

Dorm Room Paganism

16% of Pagan list their occupation as "Student/Graduate Student". This is by far the largest "occupation" among Pagans, and yet there's very little out there on being a Pagan and a student at the same time.

Students who are Pagan and live in dorms of any sort have special needs. Hopefully, we'll be able to discuss those needs in particular and address them thoroughly.

Special issues with the rooms:

Smoke detector or particle detector?

-don't squirt things into the detectors, and avoid them if you can.

No personal bathtubs

-Create a separate shower caddy

--put things in that help you get into a ritual mood, such as herbal soaps and such, including a special towel. As the purpose of a ritual bath is to bring you into a ritual state of mind, it can be done just as well with a shower, if you treat it in a ritual manner.

--use this shower caddy only when you're going to do ritual.

Leaving an altar out

-roomies play with stuff. They touch it.

--put your stuff in it's own special drawer. Don't use the drawer for anything else. You can even set it up as a "pull-out" altar if the items are short enough.

Skyclad

-Boy, is it awkward to be caught naked in a chalked-out pentacle holding a knife and chanting something about a horned god. On the bright-side, you might not have a roommate after such an incident. On the not-so-bright-side, you might have an investigation launched into your activities if it scares your roomie.

--I suggest only doing skyclad when you're sure no one is around. Like, they're at home for the weekend and you just talked to them on the phone and know where they are.

--And close your curtains.

Don't do anything that breaks rules!

-be of-age if you have alcohol in the room or use it in ritual. The Gods don't frown on grapejuice or apple juice, but Resident Advisors do frown on wine and hard cider.

-don't tamper with your smoke detector

Getting around sound issues:

Sound coming out of your room can be problematic.

-you cannot drum or chant loudly

--If you need drumming or chanting to get into a ritual space, get noise-canceling headphones and a CD player. You can dance around and listen to it all you want, but no one will hear it.

Sound coming into your room can be worse.

-again, noise-canceling headphones are great: focus on chants or drumming rather than outside noise.

-earplugs are also good.

-report persons violating "Quiet Hours"

-go outside

Places to go on Campus:

The Oval and the South Oval are the obvious green spaces on campus. But where else can you go whenever you want to get some time alone?

Chadwick Arboretum & extension

The Chadwick Arboretum is a favourite of PSA members. There you will find a small oasis of nature that is generally quiet and fairly safe at night. There is also a labyrinth out there that is used by a number of Pagan groups. The Arboretum is on the corner of Olentangy River Rd. and Lane Ave., so the traffic can get a bit noisy, and if there's a concert or game at the Schottenstein Center (right across the Lane Ave.), you might consider going elsewhere, unless you want people wandering through your ritual and honking horns while you try to draw down the moon. It's labeled as "Chadwick Arboretum" on campus maps.

NOTE: If you use candles at the labyrinth, make sure you have a plate beneath them to catch the wax. *Never, ever place a candle on the ground there.* The labyrinth is experiencing some serious degradation due to the use of candles.

The extension is on the other side of the Lane Ave. / Fyffe Rd. intersection, and you can see it on campus maps labeled "Chadwick Lake"

<http://chadwickarboretum.osu.edu/>

Mirror Lake Hollow

Next to the Main Library, just south on Neil Ave., you'll find this lake. There are great places to sit and wonderful trees to climb as well. You'll find a nifty set of griffons overlooking the lake over the door to Pomerene Hall, and just down the hill, before you get to the water, there are some trees that provide some excellent privacy for ritual. A number of PSA members have enjoyed going to the top of the rocky outcropping at the north-east corner of the lake, and it's a good ritual space

Browning Amphitheatre

Near Mirror Lake, this is a great place to sit and relax, away from traffic and a number of people. The stage can also be used for ritual, if you're feeling exhibitionistic.

The Echo Circle

This is found just in front of the Wexner Center for the Arts, near Weigel Hall. It's a short, waist-high brick circle. If you walk to the center of the circle and speak, you'll know why it's special. The acoustics will reflect your voice back to you in great ways. An excellent place to do invocations.

Cancer survivor's plaza (good for ancestor work)

There are a pair of these plazas. One is located on the corner of Lane Ave. and Olentangy River Rd., but it's highly exposed to traffic. The other is on Med Center campus, off 10th Avenue. There are a number of waterfalls and lots of open space here. It's good if you want to meditate to the sound of running water.

