

Request for Note Taker

- I would like to request a volunteer notetaker for a student enrolled in this class
- If you already take notes on a computer, sharing them would be greatly appreciated
- If you're looking for volunteer hours, this is great for it!
- If interested, please contact the **Centre for Student Accessibility**
 - accessibility@uregina.ca



RITUAL



Last Class

- How do we, as scholars of religion, understand “myth”
- How do we define “ritual”

Ritual

- Ritual ≠ a thing
- Ritual is human action
- “Ritualizing” Catherine Bell (Nye 2008, 130)
- Rituals DO things



Recognizing Rituals

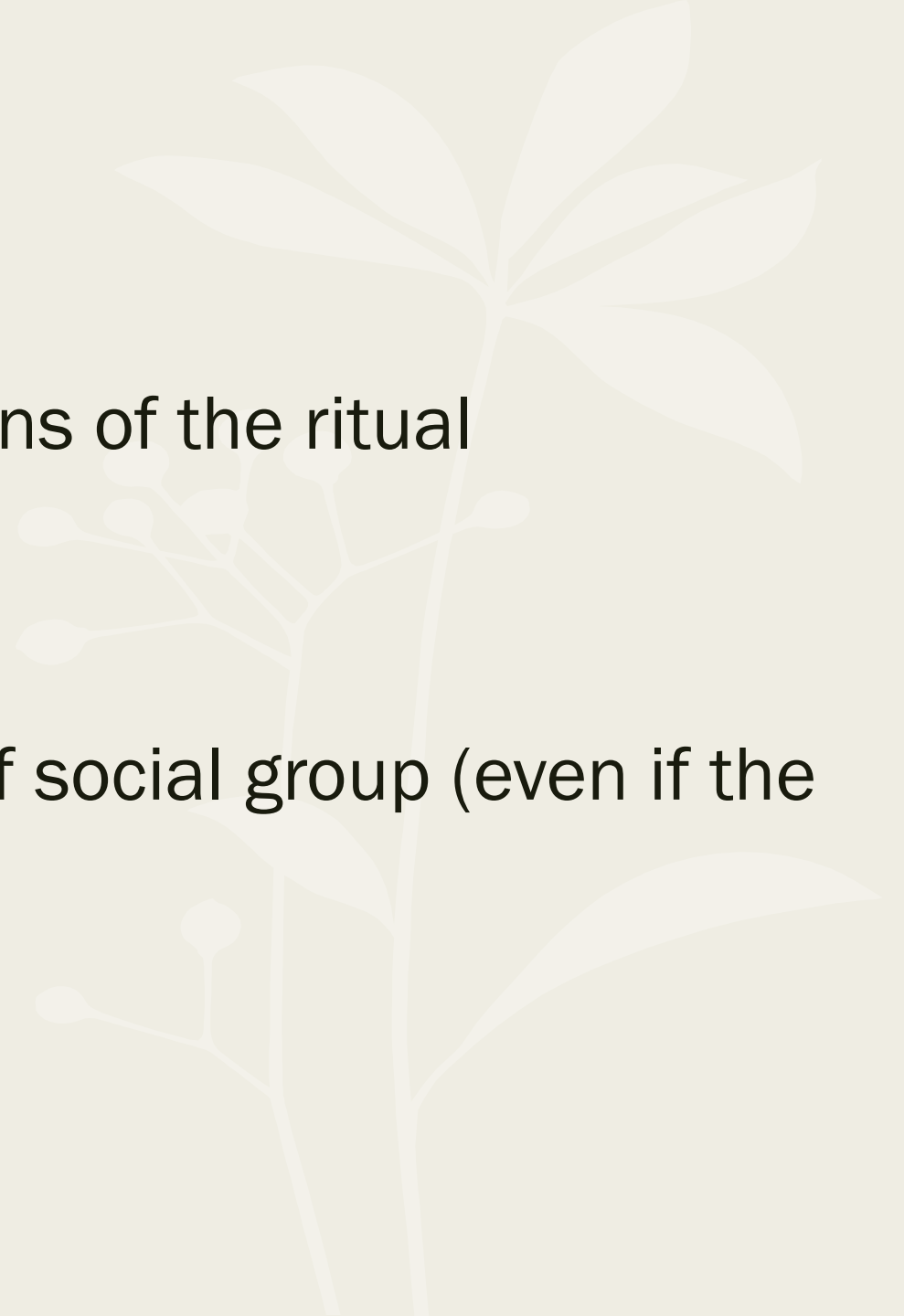
- How might we identify a particular practice as a ritual?
- Symbols
- Communication
- Expression of meaning
- Performance

