

Observing Religious Ritual in Digital Spaces

Overview:

Ethnography is the study of people and cultures through observation and participation. In this assignment, you will act as a virtual ethnographer, using *Immersive Religion's* 360-degree videos and virtual tours to study a religious service. Your goal is to observe, take detailed notes, and analyze how ritual, space, and community interact within the tradition you are studying.

Learning Objectives:

By completing this assignment, you will:

1. Develop observational and analytical skills essential to religious studies.
2. Recognize the significance of ritual, spatial organization, and community in religious practice.
3. Reflect on the benefits and limitations of studying religion through immersive digital media.

Step 1: Choose a Religious Service

Select one of the available immersive resources that document a religious ritual. Examples include:

- **Jummah Prayer** (Islam) – A Friday congregational prayer in a mosque.
- **Catholic Mass** (Christianity) – A structured service including prayer, scripture, and Eucharist.
- **Puja to Durga** (Hinduism) – A ritual offering and worship service.

Step 2: Prepare for Your Observation

Before watching, do some brief research on the ritual:

- What is its purpose within the tradition?
- Who typically participates, and what roles do they play?
- Are there specific symbols, prayers, or gestures you should watch for?

Step 3: Conduct Your Virtual Observation

Watch the 360-degree video or explore the virtual tour at least twice:

1. **First Viewing:** Experience the ritual as a participant might. Note your first impressions.
2. **Second Viewing:** Take notes using the following prompts:
 - **Space:** How is the religious space arranged? How does it guide movement and interaction?
 - **Ritual Actions:** What specific gestures, postures, or practices are being performed?
 - **Community & Roles:** How do people interact? Are there distinct roles (e.g., clergy, lay participants, musicians)?

Step 4: Write a 500-Word Reflection

Your reflection should be structured as follows:

1. **Brief Description (100 words)**
 - Identify the ritual you observed and its significance in the tradition.
 - Provide a concise description of what took place.
2. **Key Observations (200 words)**
 - Describe notable aspects of space, movement, sounds, or interactions.
 - How did participants engage with the ritual?
3. **Analysis & Reflection (200 words)**
 - How did the space, ritual actions, and community dynamics shape the experience?
 - What insights did you gain about the tradition from this immersive experience?
 - What aspects of the ritual were difficult to fully grasp through virtual observation?

Rubric (20 pts):

Category	Excellent (5 pts)	Satisfactory (3-4 pts)	Needs Improvement (0-2 pts)
Observational Detail (5 pts)	Clear, specific descriptions with strong engagement.	Some detail, but lacks depth.	Vague or general observations.
Analysis & Interpretation (5 pts)	Thoughtful discussion of ritual, space, and community.	Basic analysis, missing some connections.	Little or no critical engagement.
Reflection on Digital Ethnography (5 pts)	Thoughtful reflection on strengths and challenges of virtual study.	Some engagement, but lacks depth.	Superficial or absent discussion.
Clarity & Organization (5 pts)	Well-structured and clearly written.	Mostly clear but may have minor issues.	Disorganized or difficult to follow.