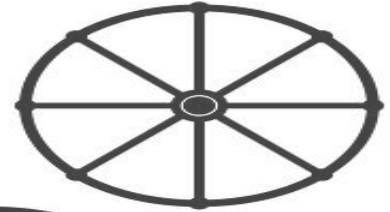
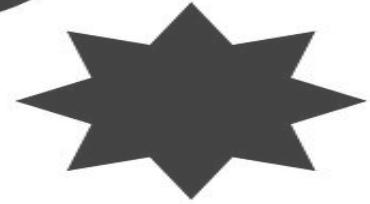




Religion & Ritual



Today's Class

- What is religion? Ritual?
- What purposes do they serve?
- A Functionalist explanation
- Examples from your own life

Learning Goals

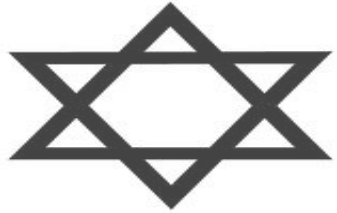
Success Criteria

Students will...

- understand anthropological terms related to religion and ritual
- understand how religion is a reflection of culture
- be able to apply functional perspective to religious activity

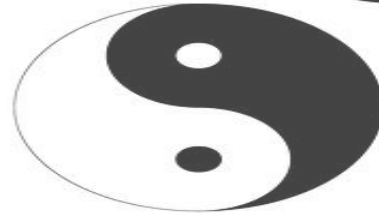
Students can...

- Apply anthropological terms in various contexts
- Apply anthropological terms to their own experiences



**What is the difference between:
(i) religion, (ii) spirituality and (iii) superstition?**

What is the purpose of religion?



Religion

Organized set of cultural beliefs of the supernatural that people use to cope with the problems of existence

- Helps people to understand ultimate questions
- Satisfies psychological needs common to all people in the face of uncertainty
- Provides community and affirms a person's place in society



Religion

Because religion answers questions about both this life and the next it is a great indicator of cultural beliefs/values:

- morality
- hierarchy (male/female, place of ancestors)
- family structure

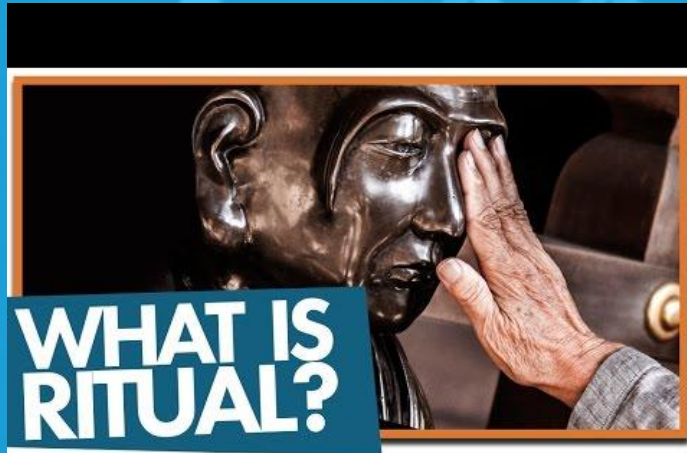
Religion is also often closely tied to some of the most important *rites of passage* (coming of age, weddings, funerals, etc.)



Religious Ritual

(Good subject for presentations...)

- What makes something a 'ritual'?
- How would you define 'ritual'?
- Do rituals need to be religious in nature?
Why or why not?



Religious Ritual

(Good subject for presentations...)

Complex concept and difficult to define:

- Related to the supernatural/mystical?
- Repetitive? Bodily? Structured? Formal?

“An assertion of difference from the ordinary”

- A way of acting that is more important or powerful than normal
- Rituals employ culturally specific space, timing, or meaning to place significance
- Every religion (and culture) has specific rituals that satisfy a variety of purposes



Anthropological Concepts / Key Terms



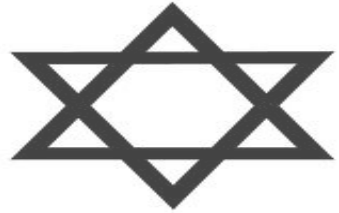
<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
<i>Fetish</i>	A specific object with magical powers
<i>Magic</i>	Strategies that people use to control or connect to the supernatural
<i>Pilgrimage</i>	A journey to a shrine or spiritual place capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices
<i>Ritual</i>	A prescribed behaviour in which there is no clear physical connection between the action and the desired outcome (added significance/connection to supernatural)
<i>Sorcery</i>	The use of magic to harm others
<i>Taboo</i>	A restriction on behaviour that ensures a good outcome (often related to breaking of norms)
<i>Witchcraft</i>	Projected evil to hurt others; whether aware or unaware of effect

“Magic”



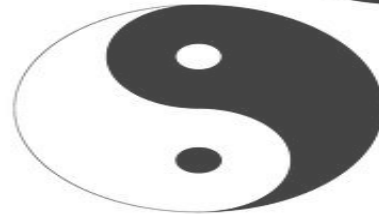
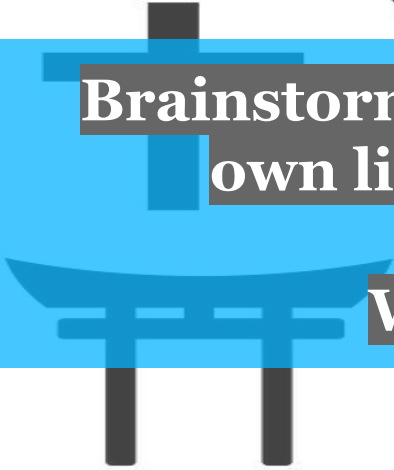
Though commonly associated with religious belief, the previous terms (*ritual*, *fetish*, *taboo*) can also be applied to the ‘mundane’

- People are more likely to believe in ‘magic’ when outcome is important or risky
 - Trobrianders of New Guinea perform specific rituals before going to shark infested waters but not calm lagoon
- Athletes are famous for their specific (and weird) ‘rituals’ thought to bring them success



Brainstorm some rituals, taboos, fetishes in your own life/culture (religious or otherwise)

We'll write them on the board



Functional Theory & Religion



- Every belief, action, or relationship in a culture functions to meet the needs of its citizens
- Interdependence of all parts of culture
- Even highly ceremonial actions can serve real social/economic/political function

Functional Theory & Your Rituals

Choose one of the rituals/taboo/fetishes that we've brainstormed

- **What function/purpose does it serve?**
 - Does it answer 'ultimate' questions?
 - Does it provide community?
 - Does this 'ceremonial act' serve a social/economic/political function?
- **What does this ritual/taboo/fetish indicate about the values/beliefs of the culture?**



Homework

→ Keep working on your presentations!