Symbol

- Ritual as “symbolic action” (Nye, p. 135)
- Turner: symbol as “lowest unit of ritual”
- Symbols: represent more than their material properties
- E.g., bread and wine (Christianity)
- Anything can be a symbol!
- Meaning is in the **relation** between symbol and person/group

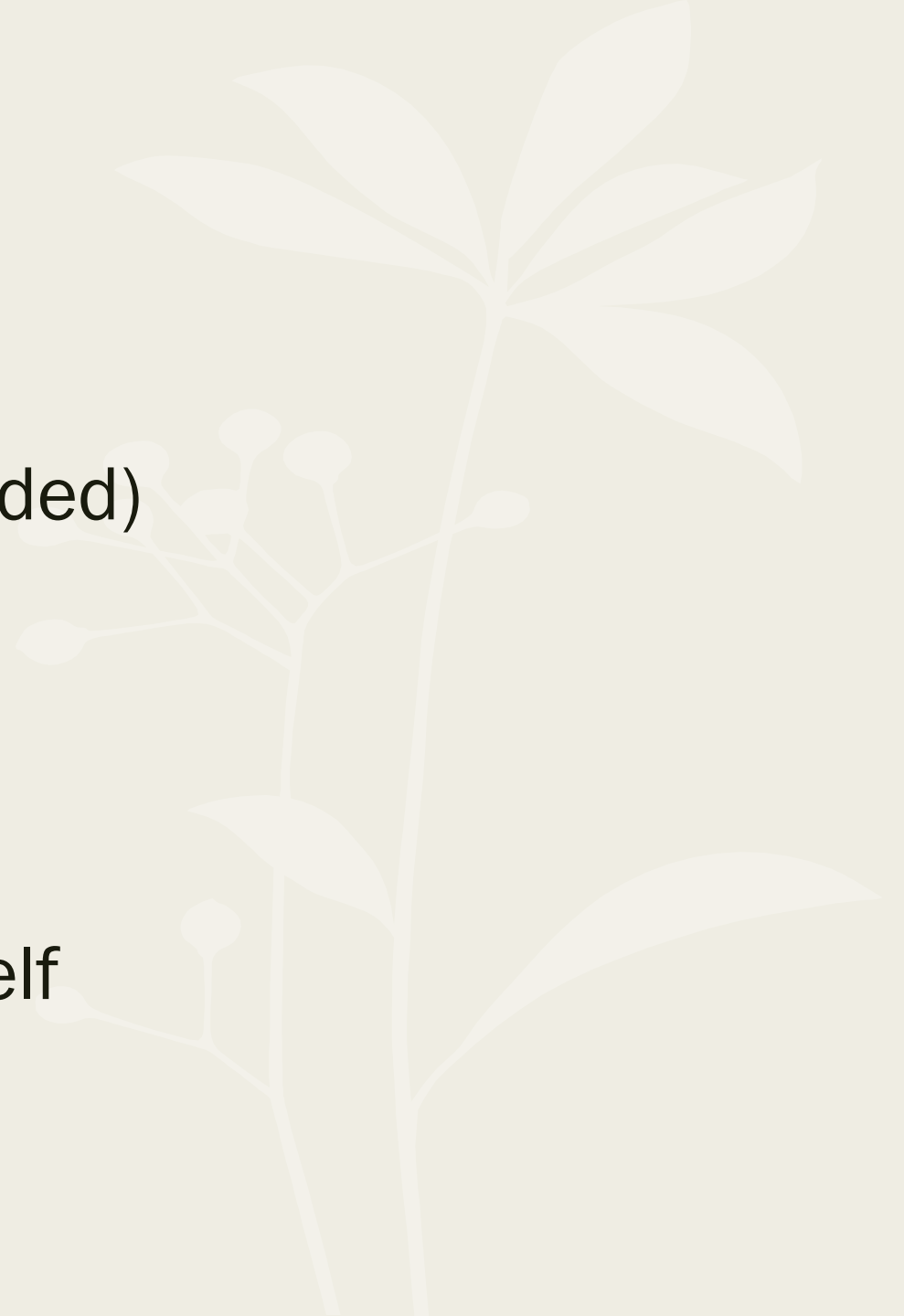
Communication

- Promote message beyond the actions of the ritual
- Holiday meals with family
- Religious services
- Rituals communicate importance of social group (even if the actual event is a disaster)



