

Religion and Culture 316 Syllabus

Ritual Studies

Fall Term, 2008; Sept.8-Dec. 1
Times: Monday, 5:30-8:20
Place: DAWB 2-108

Professor

Dr. Barry Stephenson

E-mail: bstephenson@wlu.ca

Office: DAWB 2-127

Hours: Mondays, 2-3:30pm

Phone: 884-0710, ex. 4349

Course Description

From the Calendar: 'A cross-culturally based course on the essentials of ritual. Topics may include the use of masks, music, costumes and sacred rites, as well as the problems of constructing and evaluating rites.' An introduction to the study of ritual, the course is organized around ritual types, drawing on examples from a variety of cultures and religious traditions. We explore a number of ritual genres, as well as theories and methods used to study ritual. By the end of the course, students should have an appreciation for the pervasiveness and diversity of ritual in religion and culture, as well as a basic understanding of approaches used to study, interpret, and theorize ritual.

Objectives

1. To raise awareness of the importance of ritual and performance in social-cultural life.
2. To develop knowledge and skills necessary for critical and reflective thinking about ritual.
3. To examine influential theories of ritual.
4. To develop research and writing skills.

Required Readings

- Tom F Driver, *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual*
- Course Anthology
- Research reading (for paper proposal and paper)

Evaluation

- Reading responses (4, approx. 2 pages each) 8-10 pages in total (25%) (Written responses to select course readings; see WebCT for details)
- Research proposal, 2 pp. (10%) (see WebCT for details)
- Research paper, 12-15pp. (35%) (see WebCT for details)
- Final Exam (30%)

Schedule

R = reading (Driver book and/or anthology); F = film

- Sept. 8th Introduction to Ritual & Ritual Studies
Ritualization and ethological views of ritual
R: Driver, Introduction and Ritualizing (chps 1-2)
R: Grimes, "Ritual," in Guide to the Study of Religion
- 15th Studying Ritual
R: Grimes, "Mapping the Ritual Field"
R: Stephenson, "A Beer for Martin"
- 22nd Worship (liturgical rites); Ritual Criticism
R: Driver, Christian Sacraments (chp 10)
R: Grimes, "Sitting and Eating," in *Beginnings*
- 29nd Games, Warfare, Contests (agonistic rites)
R: Driver, Modern Warfare (chp 3)
F: *Dead Birds*, Robert Gardner, 83min (1964)
- Oct. 6th *Dead Birds* discussion; Games & Spectacle
R: Ruby, "Robert Gardner and Anthropological Cinema"
R: MacAloon, "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle"
R: Pitt-Rivers, "The Spanish Bull Fight and kindred activities"
Research proposal due, via email, by 11:59pm
- October 13th - Thanksgiving, University closed (make up class, Monday, Dec. 1)**
- Oct. 20th Shamanism (magic, possession, trance)
R: Driver, Priest and Shaman (chp 4)
R: Turner, "Religious Specialists"
F: *In Pursuit of the Siberian Shaman*
- Oct. 27th Origin theories; Representing ritual
R: Driver, Ritual, Theater and Sacrifice (chp 5)
R: Segal, "The Myth-Ritualist Theory of Religion"
F: clips from *Nanook of the North*; *The Story of the Weeping Camel*; *Emerald Forest*
- Nov. 3rd F: Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, 122min (1935)
- 10th Ritual & performance theories
R: Schechner, "Restoration of Behavior"
R: Stephenson, "Charcot's Theatre of Hysteria"
R: Stephenson, "The Koan As Ritual Performance"
- 17th Ritual Criticism; Ritual Creativity
R: Driver, Ritual's Two Siblings (chp 6)
R: Grimes, "The Practical and Cultural Contexts of Ritual Criticism", from *Ritual Criticism*
F: *If Only I were an Indian*
- 24th Commemoration & Ceremony (political rites, civil religion)
Ideology, power, community
R: Driver, Order, Community (chps. 7 & 8)

R: Kertzer, "Ritual, Politics, Power," from *Ritual, Politics and Power*
R: Combs-Schilling, "Etching Patriarchal Rule"
F: *Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl, discussion
Research paper due, via email, by 11:59pm

Dec. 1st Clowning, Masking, Carnival (exchange rites, rites of inversion)
R: Driver, Transformation (chp 9)
R: Babcock, "Arrange me into Disorder"
R: Stephenson, "The Carnavalesque, Processing Change"

Course Policies

University Policies: 1. Plagiarism can result in failure of an assignment or, if a repeated offense, the entire course. Since it is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism, you must read the Calendar statement on academic and research misconduct. I may use software to check for plagiarism, and you may be required to submit written work in electronic form to facilitate such a check. 2. It is your responsibility to make yourself available for exams regardless of when they are scheduled. 3. Students with disabilities or special needs should contact Laurier's Accessible Learning Center for information regarding its services and resources, as well as review the Calendar for additional information regarding services available on campus. [Location: Arts Building 1C11; email Accessible_Learning@wlu.ca, telephone 884-0710 ext. 3086, TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf) 884-1141; fax: 884-6570] 4.

Instructor's Policies: 1. Assignments are due in class on the date specified, in the specified format. Papers that do not meet these specifications will be penalized. 2. Late papers unaccompanied by a letter from a doctor, counselor, or funeral director will be docked 10% per day. Even with such a letter, extension times must be reasonable, reflecting the seriousness of the illness or absence, and the note must specify what is considered a reasonable extension. 3. Do not leave papers in an instructor's or tutor's mail box without also emailing an electronic copy on or before the due date; otherwise, the paper is dated when in hand. 4. Except in the case of emergencies, you must notify the instructor or tutor *before* rather than *after* a late assignment is due. 5. Papers occasionally get lost, so you are required to retain a copy of your paper; do not hand in your *only* copy. 6. Attendance in this course is *required*; poor attendance or lack of participation can result in a lowering of your final grade or even failure of the course.

Fall/Winter 2008-2009 Additional Information

1. **Student Awareness of the Accessible Learning Centre:**
Students with disabilities or special needs are advised to contact Laurier's Accessible Learning Centre for information regarding its services and resources. Students are encouraged to review the Calendar for information regarding all services available on campus. Guidelines regarding the consideration of such students can be obtained by contacting the Accessible Learning Centre, ext. 3086, www.mylaurier.ca/accessible.htm

2. **For Evening Classes:**
"After class call 886-FOOT for a walk or drive home - No Walk is Too Short or Too Long!!!"

3. **Academic and Research Misconduct:**
Academic misconduct is an act by a student, or by students working on a team project, which may result in a false evaluation of the students(s), or which represents a deliberate attempt to unfairly gain an academic advantage. Academic misconduct includes: please refer to web site: www.wlu.ca/page.php?grp_id=158&p=8383&pv=1

Wilfrid Laurier University uses software that can check for plagiarism. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form and have it checked for plagiarism.

4. **Examination Deferrals:**
The academic date section of the 2008/2009 calendar, (web site: www.wlu.ca/calendars/section.php?cal=1&s=268&sp=800&ss=1142&y=33#Deferred_Examination_Policy clearly

states the examination date period for each semester. Students must note that they are required to reserve this time in their personal calendars for the examinations. Students who are considering registering to write MCAT, LSAT or GMAT or a similar examination, should select a time for those examinations that occurs outside the University examination period.

For additional information that describes the special circumstances for examination deferment, consult web site: www.wlu.ca/calendars/section.php?cal=1&s=268&sp=800&ss=1142&y=33#Special_Examinations of the 2008/2009 University on-line calendar.

The World Wide Web <<http://www.wlu.ca>> version is the up-to-date, official Academic Calendar.