

### **Assignment 3 Ritual**

The purposes of this assignment are to get you to participate in a cultural event. You have developed your observation and interview skills in assignments 1 and 2. Now you will attempt participant observation, the hallmark of social-cultural anthropology. Congratulations on getting this far!

Rituals are orderly expressions of emotion in a society. To learn about them, it is important to participate in them. In some rituals, observing might be the only appropriate role for you to play (ex. A funeral). But even in these, you are doing things out of the ordinary as an observer, so focus on these and the role of the observers. For a funeral, for example, you must dress appropriately and act appropriately, even as an observer.

Your first task is to choose a ritual—there are both formal rituals, like church services, and informal rituals like a weekend brunch in an extended family.

#### **Preparation for fieldwork:**

You should educate yourself about the ritual through research and perhaps by interviewing participants who are especially knowledgeable (be sure to provide your course information letter and have them sign the permission form). Do your homework before asking for an interview.

#### **Field Work**

To increase your observation and analytical strength, try to observe the ritual several times (if it is possible), or observe a similar ritual to compare, or you can rely on your memory if it is a ritual that only occurs once in the study period, but in which you have previously participated. This will help you see what the rules of the ritual are and allow you to see what the unique contributions of the participants are.

#### **Written Report:**

Your written submission should not exceed 3000- 4000 words. There are 3 main parts:

1. Brief introduction (1-2 paragraphs). Include 2-4 references about the ritual.
2. Observations Section. Describe the ritual as completely as you can. Include your personal actions and feelings.
3. Describe and analyze your participation, preparation and feelings.
4. Analyze the ritual. What is the ritual (the symbols and meanings) and what emotions are expected to be expressed? Provide proof that it is a ritual. Explain which ritual category/categories it belongs to. Then, explain any deviations from normal, and what, if anything, those deviations mean.
5. Be sure to use some academic references. 3-5 are recommended.