

Sacred Ritual in Secular Society

Writing 20/ Spring 2005
Sections 48 and 66

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Readings

All readings are posted on the Blackboard website for the course at www.courses.duke.edu under *Course Documents* or *E-Reserves*.

Course Overview

The primary goal of this course is to help you develop skills as a critical reader and writer of “academic texts,” a genre of writing that often appears unnecessarily complicated and esoteric to those unfamiliar with the form. The complex sentence structures, unfamiliar words, lengthy explanations and frequent references to unknown texts often lead readers to suspect that academic authors are purposely trying to confuse them. Since you will be frequently asked as a student at Duke to complete written assignments that conform to the expectations of academia, the mission of this course is to demystify academic texts and equip you with the tools of reasoning that you will need to become an effective intellectual writer. The skills you learn in this class will also help you beyond your college career as a member of an educated public that makes use of academic knowledge in a variety of ways.

Our work throughout the semester will revolve around developing competence in four practices that enable effective academic writing:

1. Reading closely and critically for the purposes of scholarly analysis
2. Responding to and making the use of the work of others
3. Drafting and revising texts
4. Making written texts public

Although all Writing 20 courses teach these core concepts, each course approaches academic writing through the lens of a particular area of study. This course will focus on the study of ritual as the term has been applied to both secular and religious practice. The writing you produce will adhere to the conventions surrounding the production of a social science field research report, including a literature review, a pilot study proposal and an interpretation of primary data. Each major assignment will build towards a final research report that will be printed in a bound anthology of all student work this semester.

Major Assignments

Your main work for this course will be to complete and report on a pilot study investigating a ritual practice of your choice. You will receive detailed guidelines for each phase of this assignment; however, a brief description of each part of the project is included below. Page ranges for each essay are based on 11 point Times New Roman Font, double line spacing, and one inch margins. Upper limits are firm on final drafts, i.e., pages over the limit will not be read by the instructor in determining the paper grade. Please see the attached instruction sheets detailing other formatting requirements and submission procedures for written assignments.

Essay 1 – Defending a Research Topic (4-6 pages)

The first section of most social science articles describes and comments on previous research conducted about the study topic. The goal of this type of writing is to demonstrate how your theoretical approach to the topic is both similar to and different from the approach that others have taken. Those of you who choose to investigate social practices that have not been previously studied as “rituals” will draw on the literature we discuss in class to demonstrate how our understanding may be enhanced by thinking of the practice as a ritual. Those who choose to investigate a practice that is commonly accepted as a ritual will need to show how you will add to what others have already argued.

Essay 2 – Defending Your Pilot Study Methodology (3-5 pages)

Field study reports should include information about how the study was conducted so that the reader can evaluate the validity of the data used to support research claims. In this second essay, you will describe and defend the methodology of the pilot study you will conduct. Your argument will include, for example, a justification of your choice of observational setting, informants, and questioning strategy.

Final Essay – Research Report (10-15 pages?)

The final research report will integrate Essay 1 and 2 (revising each as necessary) and add a report of your research findings. Since within the context of the course you will only be able to complete a small pilot study, your argument will be framed in terms of what your pilot study suggests about the best direction for future research about your topic, thus approaching the primary goal of social science writing: advancing our understanding of how and why people act as they do in particular social settings.

Making Findings Public

The insights gained from scholarly inquiry are meant to be shared with a larger public outside the university setting. The work you do in this class will be shared with a public beyond this classroom in two ways: (1) through a bound anthology containing all of the research reports produced this semester which you may share with friends, family, etc. and (2) through an open panel discussion in which you will present key findings in groups of four. More information about these venues will be distributed later in the semester.

Weekly Assignments

I will ask you to complete various assignments (1-3 pages in length) that will allow you to work with key theoretical concepts on a smaller scale. Each Thursday you will receive an assignment sheet detailing the reading and writing assignments due the following week. These assignments will be graded on a scale of 1 to 10.

Often, these written assignments will be the focus of our class discussion. We may approach the content of a reading by talking about what you have written in response to an author's ideas. Sometimes I will bring copies of individual papers into the classroom, so that we can together examine those texts more closely. In other instances, you may be asked to read your response aloud to the class. Thus, you should assume that the reader for any written piece created in this class is not only the instructor, but also your classmates.

