In Seattle, we are lucky to live in an incredibly diverse cultural environment, wherein people follow a wide range of different belief systems. In this assignment, you will get the chance to apply some of the concepts that we have been covered on belief systems by doing an analysis of an example of religious practice.

**First**, choose a place of worship to conduct your study. If you are part of a particular belief system, make sure you choose a place of worship that is different from your normal belief system. For example, if you are Christian, try to attend a non-Christian service. I’ve attached a list of potential possibilities of places you could attend. Alternately, if you know someone who is part of a faith different from your own and can arrange to attend his or her worship service, this is ideal. In choosing a place of worship to attend, make sure you will be able to understand the language that the majority of the ritual is conducted in.

**Second**, make arrangements to attend some form of ritual activity. Be aware that emic descriptions of what constitutes a “ritual activity” may vary, you may want to look for / ask about things like guided meditation, devotional practice, worship service, etc. If you are going to a place where you do not know anyone, it is a good idea to call ahead before attending and explain the nature of your assignment to ensure it will be acceptable for you to attend. Make it clear that you are a student attempting to gain understanding of different belief systems, not a potential convert. If you are uncomfortable attending alone and wish to bring a friend with you, make sure this is appropriate.

**Third**, do a bit of research on the belief system you will be visiting, so that you know what to expect and will be somewhat familiar with the concepts and terminology that might be used. Of course, the specific ritual you attend may not be exactly like what you read about in your research, but you will at least have some basic ideas in place. Also do a bit of research on what is considered appropriate behavior, attire, etc. at the place you will be attending (or ask the person you speak with when arranging the visit). It is not a good idea to accidentally offend your hosts right off the bat.

**Fourth**, attend the ritual, paying attention to and taking notes on the following:

*Ritual Space:* Where does the ritual occur? How is the space organized (open, enclosed, permanent, temporary, are some areas more important / less important, etc.)? What colors are present? What is the light like? How do people use the space? Is there a hierarchy implicit in where people are in the space? How are boundaries marked?

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1 If it is not appropriate to take notes during the service, try to remember as much as you can so that you can write it down when you have the opportunity.
Ritual Objects: What, and how many, objects are associated with the rite? What are their physical dimensions, shape, weight, color? What is done with the object before, during, and after the ritual? How did the object become special? Does power reside in it or pass through it?

Ritual Time: At what time of day does the ritual occur? On what date? Does it always happen at this time / day? Is the ritual a recurring one, or is it a one time event? What is the duration of the rite? Does it have phases, interludes, or breaks? Does the rite commemorate historical eras or events? Is it anticipating the future?

Ritual Sound and Language: What type of language is used in the ritual? Are non-linguistic sounds used? If so, who interprets them? Are certain words repeated more often than others? Is song used? If so, what type and how? Is written language used during the ritual? Is the service multilingual? If so, how are the different languages used? What moods are evoked through language and song? What moods are avoided?

Ritual Identity: What types of religious practitioners are present? What is their role in the ritual? Who else is present? Do some people participate more than others? Do participants undergo a transformation during the rite? Is identity marked by certain types of clothing or other material symbols? What feelings do people have (or are expected to have) when they are participating in the rite? Are the feelings individual or collective? Is there room for innovation or personal experimentation?

Ritual Action: What kinds of actions are performed as part of the rite? In what order to they occur? Are some actions more emphasized than others? What meanings, causes, or goals do participants attribute to their actions? What parts of the body are emphasized by participants’ kinesthetic style? What senses are most employed?

After having attended the ritual and taken notes on these aspects, you should have a good, thorough description of the ritual process. You have described the rite, but not yet interpreted it. Now you should begin thinking about the important question – Why?

Fifth, write your essay analyzing the ritual experience. In this essay you should compile your notes into a coherent description of the ritual, but you should also attempt interpretation of the ritual process. How do the different aspects of the ritual come together to achieve a goal? What type of ritual is occurring? Why are the people all present, engaging in this ritual? What do they get out of it? How does this ritual relate to the broader structure of the overall belief system? In order to do a thorough interpretation, you may need to do some further research on the overall tradition.

Turn in: Your essay describing and analyzing the ritual. Your paper should be in essay format (proper sentence and paragraph structure, intro and conclusion), and around 3-5 pages long, preferably typed, standard margins, 12 point font, 1.5 spaced. Your grade will be based on both the content of your assignment (e.g. are you using and applying anthropological concepts correctly) and the presentation of it (e.g. structure, spelling, grammar).

Due: Thursday, March 7 at the beginning of class. Late assignments will not be accepted.
Potential Sites in North Seattle

Lake City Presbyterian Church
3841 NE 123rd Street
Seattle, Washington 98125
(206) 362-6878
office@lakecitypres.org
http://lakecitypres.blogspot.com/

Seattle Buddhist Center
12056 15th Ave NE
Unit C-2
Seattle, WA 98125
(801) 872-8332
info@seattlebuddhistcenter.org
http://www.seattlebuddhistcenter.org/index.php

St. Catherine of Siena Church
8500 8th Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98115
(206) 524-8800
http://www.stcatherineparish.net/

Epic Life Church
10006 Aurora Ave. N
Seattle, WA 98133
206 552 9586
discover@epiclifechurch.org
http://www.epiclifechurch.org/

Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church
19421 Ashworth Avenue North
Shoreline, WA 98133
(206) 542-1391
holyapostles@comcast.net
http://www.holyapostlesgo.org/

Congregation Beth Shalom
6800 35th Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98115
(206) 524-0075
http://www.bethshalomseattle.org/

North Seattle Friends Church
7740 24th Ave. NE
Seattle, WA 98115
(206) 525-8800
office@northseattlefriends.org
http://www.northseattlefriends.org/

Center for Spiritual Living
5801 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle WA 98105
206-527-8801
http://www.spiritualiving.org/

Idris Mosque
1420 NE Northgate Way
Seattle, WA 98125
(206) 363-3013
http://www.idrismosque.com/intro/introduction.html

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2716 Broadway East
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