Ritual theories have made key contributions to the study of religions and of human cultures generally. They call attention to behaviors rather than beliefs, and especially to repeated practices shaped by social custom and religious mandate. Ritual theory raises questions about how such practices should be interpreted. This course surveys major ritual theories of the last century. It also tests them against cultural practices involving purification and pollution.

Language of clean/unclean, pure/impure, pristine/polluted plays a central role in the way many cultures classify people, animals, and their habitats. Concern about pollution also features prominently in modern political discourse, but is usually distinguished from traditional concerns by labeling the latter, "ritual purity." This seminar therefore tests ritual theories by evaluating their adequacy for explaining purity practices, and also tests the adequacy of the idea of ritual purity itself.

Course Requirements:
Students are expected to be prepared to discuss in class all the required readings. In addition, each student will (1) prepare and present a report on one additional book or set of essays (listed after Report), and (2) write a substantive and original research paper on a subject related to the course topic, presenting the class with a summary during the last class meeting. (The finished research papers are due on or before Dec 15th.) The students work will be evaluated on the basis of class participation (20%), the oral and written book report (20%), the research presentation (10%) and the final research paper (50%). Late papers and reports will not be eligible for "A" grades. The format and citation style of the research paper should follow the guidelines of one of the following journals: JAAR, JR, or JBL.

Academic Integrity:
Complete academic honesty is expected of all students. Any incidence of academic dishonesty, as defined by the SU Academic Integrity Policy (see the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures) will result in both course sanctions and formal notification of the College of Arts & Sciences. Written assignments must represent the work of the individual student and scrupulously note the source of both wording and ideas that cannot reasonably be considered common knowledge in the field of the academic study of religion.

**Disability Policy:**
Any students that need accommodation because of disability should discuss it with the professor during office hours or by appointment and be prepared to provide documentation to the Office of Disability Services (ext. 4498 or 1371).

**Required Texts:**


The source material, as well as additional readings in rhetorical theory and analysis, will be available on-line or in class readers. For a full list of resources relevant to the topic of this course, consult the Bibliography below.

**Topics and Readings** (for full citations, see bibliography below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Texts:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 29</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
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</table>
           Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (all).  
           **Pollution**: Leviticus 11-17; Nehemiah 13  
           Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 38-62  
           Regev, "Non-Priestly Purity" |
           Burrus, "Pollution and Purity, Sin and Absolution: Christianity." |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Ritual</th>
<th>Polluition</th>
<th>Reports</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 19</td>
<td>Schultz, &quot;Doctors, Philosophers, and Christian Fathers on Menstrual Blood&quot;</td>
<td>Roll, &quot;The Old Rite of the Churching of Women&quot;</td>
<td>Reports:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 26</td>
<td><strong>Ritu</strong>al: Lévi-Strauss, <em>Naked Man</em>, last chapter. Geertz, <em>Interpretation of Culture</em>, chaps. 1, 4, 5, 6.</td>
<td><strong>Pollution</strong>: Zarabozo, &quot;<strong>Requirement of Tahir</strong>&quot;</td>
<td>Reports:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 21</td>
<td><strong>Ritu</strong>al &amp; <strong>Polluti</strong>on: Patton, <em>The Sea</em> (all)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Course Bibliography: *Ritual Theory, Pollution & Purity*
(starred * items are on reserve in Bird Library)

**Ritual Theories:**

Pollution & Purity:


- Regev, Eyal. "Non-Priestly Purity and its Religious Aspects according to Historical Sources and Archeological Findings." In Poorthuis and Schwartz, Purity and Holiness , 223-244a.