Class Participation

Since this is a seminar-style course that depends heavily on active student participation, an evaluation of your class participation (including class discussion and peer feedback exercises) will be incorporated into your final grade.

Your participation in class discussions will be graded daily on a scale of 1 to 3 according to the following system:

- 1 point earned for being in class
- 1 point earned for being on time
- 1 point earned for contributing to class discussion

Since illness and other unavoidable circumstances may require you to be absent from class from time to time, the two lowest daily grades will be dropped from your final participation grade. Participation grades will be recorded on the Blackboard site for this course using the confidential grade reporting function (accessed through "Tools," "View Grades").

This course rests on the belief that drafting, revision and the incorporation of feedback improve the quality of academic writing. You will be required to produce several drafts of major assignments. Your grade for each project will reflect not only your success in the final draft, but a measure of your efforts in the process of revision. To aid you in making meaningful revisions to early drafts of your work, you will be asked to share your writing with other students in this class and to respond in turn to the work of your classmates. We will arrange for several venues in which responses may be exchanged, including large and small group discussions and written responses utilizing Microsoft Word's "Track Changes" function.

The usefulness of peer feedback depends on the active participation of all class members. In light of this, you will be graded not only as a writer, but as a critical respondent to the writing of your classmates. Written forms of feedback will be graded on a scale of 1 to 10 and included as part of your participation grade. You will receive detailed instructions on the form that feedback should take for each exercise.

Assessment Project

The Duke University Writing Department is conducting a study this semester to evaluate how student writing changes over the course of Writing 20. All Writing 20 students will be asked to complete two essays for this project – one at week two in the semester and one at week twelve. You will be given course credit for completion of these assignments. The week two assignment will count as Weekly Assignment 3 (10 points) and be graded simply on the basis of whether you complete the assignment and hand it in on time. The week twelve assignment will count as 5% of your final grade and will be graded according to criteria that will be handed out at a later date.

Grading

Your final grade in the course will be calculated in the following way:

| | Grade | Weight | Grade Points(Grade x Weight) |
|---------------------|-------|--------|------------------------------|
| Essay 1 | | 20 % | |
| Essay 2 | | 20 % | |
| Final Essay | | 35 % | |
| Panel Discussion | | 5 % | |
| Weekly Assignments | | 10 % | |
| Class Participation | | 5 % | |
| Assessment Essay | | 5 % | |
| | | | <i>(Total = Final Grade)</i> |

Late Assignments

Late assignments and papers will be graded down one letter grade per day. Work handed in over 15 minutes past the deadline will be considered one day late. (For example, if an assignment due on Monday at 10 am is handed in at 11am on Monday, the grade will drop from a A- to a B-; or from 9/10 points to 8/10 points.)

Acknowledging Influences

All of our work in this course will be conducted according to the spirit of integrity advanced by the Duke Community Standard <http://www.integrity.duke.edu/ugrad>. Acts of plagiarism will result in failure of this course and/or judicial action.

The key ethical question in any writing course has to do with acknowledging the influence of others on your thought and prose. When you quote, paraphrase, build upon, respond to, or in any other way draw upon the texts or ideas of others in your writing (as you will be required to do in this course) you must note your use of their work. This is especially true in the case of published sources, however, if you draw heavily on the comments and ideas of fellow students, teachers, or friends, their contributions should be acknowledged in either footnotes or a brief statement of acknowledgement at the end of your paper.¹

¹ In the spirit of such acknowledgement, I would like to thank my colleagues in the University Writing Program for their ongoing input on the course documents I write.

I would like you to use APA citation style in your assignments for this class. (APA is the most common format used in the social sciences, but be sure to check with other instructors about what style they would like you to use.) You can find information about using APA on the Duke Library site (look in the green “Research” box under citing sources) and in various APA style manuals.

But the really interesting questions in this course will have less to do with the mechanics of citation than with the dynamics of use and revision. How do you not simply ventriloquize the words and ideas of others but rather extend, counter, or revise them? In that sense, the question of how to acknowledge and respond to the work of others will be central to everything we do in this course.

Duke University’s Writing Studio

The Writing Studio offers free help with drafting, revising and editing any writing project associated with any course at Duke. Trained tutors are available to help not only students who are struggling with writing, but those who are confident writers in search of critical feedback to help them polish their work. You can meet with a tutor on a one-time basis to help with a particularly difficult assignment, or meet with a tutor on a regular basis. Visit their website at <http://www.cfw.duke.edu/wstudio> to learn more about the Writing Studio and/or to make an appointment.

