

Students will write a research essay that includes a clear argument or thesis statement. You will be expected to use a minimum of **four academic sources**. Students are permitted to use the textbook but must use three additional sources, which may include scholarly books or journal articles obtained through the UofM library online system. The essay must be a **minimum** of 6-7 pages (Approx. 1,800-2,100 words) in length but students may write up to a maximum of 8 pages. **In addition**, students are expected to include a title page (name, student number, course information & essay title), in-text citations, and a separate bibliography at the end of the essay. Accepted citation styles include: Chicago Style, APA, and MLA. Please use standard formatting: 12 point new times Roman font, 1” margins, double-spaced, with page numbers.

**Wikipedia and other non-academic websites may *NOT* be used as sources.

Students should submit an electronic copy (either word doc or PDF) through the correct dropbox folder on our UM learn course page on March 12, 2021 by 11:59pm.

Essay Topic: *Ritual Analysis*

You will select a specific ritual that we study in the course and the essay should include two parts: a descriptive section and an analytical section. First, describe what happens in a specific ritual/ceremony from a Western religious tradition that we study in this course. Description will answer questions like: Who is involved? Where does the ritual take place? What actions occur? What materials are used? What is happening during the ritual? Second, explain the *religious significance* of the ritual for the religious tradition. Why do people practice this ritual? What does it symbolize? Why is it significant? Here you want to explain how the ritual is interpreted and understood within the religion tradition. You will need connect it with particular doctrines, scriptures, or historical developments within the tradition (ie. is this ritual discussed in religious scripture?). You may also wish to explain if/how the ritual has changed over time and what the reasons are for this change.

Students must include a **THESIS STATEMENT** or argument in their essay, which should be located as **the final sentence of the introductory paragraph**. Your thesis statement should make a clear argument about the significance of the ritual (ie. it reflects a shift in identity, it solidifies a person’s position within the religious community, it publicly demonstrates commitment to a religious tradition, etc.). Your thesis will be determined after you have researched your selected ritual and you have familiarized yourself with several academic publications on the topic. Your essay should demonstrate critical thinking, include a clear analysis, and explain the arguments in your academic sources. Students should select **ONE ritual** from the following list:

Christianity: Communion/Eucharist

Additional Information:

Students must craft a thesis statement or argument BUT should avoid making any value judgments on their chosen ritual practice. In other words, you want to avoid the following types of statements:

- Anything regarding the ‘correctness’ or authenticity of a particular ritual from your own point of view
- Anything comparing the legitimacy of your selected ritual to other traditions
- Whether or not you might believe in a particular religious interpretation of your chosen ritual

You want to approach the ritual from an impartial perspective and omit any personal observations in your research essay. Your information for this paper will come from your academic sources, not your own experience (even if you are selecting a ritual with which you are familiar). If you have questions about this, please let me know. Your thesis statement will argue HOW or WHY this ritual is important to that particular religious tradition.