

Fall 2013

REL/ANT 619

Ritual Theory & Religious Practice

Thursdays 12:30-3:15 p.m. in HL 504

Instructor: [JIM WATTS](#) (Ph.D.)

Office: 501 HL

Phone: 443-5713

E-mail: [click here](#)

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:

- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Praeger, 1966.
- Patton, Kimberly. *The Sea Can Wash Away All Evils: Modern Marine Pollution and the Ancient Cathartic Ocean*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Rappaport, Roy A. *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969.
- Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Tr. M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1960.

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):

Day	Topic & Texts:
Aug 29	Introductions
Sep 5	<p>Ritual: Freud, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices." Van Gennep, <i>Rites of Passage</i> (all). Pollution: Leviticus 11-17; Nehemiah 13 Olyan, <i>Rites and Rank</i>, 38-62 Regev, "Non-Priestly Purity"</p>
Sep 12	<p>Ritual: Turner, <i>Ritual Process</i> (all). Pollution: Mark 7:1-23; Matt 23:23-26; Luke 8:43-48; Acts 10:1-11:18; 15:1-29; Burrus, "Pollution and Purity, Sin and Absolution: Christianity."</p>

	Schultz, "Doctors, Philosophers, and Christian Fathers on Menstrual Blood" Roll, "The Old Rite of the Churching of Women" Reports:
Sep 19	Ritual: Lévi-Strauss, <i>Naked Man</i> , last chapter. Geertz, <i>Interpretation of Culture</i> , chaps. 1, 4, 5, 6. Pollution: Zarabozo, " Requirement of Tahir " Reports:
Sep 26	Pollution: Douglas, <i>Purity and Danger</i> (all). ?? Parker, <i>Miasma</i> , 32-73, 281-307. Reports: Smith, <i>Clean</i>
Oct 3	Ritual: Grimes, <i>Ritual Criticism</i> , chaps. 1, 9, 10. Grimes, <i>Beginnings in Ritual Studies</i> , part 3. Pollution: Lamb, "Politics of Dirt and Gender" Durham, "Baths and Morality in Botswana" Boddy, "Purity and Conquest in Sudan" Reports: Patton, <i>Religion of the Gods</i>
Oct 10	Ritual: Staal, "Meaninglessness of Ritual." Smith, JZ. "Bare Facts of Ritual." Smith, JZ. <i>To Take Place</i> , 96-117. Smith, JZ. "Domestication of Sacrifice." Reports: Buc, <i>Dangers of Ritual</i>
Oct 17	Ritual: Tambiah, Stanley. "A Performative Approach to Ritual." Bell, <i>Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice</i> (all). Reports: Schechner, <i>Performance Theory</i>
Oct 24	Ritual: Rappaport, <i>Ritual and Religion</i> , chaps. 1, 2, 4, 5. Asad, "Toward a Genealogy of Ritual" Mahmood, "Rehearsed Spontaneity"
Oct 31	Pollution: Milgrom, "Rationale for Biblical Impurity," <i>Numbers</i> , 346-48. Milgrom, "Effect of the Sinner upon the Sanctuary," <i>Numbers</i> , 444-49. Milgrom, "Ethical Foundations of the Dietary System," <i>Leviticus</i> , 718-36. Eilberg-Schwartz, <i>Savage</i> , chap. 7 Klawans, <i>Impurity and Sin</i> , pp. v-42. Due: Paper topics and texts
Nov 7	Pollution: Olyan, "Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah" De Troyer, "Blood: A Threat to Holiness or Toward (Another) Holiness?" Ruane, "Impurity and the Creation of Difference" Korte, "Female Blood Rituals"
Nov 14	Ritual: Goody, "Construction of a Ritual Text" Watts, <i>Ritual and Rhetoric</i> , 1-36, 180-83. Pollution: Yoo, <i>Theory of Purity</i> (all) Due: Paper thesis, bibliography and outline
Nov 21	Ritual & Pollution: Patton, <i>The Sea</i> (all)

Dec 5	<i>Paper presentations</i>
Dec 16	Research Papers Due

Course Bibliography: [*Ritual Theory, Pollution & Purity*](#)