Portfolio @ Duke

As a Duke undergraduate, you have the opportunity to make use of an online archive, Portfolio@Duke, to showcase your accomplishments – in Writing 20 as well as in other courses or activities – to potential employers and to others inside and outside the Duke community. To access your Portfolio@Duke, go to <http://www.duke.edu/studentportfolio>.

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Essay 1 – Literature Review in Defense of a Research Question

Length: 4-6 pages

Annotated Bibliography Due (WA4): Wed 2/9, 10 am

First Draft Due: Sun 2/13, 3 pm

Personal Conferences: Feb 14 – Feb 17 (Class cancelled Feb 17)

Final Draft Due: Sun 2/20, 11 pm

As we have discussed in class, social science reports generally contain three main sections:

1. Literature Review
2. Defense of Methodology
3. Interpretation of Findings

In this first essay, you will be writing the literature review portion of your final project for this course. The purpose of a literature review is to convince the reader that the research question you have chosen to ask (1) has not been satisfactorily answered before and (2) is an important question to ask. You accomplish this goal by characterizing what has already been written about your research topic (specifically discussing the strengths and limits of that research) and showing how your work will ADD TO what we already understand about the practice you have chosen to study.

Choosing a Topic

For this project, you may choose to investigate any cultural practice that you think might be better understood through the lens of ritual theory. The important question is NOT whether the practice you choose IS a ritual. Some of you may choose practices that are commonly thought of as ritual, while others may pick things that are commonly categorized in another way. In choosing a topic, I suggest you consider how writing about the practice you have chosen as a “ritual” might illuminate some aspect of the form and/or function of the practice.

- On a practical level, you should also think about choosing a practice that you will be able to observe and/or to interview participants about between March 5th and 25th.
- Only one person per section may investigate any given practice.
- Topic approval will be given on a rolling basis via e-mail between Tuesday, February 1 at 5pm and Thursday, February 3 at 11 pm. The first person to e-mail me with a particular viable topic request will receive approval for that topic. (E-mails time-stamped before 5pm on Tuesday will not be considered.)
- Please use the following format in submitting topic proposals:
 1. **Social Practice to Investigate:**_____
 2. **Any articles/books located to date about the topic:**_____
 3. **Initial ideas about how you will collect data about this practice:**_____
- You may submit up to two topics at one time (in case your first choice is taken).

Coming up with a Research Question

The type of qualitative research you will be doing in your pilot study will not be driven by a hypothesis testing approach. In other words, you will not set out to answer a simple “yes” or “no” question, but will instead start with a general idea of the types of things you might like to pay attention to when observing and interviewing. For example, as I shared with you on the first day of class, my family partakes in a *Feast of the Seven Fishes* on Christmas Eve. Our practice of this Roman Catholic tradition carries with it a certain irony in that none of us are practicing Catholics or live a particularly “Italian” lifestyle. If I were to choose to study this practice, I would probably be interested in exploring why people like me (4th generation descendants of Italian immigrants) participate in this practice. Since I know that I observe this tradition in order to feel connected to my ancestors, I might be tempted to ask a research question something like:

“Does the *Feast of the Seven Fishes* create a bond between generations?”

However, the wording of this question forces a rather uninteresting answer of either “yes, it creates a bond” or “no, it doesn’t.” In addition, this question is so specific that I may unwittingly force an interpretation of the ritual by focusing so much attention on one aspect that I miss other interesting aspects of why people participate in the ritual.

On the flip side, I might ask a question such as:

“Why do people participate in the *Feast of the Seven Fishes*?”

Although many qualitative studies may start with broad questions such as this, my experience is that for a project such as this, in which the time and scope of the research are limited, more focused questions lead to better final student projects.

So, in this hypothetical case, I would turn to the existing research in order to help me formulate a question that builds off my initial hunch about what might be interesting about this ritual. My literature search turns up four articles that I decide to use in my project:

Article A: An interpretation of the symbols used in the feast and an historical account of the origins, variations, and evolution of the Feast of the Seven Fishes.

Article B: An argument about the importance of food in ritual performance. Draws on Freud’s ideas in *Totem and Taboo* about how ritual meals represent “eating the totem” or digesting the symbolic blood of the tribe, resulting in a strengthening of kinship bonds. The article briefly mentions the Feast of the Seven Fishes.