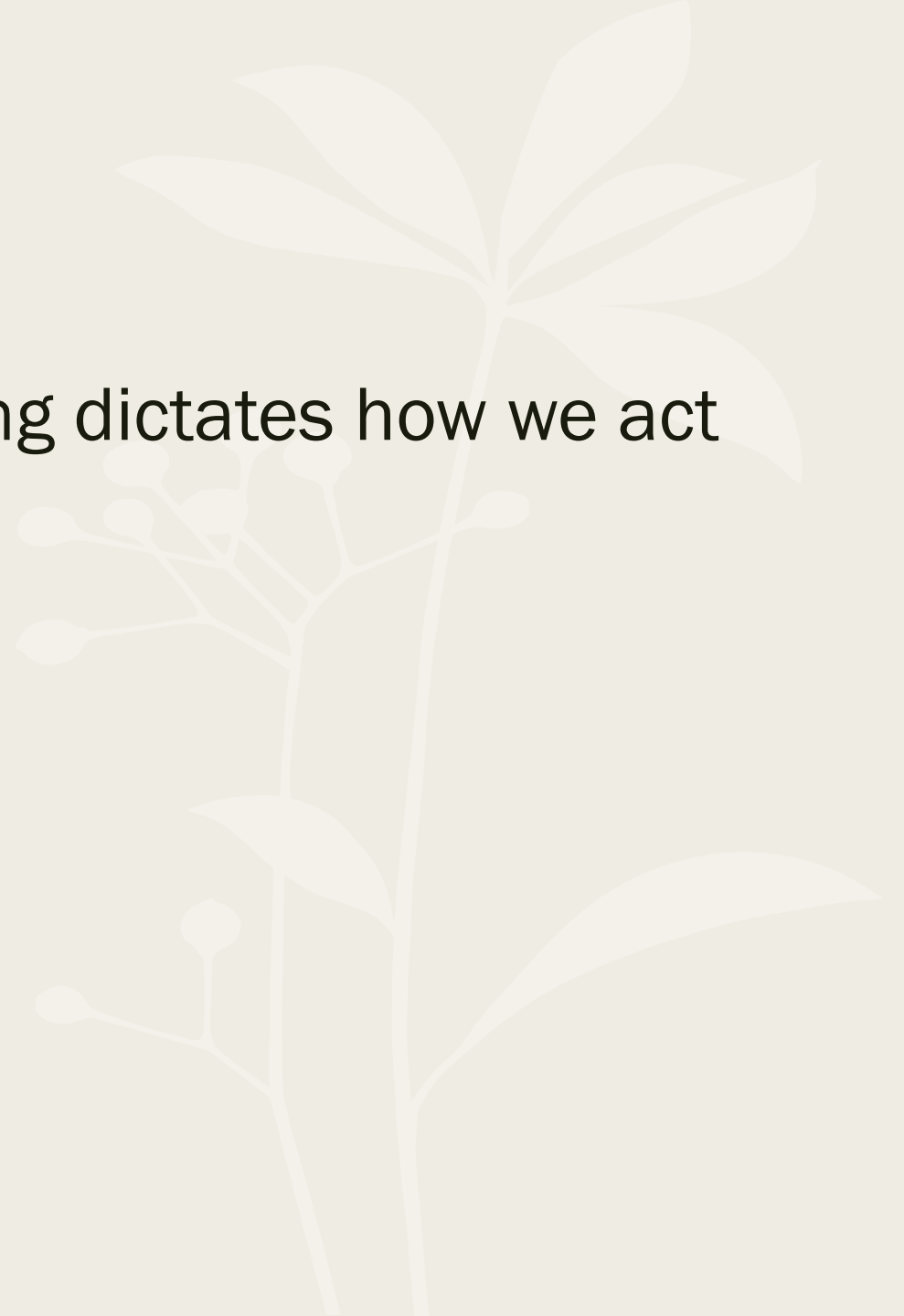
Express Meaning

- Rituals are “meaningful” actions
- What does this “mean”? (pun intended)
- Greeting someone
- Snubbing someone
- “Meaningful” beyond the action itself
- Examples?



Performance

- Where we are and what we are doing dictates how we act
- CONTEXT
- Wedding
- Funeral
- Irish Wake



Useful Theories of Ritual

- For your "Outline of Ritual Theory" assignment you will have to explain a ritual theory and think about how it will help you understand a religious service (Due Oct 18)
- Before then you need to pick a ritual to use and have it in your contract (Due Oct 7)
- Here are my suggestions

Rituals and Society (Nye pp. 141–142)

- Durkheim on rituals and relationships
- Ritual does not just express relationships: “the performance of rituals actually **creates** those relationships”
- Key questions:
 - Does a particular activity bring people together?
 - Does a particular activity drive some people apart?
 - What might the act of bringing people together/driving them apart *mean*?
 - That is to say: What purpose do you think the ritual serves in propping up, policing, or excluding people from a social unit?

Rituals and Society:

Caution

- Be careful not to be fooled by how simple this theory looks
- Concluding that Catholic mass, or a smudging ceremony is a ritual that brings people together is technically correct, but not particularly insightful
- Look at inclusion, exclusion, the social group being constituted or defended

Ritual and Memory (Nye pp. 143-144)

