

HIST 349: Reading Guide – Rituals

1. Why is medieval society so ritualistic? What place do rituals have in this society?
2. How do the sacraments help to define Christians and Christianity? With what benefits do the sacraments endow a Christian (think beyond the spiritual)?
3. Why would a husband have to and explain the mass to his young wife?
4. Do the sacraments and blessing help the Church to enact any kind of social control? If so, how?
5. What aspects of a prayer, blessing or charm give it authority? What assumptions about reality are implicit in each of them?
6. Why would charms be found in a medieval medicine manual?
7. What was the place of confession in medieval Christianity? What do the confessions that we read reveal about how medieval people thought about confession?
8. How did medieval people imagine the Eucharist? What benefits could it give them? What powers did it have? On what did they base these beliefs?