Article C: A case study of how the Feast of the Seven Fishes is practiced in a small Italian village. Finds that participants clearly articulate the origins of the feast and the symbols involved. The researcher argues that the lack of variation between participant explanations of the ritual (in many cases exact phrases are repeated by many participants) indicates that “correct” performance of the ritual is key to social acceptance within this village.

Article D: A study of how celebrations of St. Patrick’s Day were adapted by early Irish-American settlers. The author argues that the rituals associated with the holiday were used to communicate both a connection with Irish heritage as well as a clear break from those traditions as participants came to see themselves as “Americans.” The Feast of the Seven Fishes is not mentioned in the article at all.

Based on this literature, I might conclude that I can describe the origins and traditional symbolism of the Feast by using articles A and C. I could use article B to introduce the idea that the Feast may function to strengthen kinship bonds, as illustrated in part by article C. However, the research I have found does not talk about the practice of the Feast of the Seven Fishes outside of Italy. I might use article D to show that the practice of this ritual feast may have been altered by American immigrants to serve different identity needs. Based on these thoughts, I come up with the following two-part research question:

How is the Feast of the Seven Fishes practiced among 21st Century Americans of Italian decent (as compared to traditional Italian practice)?

What reasons do participants give for their continued practice of the ritual?

Although these research questions are still broad enough to allow me some flexibility in my research, they are also specific enough to focus my attention on the key issue in which I am interested, namely how and why ritual may be practiced outside the original cultural setting and without a clear knowledge of the symbolic significance of the practice. Notice how my specific research question about the Feast of the Seven Fishes also hints at a larger question about ritual in general. (I would make this larger question explicit in my literature review.) Note, also, that the answers I give to these questions will involve detailed description and analysis, not a simple “yes” or “no.”

So, some things to think about in coming up with your research question:

1. Is your research question sufficiently open-ended to require detailed discussion in order to answer it?
2. Does the question clearly grow out of not only your own intuition, but the existing literature about the practice you have chosen?
3. Will the answer to your specific question tell you something about ritual in general?
4. What type of data needs to be collected in order to answer this question? Can you reasonably gather that type of data in the timeframe allotted?
5. What terms will need to be explained in your question? (you may need to draw on the literature to help you define those terms)

Organizing your Literature Review

Rather than organizing your paper around the articles you find, use your research question to structure your argument. Specifically, this means that your essay WILL NOT look like this:

Intro
Article A
Article B
Article C
Article D
Conclusion

Instead, the paper should be organized around claims that help you defend your research question and draw on the literature as needed to help you make your argument. In other words, you are basically arguing that “this is the best research question for me to ask, because...” Claims that help support that argument might include “...because this other aspect has been covered already,” “...because the answer to this question will tell us something important about ritual in general,” “...because what that other researcher found may not be true in another setting where the ritual is performed,” etc.

So, the organization ends up looking more like this:

Intro
Claim 1 (supported by Article A and C)
Claim 2 (supported by Article B)
Claim 3 (Supported by Article D and C – refuted by B)
Etc.
Conclusion

Grading Criteria

Although you will receive grades for Essays 1 and 2, you will be graded on specific criteria that recognize that these essays will go through another round of revision before being incorporated into the Final Essay. For Essay 1, I will be grading you according to these criteria:

- Do you draw on at least 4 scholarly sources related to your practice? (plus any of the ritual theory articles we have talked about in class)
- Do you show that your research will attempt to fill a gap in the existing knowledge about your practice?
- Do you effectively “come to terms” (ala. Harris) with the texts you use in your argument?
- Do you use the defense of your research question to drive the organization of your essay?
- Does your introduction effectively draw the readers in and suggest what they will gain from reading your work? In other words, do you answer the “so what?” question?
- Do you use sufficient details and examples to back up your claims?
- Do you use APA style correctly?
- Is your essay free of careless spelling and grammatical errors? In other words, do a preliminary edit on the piece, but we will work more closely with lower order concerns, such as conciseness, later in the semester.

