutionary verbal acts, and/or 3. Performative ritual? [If you wish you can use an example from the film “The Asmat of New Guinea”] (Explain how your example relates to Tambiah’s article)

Option 2: (George Gmelch)

Gmelch, George 2000 “[Baseball Magic](http://www.meissinger.com/uploads/3/4/9/1/34919185/gmelch_baseball_magic.pdf)” Revised version of “Superstition and Ritual in American Baseball” in *Elysian Fields Quarterly,* Vol. 11, No. 3, 1992, pp 25-36.

A.(Topic) What is the main point of Gmelch’s article? (One sentence)

B.(Thesis) George Gmelch draws on Malinowski’s theory of magic, that magic is used to cope and in times of uncertainty. Gmelch outlines three concepts in relation to this understanding of magic: Ritual, magic fetish, and taboo. Notice his definitions are different from some of our previous authors. Unlike Douglas, who sees taboo as connected to cultural perceptions of purity and impurity (classification systems), Gmelch sees taboo as something avoided in order to control the uncontrollable (luck). In terms of ritual he says rituals are similar to routines, repetitive actions, yet they are “prescribed behaviors in which there is no empirical connection between the means (e.g., tapping home plate three times) and the desired end (e.g., getting a base hit.) Because there is no real connection between the two, rituals are not rational” (Gmelch 2012: 350). Baseball players may repeat actions to help them win in situations of uncertainty, to improve their luck. After reading the entire article, explain what Gmelch means by magic using at least one of the concepts he applies: ritual (quotation above), magic fetish, or taboo.

C.(Cultural example) The cultural evidence Gmelch uses to prove his thesis is data collected from his experience in the minor baseball league. Can you think of an example from your own experience that you can relate to Gmelch’s understanding of magic? [If you wish you can use an example from the film “The Asmat of New Guinea”] (Explain how your example relates to Gmelch’s article)