(starred * items are on reserve in Bird Library)

Ritual Theories:

- Asad, Talal. "Toward a Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual." *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993. 55-79.
- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Bell, Catherine, ed. *Teaching Ritual*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Tr. R. Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1977.
- Blondeau, A.-M. and K. Schipper. *Essais sur le rituel*. 3 vols. Louvain-Paris, 1988, 1990, 1995.
- Buc, Philippe. *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Burkert, Walter. *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religion*. Cambridge: Harvard, 1996.
- Chwe, Michael Suk-Young. *Rational Ritual: Culture, Coordination, and Common Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Cunningham, Graham. *Religion and Magic: Approaches and Theories*. New York: NYU Press, 1999.
- Driver, Tom. *The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites that Transform Our Lives and Our Communities*. New York: Harper San Francisco, 1991.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices." 1907. Available among other places in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, edited by Ronald L. Grimes. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996. Pages 212-217. Also at: <http://people.uncw.edu/bergh/par325/L31RFreud.htm>
- Gane, Roy E. *Ritual Dynamic Structure*. Gorgias Press, 2004.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Culture*. New York: Basic, 1973.
- Goody, Jack. "The Construction of a Ritual Text." In *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 2000), 47-62.
- Grimes, Ronald L. *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*. Rev. ed. Columbia: U. of South Carolina Press, 1995.
- Grimes, Ronald L. *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory*. Columbia: U. of South Carolina Press, 1990.
- Harvey, Graham. *Ritual and Religious Belief*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Klingbeil, Gerald A. *Bridging the Gap: Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. Tr. C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf. Garden

- City, NY: Doubleday, 1967.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Naked Man*. Tr. J. and D. Weightman. New York, 1981. (French, 1971).
 - Mahmood, Saba. "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of *Salat*." *American Ethnologist* 28/4 (2001) 827-853.
 - Patton, Kimberly. *Religion of the Gods: Ritual, Paradox, and Reflexivity* (Oxford, 2009).
 - Platvoet, Jan and Karel van der Toorn, eds. *Pluralism and Identity: Studies in Ritual Behaviour*. SHR 67. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
 - Porter, Barbara Nevling. *Ritual and Politics in Ancient Mesopotamia*. New Haven, CT : American Oriental Society, 2005.
 - Rappaport, Roy A. *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
 - Rappaport, Roy A. "Logos, Liturgy, and the Evolution of Humanity." In *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. 601-32.
 - Schechner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2003.
 - Smith, Jonathan Z. "The Bare Facts of Ritual." *History of Religions* 20 (1978) 112-127; reprinted in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 53-65.
 - Smith, Jonathan Z. "The Domestication of Sacrifice." In *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (ed. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly; Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1987), pp. 191-235.
 - Smith, Jonathan Z. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1987.
 - Staal, Fritz. "The Meaninglessness of Ritual." *Numen* 26/1 (1979), 2-22.
 - Staal, Fritz. *The Science of Ritual*. Poona, India: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1982.
 - Tambiah, Stanley J. "A Performative Approach to Ritual," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65 (1979), 113-69.
 - Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969.
 - Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Tr. M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1960.
 - Watts, James W. *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus: From Sacrifice to Scripture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Pollution & Purity:

- Arabestani, Mehrdad. "Ritual Purity and the Mandaean Identity." *Iran and the Caucasus* 16/2 (2012), 153-168.
- Bean, S. S. "Toward a Semiotics of "Purity" and "Pollution" in India." *American Ethnologist* 8 (1981) 575-95.
- Boddy, Janice. "Purity and Conquest in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan." In *Dirt, Undress, and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Body's Surface* (ed. Adeline. Masquelier, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 168-89.
- Burrus, Virginia. "Pollution and Purity, Sin and Absolution: Christianity." In *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide* (ed. Sarah Iles Johnston; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 511-13.
- Cressy, David. "Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women." In *Birth, Marriage & Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*. Oxford: Oxford UP,