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Essay 2 - Defense of a Research Method

Length: 3-5 pages

Initial Plan Due (WA5): Thursday, Feb 24, in class

First Draft Due: Monday 2/28, noon, to group pages

Feedback Assignment 1 Due: Tuesday, March 1 – **4 hard copies** to class

Final Draft Due: Friday, March 6, 5 pm, to Dropbox

In Essay 1, you defended a research question for your study, drawing on the available literature about your topic to convince the reader that your question (1) has not been answered before and (2) will be an interesting question to ask, in part because the answer may help us understand something about ritual in general. In this essay, you will explain and defend the methodological approach you will take in answering your question.

The “methods” section of a social science research report tells the reader how data was collected in the study. This section is intended to convince the reader that the data used to back up the conclusions in the study is relatively unbiased and reflects naturally occurring social behavior. Of course, every approach to data collection has both strengths and limitations. Some common perceived trade-offs of choosing different methodologies include:

1. **Breadth vs. Depth:** A large scale survey creates a confidence that our conclusions may describe the practices of a large population, while a smaller case study may give us more detailed data that allows us to discuss more complicated theoretical issues.
2. **Qualitative (descriptive, “non-countable”) vs. Quantitative (“countable”) data:** Qualitative data provides descriptive depth, but it can be difficult to equate the unique comments of one participant with those of another. Quantitative data is collected using standardized measures, making it easy to correlate answers, although nuances are often missed.
3. **Emic vs Etic perspective:** Those who participate in a social practice may explain what they do according to one set of criteria, while researchers who observe the practice may offer alternative explanations. Which perspective to privilege in social science writing is a constant site of discussion.

These are just a few of the most common types of choices a researcher makes when designing a study. The methods section points to both the strengths and limits of the choices you make when designing your

study. Acknowledging different approaches you might have taken, and explaining why you chose as you did, will enhance your credibility in this section. Ultimately, your methods section should help convince the readers that the conclusions you make are within the limitations of the data you collect.

To give you some idea of what a methods section might look like, I have posted a version of the final methods section from my doctoral dissertation, “As Time Goes By: Ritualized Remembering through Wedding Photography,” on the Blackboard site under “Course Documents.” Also, for your reference, I have posted the methods section from my dissertation proposal so that you see how this section changed after I completed the study.

In this Project

- You must complete at least two face-to-face interviews and record them on your iPod or other digital recorder.
- You must include an interview questionnaire/guide as an appendix to your paper.
- You may also observe the ritual taking place (taking detailed field notes) or conduct surveys (paper or e-mail) at your discretion.
- If you are only conducting interviews, you should plan on conducting at least five (more if each one is less than 15 minutes). You may collect as much data as you like - the more you have, the easier it will be to observe trends. However, in this pilot study, you will be graded on the quality of your interpretations and conclusions, not the quantity of data.
- You are free to use other forms of data collection in addition to the one listed above – be creative!

In Essay 2, you should discuss your research plan, including issues such as:

- Who will you interview?
- Where/when will you observe?
- Will you collect other types of data?
- How will you get people to feel comfortable talking to you?
- What part of your research question do you expect to be addressed by each type of data collected?
- Is your approach notably similar to an approach you read about in one of your sources in Essay 1? Is it significantly different from any of your sources?

Some things to keep in mind when writing interview questions:

- What type of language will make your participants feel at ease? (avoid “ritual” jargon)
- Ask interviewees specific questions to get them to describe their practices in detail. Save questions about the meaning of their actions for later in the interview.
- Think of points in the interview where you might need to ask follow-ups such as “tell me more about that...”

- Avoid using too many yes/no questions – the goal is to get participants to talk as much as possible!
- Avoid leading questions that will only produce data that supports what you think you want to conclude. The goal is to discover new answers – not just collect support for what you think you already know. If your hunches are right, the data to support them will emerge – if not, be ready to listen for an alternative answer!

Grading Criteria

Although you will receive grades for Essays 1 and 2, you will be graded on specific criteria that recognize that these essays will go through another round of revision before being incorporated into the Final Essay. For Essay 2, I will be grading you according to these criteria:

- Do you fully explain and defend your research method?
- Do you show how each part of your plan relates to your research question?
- Do you recognize and discuss other approaches that might have been taken? (Anticipating and arguing against counterarguments.)
- Do you discuss how you will make your research participants feel comfortable with you?
- Do you use effective transitions to lead your audience through your argument?
- Do you use concise language?
- Do you use APA style correctly?

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Final Project – Adding Something New to the Understanding of (a) Ritual

Length: Flexible – I anticipate the average being around 15 pages.

