



REL 494 / 591 Rituals in History, Politics and Religion

Fall 2022

Alexander Henn

School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies

Preliminary Syllabus (4/17)

Instructor: Alexander Henn Office: Coor 4452 Office Hours: by appointment alexander.henn@asu.edu	Day/Time: T 4:30-7:15 pm Location: DH 204
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Course Description

Rituals are universal to humanity. Scholars agree that no social and cultural life is feasible without rituals and ever more scientists discuss the impact of rituals on human biology and nature. Intriguingly, it is not fully clear, however, why rituals are so essential to human life and how, exactly, they operate.

This course will give you a compact introduction to the modern scholarship and study of rituals. Theoretical themes, historical and ethnographic case studies, and contemporary topics will come from a range of disciplines including anthropology, religious studies, history, political science, art history, and linguistics.

Sources of learning will be readings, images, audios and videos; primary modes of learning will be seminar discussions, media analysis, and lectures. Readings and assignments will be adjusted to undergraduate and graduate levels.

Questions to be discussed will be, among others:

- How do rituals impact the formation and operation of society?
- What is the role of rituals in structuring calendars, geographies and the passage of time?
- Does the significance of rituals change in modern time?
- How do rituals affect the negotiation between cultures and the relationship between culture and nature (environment)?
- Why are rituals important in the formation of political authority, power, protest, and rebellion?
- What effects do rituals have on body and healing?

Learning Outcomes: After completing this course students will be able to

- analyze and interpret rituals in multiple and diverse historical, political, and religious contexts
- discuss theories about ritual in the formation of meaning and the structuration of practice
- write and talk about rituals and other significant humanities' subjects on an advanced academic level

Assignments:

- Attendance. You must attend every class. Attendance can be excused only for serious, documented, and accepted reasons.
- In-Class Discussion. Contribute regularly to class discussions. Show that you have read the assigned readings, raise informed questions, discuss diverse perspectives and arguments.
- Class Preparations. Perform at least two assignments marked as 'Class Prep' in the schedule. That is, prepare and organize — perhaps together with another student — a summary of the readings of the session and facilitate the discussion of arguments.
- Discussion Boards. Contribute in writing to sessions marked as 'Discussion Board'. That is, post comments and criticism about sources (readings, videos). Raise questions and respond to other students' posts.
- Write and present a Final Paper (minimum 15 pages for undergraduate and 25 pages for graduate students, double-spaced) on a topic related to the course's subject. The topic is selected by you but needs approval by the instructor. The Final Paper assignment includes the submission of an outline, an oral presentation, and the submission of the written paper. All due as marked in the schedule. Ppts are fine for paper presentations!

Grading

90 – 100 = A; 80 – 89 = B; 70 – 79 = C; 60 – 69 = D; Below 60 = E/F

Source Material: Books (available at ASU bookshop, preliminary selection)

- Bowen, John. Religions in Practice: An Approach to the Anthropology of Religion, 7th edition, London 2018: Routledge
- Grimes, Ronald (ed): Readings in Ritual Studies, Upper Saddle River, NJ 1995: Prentice Hall
- Muir, Edward: Ritual in Early Modern Europe, Cambridge 1997: Cambridge University Press

Source Material: Articles / Chapters (on Canvas, preliminary selection)

- Asad, Talal: Towards a Genealogy of Ritual, in: Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam, Baltimore 1993: John Hopkins University Press, 55-79
- Baumann, Gerd: Ritual Implicates 'Others': Rereading Durkheim in a Plural Society, in: Coppet, D.de (ed): Understanding Rituals, London & New York 1992: Routledge, 97-116
- Bell, C. Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions, New York / Oxford 1997: Oxford University Press. Various excerpts.
- Bell, Catherine, Paradigms Behind (and Before) the Modern Concept of Religion, History and Theory 2006/45:27-46
- Bowie, Fiona. What is Ritual?, in: The Anthropology of Religion. An Introduction. 2nd edition. Malden MA 2006: Blackwell publishing, 140-147
- Eliade, Mircea. Ritual and Myth, in: Grimes, Ronald (ed): Readings in Ritual Studies, Upper Saddle River, NJ 1995: Prentice Hall 194-200
- Fields, Karen. Introduction to E. Durkheim, Émile. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Free Press, 1995. IIIV-LI
- Hirschkind. The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Auditioning in Contemporary Egypt, in: American Ethnologist 2008/ 28,3: 623-649

