



## Ritual in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam

RRE Interaction Course; spring term 2022

**Taught by:** [Stig Frøyshov](#) (FS) and [Anne Katrine Gudme](#) (AKG) at the University of Oslo (UiO); **UiO Course code:** [RRE4206](#)

### Course Description:

Religious ritual such as prayer, worship, rites, and liturgy, is an essential part of the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, both in their practice and their belief. The course introduces the worship traditions of each of these religions as they appear in approximately the first millennium CE, with an emphasis on their historical evolution.

The first part of the course is intended to give students a general knowledge of ritual and liturgical theory and terminology, as well as of the content of the three worship traditions.

During the second part of the course, we focus on selected themes in a comparative perspective. What comprises daily worship for Jews, Christians and Muslims during the first millennium CE? How are ordinary and extraordinary life events framed and affected by ritual practices? Themes for analysis and discussion are ritual meals and the Eucharist, weekly and annual rituals and religious feasts and fasts, rituals that mark important life events and transitions, such as birth, death and initiation, rituals of purification, ritual efficacy and the relationship between ritual and materiality.

The relationship and mutual influences between the three worship traditions will be explored throughout the course, and there will be an emphasis on applying ritual and liturgical theory to the examples that we study.

### Teaching:

Teaching is offered in digital form as ten online learning units supplemented by a two-day compact seminar in Copenhagen, March 17-18, 2022. There will be 10 online assignments throughout the term.

A learning unit may consist of recommended readings (cf. the reading list/syllabus in [Leganto](#)), one or more brief online lectures, a zoom gathering and an assignment. The format may vary a bit from week to week. All information will be made available in Canvas.

### Exam:

The student writes a paper between eight and ten pages in length on a subject, question or material chosen by the student and approved by the teacher. To qualify for the exam the students must complete 80% (minimum 8 out of 10) of the e-learning assignments.





## Preliminary course plan

### **Part 1: Ritual theory + overview (calendar weeks 5 to 9)**

- 1) Defining Ritual + Intro to ritual theory (AKG)
- 2) Methodological perspectives: Types of rites, ritual structures, ritual evolution (SF)
- 3) Christian Worship: Overview (SF)
- 4) Jewish Worship: Overview (SF)
- 5) Muslim Worship: Overview (SF)

### **Compact Course in Copenhagen (calendar week 11)**

- 6) **Mortuary Ritual** (AKG)
  - 6A: Presentation of case-study from Beit Shearim in Roman Palestine;
  - 6B: Workshop: Applying theory to material culture (including 'fieldwork' in local cemeteries etc.)
  
- 7) **Prayer** (SF)
  - 7A: Daily prayer in the three religions
  - 7B: Workshop on Daily prayer

### **Part 2: Selected themes (Calendar weeks 12-14 and 16-17)**

- 8) From Jewish meal to Christian Eucharist (SF)
- 9) Weekly and annual rituals: Special weekday; fasts and feasts (SF)
- 10) Sacred Space, Ritual impurity/purity (AKG)
- 11) Rites of passage: pilgrimage and ritual transformation/ritual efficacy (AKG)
- 12) Initiation as a rite of passage (SF)