DUE DATES

WA6 (*involves completing a partial draft for your tutoring session*): 3/28-3/31

WA7 (*involves completing a partial draft for whole-class workshops*): 3/29, 3/31 and 4/5

Complete Draft 1: Wednesday, 4/6 to Group Pages, 5 pm

Feedback 2: Thursday, April 7 – 2 hard copies to class

Complete Draft 2: Hard Copy to Class for Editing Workshop, Thursday, 4/12

Final Draft: Friday, 4/15 to Group Pages, 11:45 pm

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is it! The last hurrah! In this final project you will interpret the data you have gathered in your pilot study in order to add something new to the understanding of the particular ritual that you studied in this project. The conclusions you make should also point to a greater understanding of rituals in general. In other words, your writing should make clear to the reader how the knowledge you gained in this project might be “portable.” How might the conclusions you reach be forwarded by future scholars of ritual?

The intellectual moves this paper needs to make include:

1. Summarizing and evaluating previous research about your practice, showing how you arrived at your research question (a revision of Essay 1).
2. Summarizing and defending the choices you made in collecting and analyzing data (a revision of Essay 2).
3. Describing and interpreting the pilot data you collected. Specifically show the reader how the data you present supports the claims you make about your original research question.
4. Discussing the implications of this study for our understanding of ritual in general and for future research projects. This move includes referring back to the literature to show how your findings fit into the larger field of study.

INSTRUCTOR ADVICE FOR APPROACHING THIS REPORT

In Steinar Kvale's (1996 – hard copy handed out in class) chapter on “Improving Interview Reports,” he identifies four sections that constitute the typical structure of an interview research report (see page 263): Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion. We will discuss the structure he proposes in class, especially questioning how a report might vary from this strict structure while still accomplishing the same goals. However, I will use Kvale's structure here to organize some advice I would like to offer as you are writing this final project.

Introduction/Thematizing/Literature Review

Your paper should start with a strong introductory paragraph that explicitly tells the reader what he/she will get out of reading the paper. Do not worry about giving away the ending (this is not a suspense novel)! Granted, you may not want to explain all of your conclusions here at the beginning of the paper. Ideally, the reader will not even be able to completely understand or accept your conclusions at this point – otherwise there would be no need for the rest of the paper. However, you should give the reader a reasonable idea of where your paper is headed and how your conclusions might be useful in other contexts.

Following the introductory paragraph, you will need to explain your research question, situating it in the existing literature. This section will be a revision of your Essay 1. I want to emphasize REVISION – which does not mean “copy and paste.” You will need to make another round of choices. Which parts of the original literature review seem particularly relevant now that you have done your research? Might you present some sources in a more abbreviated manner? Do you need to come to terms more fully with some sources? If you plan on countering a source in interpreting your data, how much should you say about that source and the stance you will take towards it now – and how much should you save for later?

Method

Kvale (p. 256) says that a report should “contribute new knowledge” and “be cast in a form that allows the conclusions to be checked by the reader.” In this section you do much of the work that allows the readers to evaluate your data, including how you conducted your interviews, surveys and observations, how you handled the data (including transcribing and tallying of survey data), and how you analyzed the data (how did you determine categories of similar quotes, for example?). Again, this section will be based on your earlier essay, but will need to be a major revision. It is easy for the methods section to get long and dry. To avoid this, ask yourself: What details do the readers really need? Where are they likely to question my methods? Don't waste time defending choices that few people will question. As a proposal, Essay 2 needed more detail than the final report. Think in terms of including:

- The types of data collected (include exact numbers of interviews, surveys, etc. – refer your reader to your questionnaires in the appendix.)
- How that data is connected to your research question.
- Any particular concerns with balancing your insider/outsider status.

***Be sure to remember to put your method section in the past tense now.

Results

The results and discussion are the most important parts of your paper, since here is where you “add something new.” Think of these sections as comprising at least half of your paper.

In the results section you will summarize and interpret the data you have collected. You will need to group different quotes and observations according to claims you think you can make about your research question. Refer to p. 266 of Kvale for advice about how to use quotes in this section.

Discussion

Although Kvale identifies “discussion” as a separate section to your report, some of your discussion may actually be woven in with the presentation of your results.