- Houtman, Dick and Birgit Meyer (eds). Introduction, in *Things. Religion and the Question of Materiality*, New York 2012: Fordham University Press, 1-17
- Kaptchuk, Ted J. Placebo studies and ritual theory: a comparative analysis of Navajo, acupuncture and biomedical healing. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B Biol Sci.* 2011 June 27; 366(1572): 1849–1858.
- Keane, Webb. Language and Religion, in Duranti, A. (ed). *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, 431-48, Malden 2004: Blackwell
- Kerzer, David. Ritual, Politics, and Power, in: Grimes, Ronald (ed): *Readings in Ritual Studies*, Upper Saddle River, NJ 1995: Prentice Hall, 335-352
- Pentchev, Bissera V. The Performative Icon, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (Dec., 2006), 631-655
- Schieffelin, Edward, L.: Problematising Performance, in: Hughes-Freeland, Felicia (ed): *Ritual, Performance, Media*, London 1998: Routledge, 194-207
- Schneider, Mark. Culture-as-Text in the Work of C. Geertz, in: *Theory and Society* 1987/16:809-839
- Staal, Fritz. The Meaninglessness of Ritual, in Grimes, Ronald (ed): *Readings in Ritual Studies* Upper Saddle River, NJ 1995: Prentice Hall, 483-494
- Turner, Terence. Ritualized Politics, Politicized Ritual, in: Henn, Alexander and Klaus-Peter Köpping (eds). Introduction, *Rituals in an Unstable World. Contingency, Hybridity, Embodiment*, Frankfurt 2007: Peter Lang, 133-148
- Turner, Victor. Liminality and Communitas, in: Grimes, Ronald (ed): *Readings in Ritual Studies*, Upper Saddle River, NJ 1995: Prentice Hall >> 511-519
- Vidal, Denis. When the Gods Drink Milk. Empiricism and Belief in Contemporary Hinduism. *South Asia Research* 18(2):149-171 (1998)
- Winzeler, Robert. Anthropology and Religion. Anthropology and Religion. What We Know, Think, and Question, New York 2012: Altamira >> Religion Here and There 21-35

Source Material: Videos (mostly accessible through Hayden Library, preliminary selection)

- Buddha in the Land of Kami, Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2005, 53 mins
- Dreamings. The Art of Aboriginal Australia, Kanopy, 2006, 30 mins
- Full Circle. Return of a Totem Pole, 2008, 27 mins.
- Gardner and Staal. The Altar of Fire, 60 mins. 2008
- Inside Mecca, Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2003, 57 mins
- N/um Tchai. Kung Bushmen, John Marshall, 1969, 20 m
- Standing on Sacred Ground. Bullfrog Films, Fire and Ice, 2014, 57. Mins
- The Spirit of the Rice Field' 2013, 50 mins.
- Visions of the Divine, PBS, 2020, 50 mins.
- Young, Muslim and French, Wide Angle 2008, 57 mins

Weekly Schedule (preliminary)