Harvey Whitehouse

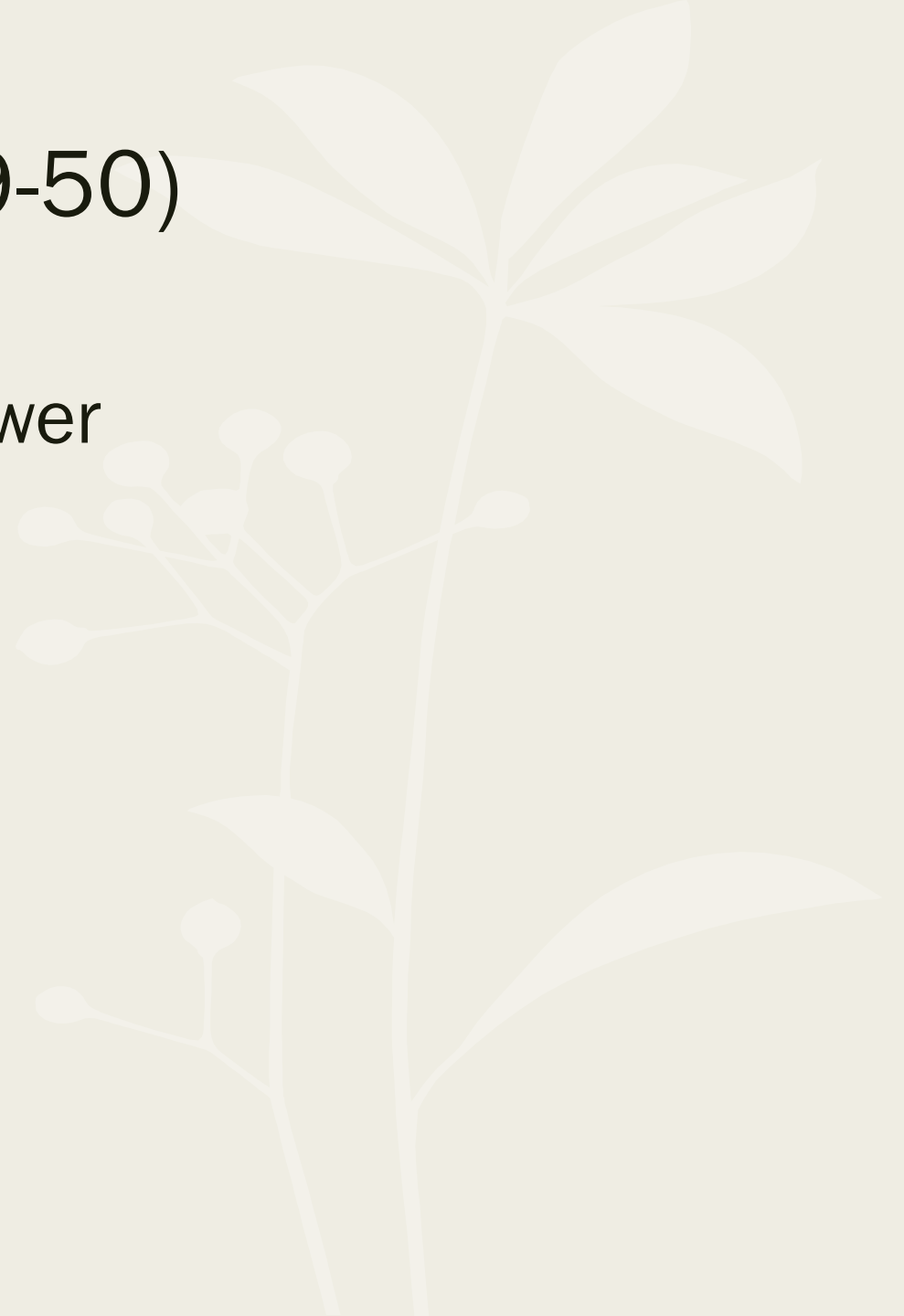
- Rituals and memory
 - “**Imagistic**” mode: high intensity (dramatic and/or traumatic)
 - ❖ E.g., wedding, funeral, car accident
 - “**Doctrinal**” mode: mundane repetition (routine)
 - ❖ E.g., daily prayer, national anthem

Ritual and Memory con't

- Whitehouse's theory about ritual and repetition
- identifies two different types of ritual practices: the “imagistic” mode and the “doctrinal” mode
- three questions:
 - what mode would you classify a particular action (or experience) as?
 - what is the person learning from that action (or experience)?
 - why does this matter?
- There is a good chance most of the rituals you witness will fall under into the “doctrinal” category.

Ritual and Power (Nye pp. 149-50)

- Rituals involve power relations
- Can **express** power or **challenge** power
- Examples?
- Indigenous potlatch
- NFL: taking a knee
- This classroom?



Ritual and Power

- You might simply ask:
- Does a particular action reinforce power relations between people (or groups) at the service you went to? *If so, how?*
- Alternatively, does a particular action represent an attempt to resist or overturn certain power relations? *If so, how?*
- It's okay to be “wrong” here. If you think a particular ritual is subversive or presents an unequal power structure, but the participants think it is doing something else, that's totally okay!
- Since you haven't done any additional research on the religious service you're attending, you won't necessarily know the contexts behind the rituals, but you can still observe and comment on relations of power.

Ritual and Potlatch

- Ritual and Society
- Ritual and Memory
- Ritual and Power