Orton Hall: East/West "altars"

Walk in the front doors of Orton and you'll see what I mean. There was a rumour going around that the designer of this hall was a Wiccan, and that he put in two altars in the entranceway. While the rumour is probably bunk, they sure do look a heck of a lot like altars. The gargoyles on Orton are also pretty nifty. And don't miss the geological museum, if you're going to be in there.

Gazebo on West Campus

PSA has held a few parties and rituals out here. It's located near Howlett Hall on West Campus (north of Vernon L. Tharp St. and west of Coffey Rd.) It's very quiet at night, but somewhat exposed. Cookouts sometimes occur here, so it's not always an ideal place, but it's usually abandoned later in the evenings.

Sycamore down by the Olentangy River

This sycamore is another favourite of PSA. It's located north of the shelter house near the Drake Performance and Event Center very close to the river. The PSA's oldest ritual story took place here. It's fairly private and rather quiet.

The woods by WC5 lots

The WC5 parking lots, way in the back of West Campus at the western end of Carmack Rd. (Woodruff Ave. becomes Woody Hayes Dr. which becomes Carmack Rd. at it's west end) are the bane of a number of students, but there are woods out there that include a lake and some rather interesting wildlife. Check it out if you get the chance, but the safety of the area is somewhat doubtful late at night. The woods run along the southern edge of the WC5 lot.

The Greenhouse on top of the parking garage

More than just a funny thing to tell Freshmen about (they never believe you, and think it's a trick to strand them somewhere, like the "pool on the roof" joke in high school), the greenhouse is open most days to sit in, and meditation with the plants is one really good use for this place. It's located atop one of the garages on 12th Avenue, near the Medical Center Campus, and labeled "Biological Sciences Greenhouses" on the campus maps, number 010.

Dealing with roommates:

First, be reasonable. Intolerance can only be countered with tolerance.

- Tolerance always wins out over intolerance when it comes to roommate disagreements.

- Be up-front with your roommate if you're comfortable with that, but if you aren't comfortable with it, don't expect them to respect something they don't know about.

- On a similar note, don't expect them to respect your beliefs if you are up front, either, but give them the benefit of the doubt. Most people don't really care, but some really do, and you can never quite tell until the situation explodes, usually.

Use the roommate agreement to your advantage:

-request time for ritual (if you aren't being open about your beliefs, just ask for "alone time, no questions asked").

--have dates you want the room ready.

--work with your roommate: go out for rituals sometimes.

--Use sex to your advantage: set a symbol for when someone is in the room having sex (sock/tie on the door knob, a catchphrase on the message board, or call them on their cell), and use it if you need to do a ritual.

If things start to become problematic, start taking notes, and go to your Resident Advisor.

-time/date/description of incident

-take pictures, too, if you have a camera, if it's something visible.

If you need help, please ask. PSA has dealt with discrimination before.

-Make sure it is discrimination, though. . . We've also dealt with cases that weren't discriminatory.

Fundamentalist Roommate?

Don't play his/her game

-If s/he wants to discuss religion, don't get defensive. If you're not comfortable explaining it, don't try.

-Work out a method of question/answer that lets you answer questions on your terms. Maybe ask for written questions that you can respond to when you've had time to think about them. If you aren't comfortable making arguments, don't do it.

Remember that you have as much right to be there as they do.

-They can't kick you out, though they can try to scare you out. Don't let them

If they say they're praying for you, you have some options in response:

a) "I'm glad, because I'm praying for you, too!"

-This usually pulls a very negative response, and makes things competitive. Avoid this one if you're more interested in keeping the peace.

b) "Thank you," and smile

-This may seem encouraging, but it's no fun to try and convert someone who isn't fighting tooth and nail.

c) "Thanks, but it won't help."

-This usually begins a dialogue, so be prepared if you use it to talk about it.

Symbols:

Earth: dirt in a bowl, a tree/seedling/bonsai, turf

Air: essential oils, potpourri

Fire: picture of fire, flashlight, battery candle, hand-warmer, lightstick

Water: bowl of water, aquarium, cup of water

Spirit: pentacle, triskel

Fire: picture of flame, flashlight, battery candle, hand-warmer, lightstick

Well: bowl, caldron, jar, cup

Tree: a twig, bonsai, wire twisted into a tree shape

Deities: pictures, symbols, printoffs, statues (SacredSource.com)

Ancestors: hazelnuts, apples, pictures, Halloween decor

Nature Spirits: sticks, leaves, branches, acorns

Quarter candles:

Get four or five battery operated candles and paint them in the colours you want, or else purchase coloured bulbs for them.