Think of **results** as being statements of: *This is what I found.*

While **discussion** consists of statements of: *This is what it means.*

It is often awkward and boring to present a bunch of data organized into categories without immediately commenting on the implications of that data. So I encourage you to think in terms of presenting results and discussion in whatever order will be easiest for the reader to understand.

Nevertheless, the report will need to end with a few paragraphs devoted completely to discussion of the implications of your findings for our understanding of ritual in general and for future research projects.

At some point in your discussion of your results, you may need to bring in other sources to help you explain your findings. For example, many of you are conceptualizing your studies as partial challenges to Turner’s (1967) categories of liminality and communitas. You may need to come to terms with Turner in more detail as you present your results in order to effectively “add to” Turner’s ideas.

A few general comments:

- Refer to your project as a “study” not an “experiment.” Experiments are a particular type of study that involve random samples (usually) and experimenter control of variables in the study. For example, clinical drug trials would be considered “experiments.”
- Avoid using the royal “we.” These studies were conducted by one person, so go ahead and use “I” when you need to in order to talk about methods without passive voice, for example.
- Since this is a pilot study in which you have only had time to gather a small amount of data, it will not be appropriate to make definitive global claims. A pilot study is meant to (1) make preliminary conclusions that a future study might build on and (2) test particular methodological strategies. Therefore, you should think of this project in terms like:
 - “This pilot study suggests this answer to the research question...”
 - “Future research might build on these findings by...”
 - “If a larger study upheld the conclusions of this study, we would know_____ about ritual in general...”
 - “Since the interview strategy of this study was successful in gathering X type of data, future studies might benefit from this approach (or Y method did not work well – future studies might try Z different strategy...”

GRADING CRITERIA

A strong paper will...

1. Use Other Texts Effectively to Facilitate the Author's Argument

- Do you effectively situate your question within the existing literature?
- Do you show that your research fills a gap in the existing knowledge about your practice?
- Do you effectively “come to terms” (ala. Harris) with the texts you use in your argument?

2. Adapt the Argument to the Intended Audience

(Remember our intended audience includes not only members of both class sections, but anyone who might read the printed course publication, and anyone who may attend the panel discussions.)

- Does your introduction effectively draw the readers in and suggest what they will gain from reading your work? In other words, do you answer the “so what?” question?
- Do you explicitly link your findings to larger implications for the study of ritual?
- Do you use effective transitions to lead your audience through your argument?
- Does your title effectively frame your study?
- Do you define terms that those outside of this class may not understand?

3. Present Evidence to Support Claims

- Do you fully yet succinctly explain and defend your research method?
- Do you show how each type of data relates to your research question?
- Do you organize your discussion of your results in a manner that relates the evidence back to the research question?
- Do you make your claims in language that reflects the pilot nature of the study? In other words, do you avoid over-generalizing your results?
- Do you use quotes from your interviews effectively (see Kvale, p. 266)?

4. Follow Academic Writing Conventions

- Do you use concise language?
- Do you use APA style correctly?
- Is your essay free of spelling and grammatical errors?

Sacred Ritual in Secular Society

Panel Discussion

DUE DATES

Thursday, 3/14, End of Class: Title of Panel Discussion Due – in writing to Instructor

Tuesday, 3/19, End of class: Hardcopy of Handout Due to Instructor if you want her to make copies

Thursday, 3/21, in class: Panel Discussions – BOTH classes held in White 106 that day

The point of these panel discussions is for you to get a chance to talk about the great work you have done this semester with a slightly larger audience than our class. In addition, the structure of the discussions is designed to help you think about how your studies relate to one another. Imagine a future writer discovers your studies. What would they be able to say they already know from reading your collective work? What future research questions might your studies inspire?

REQUIREMENTS

- Create a one-page handout with a title for your panel and an annotated bibliography of the four studies, to be handed out to the audience the day of the presentation (20 copies if you bring your own).
- Give a 10 minute presentation. All members should speak about 2.5 minutes. It is important to practice and make sure you have the timing right – we don't have a lot of room to go over! Your presentation should include:
 - VERY brief “elevator speech” from each panel member
 - One or two claims about ritual that your studies as a whole support.
 - Evidence from each study to illustrate your claim(s).
 - Implications of your work for future research.
 - You may use Powerpoint if you wish (with imbedded audio files as evidence – ask me if you need to know how to do this).
- Field questions from the audience (this is the “discussion” part).