

LS510

Sacred Ceremony and Ritual

January 5-16, 2015

2:00 to 5:00PM

Instructor: Paula Sampson (paulas@vst.edu)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human beings of all cultures use ceremony and symbol to communicate with the divine, mark important life events and form communities. This course will explore a variety of understandings of how sacred ceremony and public ritual operate in various cultures and religious traditions. It will employ theologies of imagination, ritual and the semiotics of culture to help Christian worship leaders and others, conduct ministry and/or educational tasks appropriately in an increasingly pluralistic world. This is an MDiv/PPL liturgy elective and provides the MAIS competencies in Ritual and Ceremony.

Competencies: This course is designed to meet the following course competencies such that students who complete the course and the assignments will be able to:

1. Describe several ways in which sacred ceremony is present in human communities and show it shapes the spiritual life
2. Describe how sacred ceremonies are formational in two Indigenous or other faith traditions and how they shape the spiritual life of followers of those traditions
3. Explain, using examples such as ecological action, peacemaking, justice advocacy, etc., how engagement with the sacred influences behaviors
4. Plan a public ritual/ceremony based on a hypothetical theme or event which demonstrates the ability to analyze a context and make appropriate use of symbols, prayer language, participants and rites given the circumstances of the theme or event.

Format: This course is delivered in the January intensive format: five afternoons a week, Monday through Friday, for two weeks

Expectations: Students in an intensive course are expected to attend class every day. Of course, extenuating circumstances and emergencies will be taken into consideration. Class participation, evidence of completed reading assignments and participation in planning and participating in group project are essential elements of credit fulfillment.

There will also be a 10 to 12 page paper/liturgy outline due on April 15, 2015 which will demonstrate achievement of the competencies. Details of this assignment will appear on Moodle and will be discussed on the first day of the course.

Required reading:

Selections from the bibliography will be assigned for each class day. These will be available on Moodle.

SYLLABUS

Read for January 5

The Sacred in Human Understanding

Read for January 6

Symbols and signs

Read for January 7

Engagement in Ritual and Ceremony

Read for January 8

Religious Imagination

Read for January 9

Metaphor, Liturgies and the Social Sciences

Organize for group project

Read for January 12

Inter-religious and Secular Considerations

Time set aside for group project work

Read for January 13

Semiotics of culture

Read for January 14

The sacred, the ceremonial and the ethical

Time set aside for project:

Read for January 15

Public Ceremony Beyond September 11 and Boston Strong

Time set aside for project

Read for January 16

Group project

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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