In single rooms, chalk is good for marking the boundaries of a circle, and will usually come out with some warm water if you mark light enough. In doubles or multi-person rooms, rope is a good solution, as it can be gathered up quickly with no mess.

Common tools:

athame: butter knife, pocket knife, kitchen knife, scissors

wand: stick, finger, dowel rod, pencil/pen

sword: leave it at home. Athame will do.

staff: leave it at home. Wand will do.

chalice: cup from Wendy's, dixie cup, beer mug, measuring cup

caldron: bowl, jar, salsa bowl, plate

candles: battery candles, flashlight, lightstick

pentacle: a disk or plate, frisbee

Altar things:

Fun-Kin Tealight: \$2.99 ea.

-excellent in groups of three to indicate a triple deity or to symbolize fire. One each could also indicate each of the three Kindred (Gods, Ancestors, Nature Spirits). They flicker and put out decent light.

Gold Apple: \$1.99 ea.

-representation of goddess Eris. Think before you put this on your altar. You should have some representative of deity, though.

Battery operated candles (Darce brand): \$5.99/pair

-safe to light, and they can still burn down as the battery runs out. No smoke, and they give off nearly as much light as a candle. You can also draw intentions on them, or paint them different colours, but they're a bit expensive for that.

Battery operated candles (Victoria Lynn brand) (subpar): 3.99/pair

-found in the wedding aisle, cheaper, and man, do you ever get what you pay for. Avoid these.

Tree: \$.92 ea.

-found in the Halloween aisle. The tree is the crossroads of the world, or can represent earth.

lightstick: \$2.67/pair

-a healthy glow, and the colours can symbolize fire. Drawback: you can only use them once.

mini-pocketknife: \$.88

-a steal at eighty-eight cents, this particular knife comes in to good use, as it has a black handle as is "traditional" for an athame, and it's totally legal.

butter knives: \$1.00/6

-These can also be found at the Commons. Of course, we don't recommend stealing from the university (it will only increase the cost of your tuition), especially when you can get 6 for a dollar.

Magnetic link party favours: \$2.97/4 (makes 3 pentacles)

-Need a way to put together a pentacle? Try these party favours. Found in the "party supplies" aisle, you get four packages of them, and putting two packages together will net you a nifty looking pentacle. The best part is, you can pull them apart when finished.

potpourri sachet: \$.84 ea.

-potpourri is an excellent replacement for incense, and comes in even more possible combinations of smell. Placed in an air-tight container, the scent can be kept for months without dissipating, and brought out whenever you need it.

Cinnamon sticks: \$2.96 ea.

-another good way to get a good scent is just to have the herb out. Be careful with herbs, though: a roommate of mine swore I was smoking up because I had a full set of herbs. Fortunately, he had worse, so I was never turned in, but I have a sneaky suspicion he tried to smoke some of it.

light bulb ring: \$1.76 ea.

-These are small rings that sit on top of a light bulb. They have a groove in which you can drip bits of essential oils. No smoke, no incense, all the scent.

essential oil (vanilla/cinnamon): \$1.84 ea.

-This can be picked up nearly anywhere, from the hippie guys on the street to Target to Walmart to your local Pagan shop. It's a concentrated scent in oil, and is best used on the bulb rings. Use sparingly, because a little goes a very long way. Really covers up that dorm smell, though.

1 oz. mister bottle: \$.99 ea.

-a couple drops of essential oils in water can be sprayed using a mister bottle. It's no stinkier than perfume, and still gets the scent out. Better, you can control when you smell it, and this can be used to help put you into a ritual state of mind.

plastic shot glasses: \$1.83/4

-cups are good for lots of things, but why bother with chalices, which are large, bulky, and breakable, when you can use shot glasses? Working solitary, you don't need to have a whole lot of water or wine, so a shot-sized blessing cup is probably more than enough.

ancestor (ghost/skull) candle: \$1.88 ea.

-Honouring our ancestors is very important. Setting up a small portion of your altar to them is important. This kind of candle is one of those things that is available during Halloween to represent them.