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- De Troyer, Kristin. "Blood: A Threat to Holiness or Toward (Another) Holiness?" In Kristin De Troyer, Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, and Anne-Marie Korte, eds. *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), pp. 45-64.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Praeger, 1966.
- Douglas, Mary. *In the Wilderness: the Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers*. JSOTSup 158. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.
- Douglas, Mary. *Leviticus as Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Durham, Deborah. "Did You Bathe This Morning? Baths and Morality in Botswana." In *Dirt, Undress, and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Body's Surface* (ed. Adeline. Masquelier, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 190-212.
- Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism*. Bloomington: U. of Indiana, 1990.
- Ferm, Robert L. *Piety, Purity, Plenty: Images of Protestantism in America*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- Fonrobert, Charlotte Elisheva. *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Frandsen, Paul John. "The Menstrual 'Taboo' in Ancient Egypt." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 66/2 (April 2007), 81-106.
- Frevel, C. and C. Nihan. *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and ancient Judaism*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel," in Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (eds), *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth. Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, Winona Lake, Indiana, Eisenbrauns, 1983, pp. 399-414.
- Harrington, Hannah K. *Holiness: Rabbinic Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World*. Routledge, 2001.
- Harrington, Hannah K. *The Purity Texts. Companion to the Qumran Scrolls*. London: T. & T. Clark, 2004.
- Hayes, Christine E. *Gentile Impurity and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Horden, Peregrine. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- Jay, Nancy. *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity*. Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1992. Chapter on Catholic priesthood.
- Katz, Marion Holmes. *Body Of Text: The Emergence of the Sunni Law of Ritual Purity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.
- Kehnscherper, Günther. "The 'Churching of Women': Leviticus 12 and Luke 2:21-24: the Law of Purity and the Benediction of Mother." In *Studia patristica*, 18, pt 2. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1989. 380-384.
- Klawans, Jonathan. *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
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- Korte, Anne-Marie. "Female Blood Rituals: Cultural-Anthropological Findings and Feminist-Theological Reflections." In Kristin De Troyer, Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, and

- Anne-Marie Korte, eds. *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), pp. 45-64.
- Lamb, Sarah. "The Politics of Dirt and Gender." In *Dirt, Undress, and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Body's Surface* (ed. Adeline. Masquelier, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 213-232.
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 - Majer, Gerald. "On Contagions: Leviticus and the Fascination of the Abomination." [*Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 2/2 \(2001\) online.](#)
 - Meigs, A. S. "A Papuan Perspective on Pollution." *Manuscripta* 13 (1978) 304–18.
 - Milgrom, Jacob. "Rationale for Biblical Impurity." In *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 346-48, 444-47.
 - Milgrom, "Ethical Foundations of the Dietary System, 3. Prohibited Animals." In *Leviticus*, Anchor Bible Commentary 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 718-36.
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 - Olyan, Saul M. *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
 - Olyan, Saul M. "Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 35 (2004) 1-16.
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 - Patton, Kimberly. *The Sea Can Wash Away All Evils: Modern Marine Pollution and the Ancient Cathartic Ocean*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
 - Poirier, John C. "Purity Beyond the Temple in the Second Temple Era." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122/2 (2003) 247-265.
 - Polidoulis Kapsalis, Maria Fotini. "The Canons of Ritual Uncleaness and Women in the Orthodox Church." *Coptic Church Review* 19 (Wint 1998), 110-121.
 - Poorthuis, M. J. H. M. and J. Schwartz (eds.). *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
 - 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.
 - Roll, Susan K. "The Old Rite of the Churching of Women after Childbirth." In Kristin De Troyer, Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, and Anne-Marie Korte, eds. *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), pp. 117-141.
 - Rosen, L. N. "Contagion and Cataclysm: A Theoretical Approach to the Study of Ritual Pollution Beliefs." *African Studies* 32 (1973) 229–46.
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 - Schultz, Jennifer. "Doctors, Philosophers, and Christian Fathers on Menstrual Blood." In Kristin De Troyer, Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, and Anne-Marie Korte, eds. *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), pp. 97-116.
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- Wilson, E. Jan. *Holiness & Purity In Mesopotamia*. AOAT 237. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener/Ugarit Verlag, 1994.
- Wright, David P. *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literatures*. SBLDS 101. Atlanta: Scholars, 1987.
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