

**Graduate Students Seminar: Ritual and Order in India: Past and Present**  
**Prof. Frederick Smith, Iowa University**

India, and South Asia in general, is land of ritual. It is now, and was three thousand years ago. Indians have always been drawn to complexity in religion, ritual, performance, human relations, and polity in general. Indeed, identity in India can arguably be said to be formulated by the richness of ritual structure in which everyone's life is immersed. Thus, ritual in India has always been a rich field for both its own inhabitants and for scholars. In this course, we will explore the nature of ritual, what's unique about ritual in India, look at the history of ritual in India and its relationship with performance of many varieties. We will move from Vedic sacrifice in antiquity to Pāṇḍav līlā today, to the ritualization of history in the construction of pilgrimage routes as sacred space, to Dussera blessings on motor scooters and tantrik and other "magical" divination, from ritual that helps people deal with the future, namely astrology and its extensions, to medicine and medical ritual throughout Indian history, and to the ritual and ritualization of politics.