**Prof. Pope Fischer**

[Lpopefischer@citytech.cuny.edu](mailto:Lpopefischer@citytech.cuny.edu)

**ANTH 1102**

**Attendance/Participation Questions for Week 9: Witchcraft**

**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 (Evan Evans-Pritchard):

Evans-Pritchard, EE “[Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events](https://bbhosted.cuny.edu/bbcswebdav/pid-2667924-dt-forum-rid-423228157_1/xid-423228157_1) ” in  Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach edited by William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt.  New York: Harper & Row, 1979

A.(Topic) What is the main point of the Evans-Pritchard article? (One sentence)

B.(Thesis) Evans-Pritchard describes circumstances in which how cause and effect could not completely explain an event, hence they were attributed to witchcraft or magic. He states:

“The concept of witchcraft nevertheless provide [the Azande] with a natural philosophy by which the relations between men and unfortunate events are explained and with a ready and stereotyped means of reacting to such events. Witchcraft beliefs also embrace a system of values which regulate human conduct” (Evans-Pritchard 1979: 363).

Having read the entire article, explain what Evans-Pritchard means in the above quotation and how it contributes to his overall argument.

C.(Cultural example) He draws on several examples that he observed among the Azande to show how misfortunes that could not easily be explained, could be explained in terms of magic, the most famous being the granary example. I would add that you could also say religious beliefs are also used to explain misfortunes. Can you think of an example of an unfortunate event that can be explained in terms of one’s beliefs? (Relate or compare your example to the Evans-Pritchard article). [If you wish you can use an example from the film “The Asmat of New Guinea]. (This should be at least 3 sentences)

Option 2: McCarthy Brown book

Start to read book: McCarthy Brown, Karen [Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL17415590M/Mama_Lola). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. [Mama Lola #1](https://bbhosted.cuny.edu/bbcswebdav/pid-2667928-dt-forum-rid-423225080_1/xid-423225080_1)

Portions of the book can also be found on [google scholar](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=zbowDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=mama+lola&ots=2ObfVkXOnp&sig=AezFi-rCHN7ITaChDKyWRH8uqFM#v=onepage&q=mama%20lola&f=false).

I realize you may have just started to read the book, but if you read the introduction you could answer the following.

A.(Topic) What is the main point of McCarthy Brown reading?

B.(Thesis) Voodoo is a syncretized religion that combines both African and Catholic beliefs. A voodoo priestess fits the classic definition of a “shaman,” an individual who has the unique ability to contact the spirits through undergoing a trance – this trance-like state being a dangerous position between life and death. At first in 1978 when McCarthy Brown knocked on Alourdes Fort Green row house door in Brooklyn, she was greeted with trepidation. However, they formed a long lasting bond that resulted in this ethnography. She reveals an immigrant experience in New York City. Mama Lola came from a family with at least three generations of healing experience, as a voodoo priest, who serves to call the spirits to aid others. McCarthy Brown notes that:

“It is no exaggeration to say that Haitians believe living and suffering are inseparable. Vodou is the system they have devised to deal with suffering that is life, a system whose purpose is to minimize pain, avoid disaster, cushion loss, and strengthen survivors and survivor instincts. The drama of Vodou therefore occurs not so much within the rituals themselves as in the junction between the rituals and troubled lives of the devotees (McCarthy Brown 1991:10)”.

Having read the some of the book, explain what McCarthy Brown means in the above quotation and how it contributes to understandings of the use of magic.

C.(Cultural example) Can you relate this quotation to an example from the Evans-Pritchard article or if you wish you can use an example from the film “The Asmat of New Guinea”. Or if you prefer, think about how other forms of religion also might be “devised to deal with suffering that is life” (McCarthy Brown 1991:10).