Course: **Anthropology of Ritual**

Mgr. Veronika Seidlová, Ph.D.

Annotation: Studies of ritual continue to be of critical interest in anthropology. This course explores anthropological approaches to ritual as a universal feature of human social life. Attention will be given to key anthropological concepts of ritual (e.g. rites of passage, liminality, anti-structure, communitas, ritual as performance). Although ritual is sometimes considered as primarily related to religion, the anthropological approach requires that ritual be situated not only in religious but also in secular contexts, such as: politics and power relations, the construction of social identities and boundaries, the reproduction and invention of 'tradition' or social memory practices, globalization, commodification etc. We will also problematize the dichotomy of sacred and secular while discussing practices of today’s individualized spirituality. Special focus will be paid to the negotiation of sound dimensions of ritual practice.

Key words: ritual, practice, performance, anthropological theory

Requirements: Minimum 500 words annotations of **6 assigned readings** uploaded in the moodle course page, here <https://dl1.cuni.cz/course/view.php?id=8610> AND a **10 min powerpoint presentation** of a selected ethnographic case of a ritual performance interpreted with the help of theoretical concepts from mandatory readings, uploaded in the moodle and orally presented by the student.

Focus group: Undergraduate students of Liberal Arts and Humanities in their 2nd or 3rd year of studies. (Certain CESS texts from anthropology included.)

1st week (24.2. 2025)

 Introductory lecture

2nd week (3.3.2025)

Miner, Horace. 1956. **Body Ritual Among Nacirema**. In: Spradley, J. P. - McCurdy, D. (eds.) 2012. *Conformity and conflict: readings in cultural anthropology*. 14th ed. Pearson. P. 287 – 291.

Gmelch, George. **Baseball Magic**. In: Spradley, J. P. - McCurdy, D. (eds.) 2012. *Conformity and conflict: readings in cultural anthropology*. 14th ed., p. 266 – 274.

3rd week (10.3.2025)

Dubisch, Jill. **Run for the Wall: An American Pilgrimage**. In: Spradley, J. P. - McCurdy, D. (eds.) 2012. *Conformity and conflict: readings in cultural anthropology*. 14th ed., p. 275 - 286.

4th week (17.3.2025)

Bowie, Fiona. **Ritual Theory, Rites of Passage, and Ritual Violence.** In: Bowie, Fiona. 2005. *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction*. 2 edition. Malden, MA ; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. p. 138 – 169**.**

**OR:** Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. **Religion and Ritual.** In: *Small Places, Large Issues…*, p. 209 - 226.

5th week (24.3.2025)

Turner, Victor. 1969. **Liminality and Communitas**. In: Turner, V. The *Ritual Process*. *Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 94-130.

6th week (31.3.2025)

 ***5th annotation***: Clifford Geertz: **Ritual as a Social Change: A Javanese Example**.

7th week (7.4.2025)

Schechner, Richard. **Ritual**. In: Schechner, R. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London – New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 52 – 88.

Seidlová, Veronika. 2018. „**Negotiation of Musical Remembrance within Jewish Ritual Performance in Prague’s Old-New Synagogue**“. *Journal of Urban Culture Research*, Vol. 16, s. 44 – 62.

8th week (14.4.2025)

***6th annotation***: Barry Stephenson*.* **Ritual Negotiations in Lutherland**. In: Husken, Ute – Neubert, Frank. 2011. *Negotiating Rites*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press. p. 81 – 95.

9th weeek (21.4.2025) *No class (Easter Monday)*

10th week (28.4.2025)

Seidlová, Veronika. 2013. **Singing One’s Way out of Marginality? The Musical-Religious Activities of a Female Hindu Ascetic in Rishikesh, India**. In: Jurková, Z., Stellmacher, M., Skořepová, Z., Kuhnová, K., Seidlová, V. 2013. Tóny z okrajů: Hudba a marginalita/Sounds from the Margins. Praha: Kher. 59-71; 130-145. E-book, available free from <http://www.kher.cz/eknihy_nase.php>

11th week (5.5.2025)

*To be specified*. Most likely: Ong, Aihwa. **The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia**. *American* *Ethnologist, Vol. 15, No. 1, Medical Anthropology (Feb., 1988), pp. 28-42.*

12th week (12.5.2025) Student’s presentations and discussion

13th week (19.5.2025) Student’s presentations and discussion

If needed: Examination period (26.5.2025) Remaining presentations

Powerpoint presentation details: 7-10 slides including List of references. Your presentation should consist of a description of an ethnographic case (approx. 2-3 pages) of an event which can be interpreted as a ritual performance. Either you can use a case from anthropological literature or you can try to ethnographically describe an event which you have yourself attended (include photos). The event must be framed with a theoretical concept(s) from the literature provided in the course, i.e. you would add interpretations of the observed. Put references in the text and include the final list of refences at the end. Please **upload the ppt presentation** in the moodle **by 11/5 and 18/5/ 2025 respectively.**