Preliminaries		
Week 1	Technical Introduction	Assignments
Week 2	<p>Thematic Introduction: Problematizing Religion – Specifying Ritual</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bell. Paradigms Behind (and Before) the Modern Concept of Religion, 27-46 (on Canvas) <i>(not required for undergraduate students)</i> Winzeler. Religion Here and There, 21-35 (on Canvas) Bowen. 'Religions in Practice, 5-9 and 35-51 (on Canvas) Bowie. What is Ritual?, 140-147 (on Canvas) <p>VIDEO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buddha in the Land of Kami, Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2005, 53 mins (excerpts) Japan. The Spirit of the Rice Field 2013, 50 mins. 	
Classical Positions and Modern Critiques		
Week 3	<p>Ritual and Society (Durkheim, Indigeneity, Plural Society)</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durkheim, 'Ritual, Magic and the Sacred', in Grimes, 188-193 (textbook) Fields. Introduction to Durkheim 'Elementary Forms of Religious Life', 34-51 (on Canvas) Baumann. Ritual Implicates Others, in Coppet (ed) Understanding Ritual, 95-116 (on Canvas) <p>VIDEOS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dreamings. The Art of Aboriginal Australia, Kanopy, 2006, 30 mins Full Circle. Return of a Totem Pole, 2008, 27 mins. 	
Week 4	<p>Rites of Passage (Turner, Van Gennep, Islam, USA, Feminism)</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bowen. Rites of Passage, 142-150, (textbook) Turner. Liminality and Communitas, in Grimes 511-519 (textbook) Bell. Calendrical Rites, Rites of Passage 93-108 (on Canvas) Davis-Floyed. Ritual in the Hospital, in Grimes, 146-159 (textbook) <p>VIDEOS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inside Mecca, Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2003, 57 mins 	
Week 5	<p>Ritual and Culture (Eliade, Geertz, Bali, Symbolism, Colonialism)</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliade. Ritual and Myth, in: Grimes 194-200 (textbook) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell. Sacred Symbolism, 155-159 (on Canvas) • Geertz: Deep Play, in Grimes 217-230 (textbook) • Schneider. Culture-as-Text in the Work of C. Geertz, 809-839 (not required for undergraduate students) <p>VIDEO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trobriand Cricket, 1979, 50 mins. 	
Historical Interlude: Ritual, Reformation, Modernity		
Week 6	<p>Carnival versus Manners: Catholic Ritual and Protestant Scripture</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muir. Ritual in Early Modern Europe, pgs. 1-12, 85-146; (147-227 only for graduate students) (textbook) 	
Modern Approaches: Ritualization and Mediation, Senses and Things		
Week 7	<p>Ritualization and Ritual-like Action: Religion and Beyond (Theory, Method, Sociology)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asad. Towards a Genealogy of Ritual, in: Genealogies of Religion. 55-79 (on Canvas) (not required for undergraduate students) • Bell. 'Ritual-like Activities: Formalism, Traditionalism, Performance', 138-150, 160-164 (on Canvas) • Goffman: Interaction Ritual, in Grimes 269-279, (textbook) 	
Fall Break		
Week 8	<p>Images, Icons, Things (Christianity, Semiotics, Materiality)</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowen. Meaning and Materiality, 73-76, 88-102 (textbook) • Pentcheva: The Performative Icon, 632-655 (on Canvas), (not required for undergraduate students) • Houtman and Meyer. Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality, 1-17 (on Canvas) <p>WATCH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Images, PPT 	
Week 9	<p>Scripture, Speech, Sounds (Islam, Semantics, Linguistics)</p> <p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowen. Revelation and Authority in Islam, in Religions in Practice, 186-194 (textbook) • Hirschkind. The Ethics of Listening, 623-649 (on Canvas) • Keane. Religious Language, 14 pgs. Extract (on Canvas) (not required for undergraduate students) 	
Week 10	<p>Performance, Sacrifice, Theater (Hinduism, Mantra, Mimesis)</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowen. Hindu Worship, in Religions in Practice, 76-87 (textbook) • Schieffelin. Problematizing Performance, 194-207 (on Canvas) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staal. The Meaninglessness of Ritual, In Grimes (484-494 (textbook) (not required for undergraduate students) <p>VIDEO</p> <p>Gardner and Staal. The Altar of Fire, 60 mins. 2008</p>	
Ritual Politics: Power, Protest, Public Life		
Week 11	<p>Authority, Symbolism, Activism, (Kings, Tribes, Sacred Lands, Environmentalism)</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muir. Government as Ritual Process, 229-268 (textbook) • Kertzer. Ritual, Politics and Power, in Grimes 335-351 (textbook) • Turner. Ritualized Politics, Politicized Ritual, 133-146 (on Canvas) <p>VIDEO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing on Sacred Ground. Fire and Ice, Bullfrog Films, 2014, 57. Mins. 	
Week 12	<p>Globalization, Migration, Diaspora (Europe, Islam, Hinduism, Media)</p> <p>READINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowen. Migration and Diaspora, 220-238 (textbook) • Vidal. When the Gods Drink Milk. Empiricism and Belief in Contemporary Hinduism. 149-171 (on Canvas) <p>VIDEOS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young, Muslim and French, Wide Angle 2008, 57 mins • Voices of Muslim Women from the US South, Kanopy 2015, 30 mins. 	
Week 13	Student Presentations	
	Embodiment and Healing (Indigenous and Western Medicine)	
	<p>Shamanism and Placebo (Japanese Trance, Brazilian Candomblé, Navajo Chanting, Western Acupuncture)</p> <p>READINGS</p>	
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowen. Embodiment and Healing, 114-123, (textbook) • Kaptchuk. Placebo studies and ritual theory, 1848-1858 (on Canvas) <p>VIDEOS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/um Tchai. Kung Bushmen, John Marshall, 1969, 20 mins 	