Ancestor skull: \$.97 ea.

-Perhaps easier than a candle is this small, Styrofoam skull.

craft bird: \$.97 ea.

-Paganism is a religion based in nature and the natural world. A way to show our alliances with nature is to represent them on the altar. Things like these little birds are a good way to do that.

small jars: \$.94/3

-jars can double as bowls for holding things, or they can be used to contain all sorts of things that mean something to you. Also good for holding water, if you use a well.

metal cups: \$.94/4

-again, can double as bowls, or as offering cups, or as your blessing cup.

salsa bowls: \$.94/2

-These make an ideal Well or Caldron. Symbolizes water.

Call bell: \$5.25 ea.

-Using a bell at the beginning of your worship is a good way to get into the mental state, and an excellent way to clear the space. Of course, these bells are difficult to resist ringing, so be careful about leaving it out. These are bells you "ring for service", which draws a nice parallel with doing a worship service, but if others are ringing it in a dorm room, there's no telling what kind of "service" people will be ringing for.

Band-Aids: \$2.37/30

-Every magician should keep Band-aids near their altar and with their ritual equipment. It's just good sense.

flashlight: \$3.48

-An integral part of anyone's altar kit. When you drop something small, you'll understand.

Altar cloth supplies:

-What do you put all this stuff on?

table runner: \$5.96

-this is a great way to cover a shelf or the foot of your bed, or even a chair, and it's reminiscent of religious ceremonies in certain churches.

cotton rug: \$4.68

-these can do triple duty: First, you can use a rug as a heavy-duty altarcloth if you have no space on a shelf, and need to set up on the floor; second, you can sit on it or kneel on it if you're outside or you need some padding under you; third, you can roll a number of ritual items up into the rug and take the whole thing with you. If you're really creative, you can sew pockets into the rug and have a place for everything you need.

seasonal napkin: \$2.88/2

and

solid colour napkin: \$3.00/2

-napkins make great altar cloths, and combining them is also a great way to make the altar look very nice and festive for any ritual.

Offering Box:

-An offering box is a good thing to keep around. Most of the time, these things include incense, oils, and silver, but they can contain anything you wish.

Generally, the following items are good for dorm-room paganism:

- a) water from your well
- b) essential oils in drop-bottles
- c) silver and/or gold beads for offerings
- d) bird seed for nature spirits
- e) dirt from home/ancestral land
- f) other types of offerings

I picked up my offering boxes for a little over \$10 at The Container Store.

Box: \$2.49

.5 oz. dropper bottle: \$1.99 (2)

.4 oz. snap-top bottle: \$.79 (2)

4 dram glass vial: \$1.58 (1)

2 dram glass vial: \$2.36 (2)

Teen Witch Kit: \$24.95

-Produced by Silver Ravenwolf and distributed through Llewellyn Worldwide, it converts into its own cardboard altar, comes with a book, and some pretty cheap stuff. If you think

about what you get for the cost, you'll see that this kit isn't really worth what the price indicates. You can build a much, much better altar for far cheaper.

- a book
- an altar
- pouch
- sea salt
- crystal
- "yes/no" coin
- "god/goddess" coin
- "silver" bell
- wish cord
- pentacle

Spells for Students:

Rather than deal with actual spells, I'll provide some hints I've picked up over the years for things that affect students. Warning, tongue is often placed firmly in cheek regarding these spells!

"Burn a yellow candle while studying"

-Sure, this works if you're not in a dorm. But you can also paint a battery-operated candle yellow and still use it. There's a success spell found online that uses the yellow candle: <http://www.mojomoon.net/succnet.html>

Feel free to adapt any ritual for dorm use. This might be a good one to start with, actually.

Tool consecration:

You don't need fire to consecrate tools. Simple saltwater usually does just fine in most traditions. Grab a cup of water and a salt packet from the Commons and you have instant consecration.

Love spells:

-You can find all sorts of interesting ways to get love going in a dorm, and there's plenty online to tide you over. That rope mentioned above for marking a circle might be handy for this.

Using Spells to avoid hangovers:

-Take two Vitamin-I (ibuprofen) and drink a hell of a lot of water. You can always try banishings, too, but a sore head might just get worse if your dancing around vibrating names.

And always: banish with laughter.

Conclusion:

Remember the most important thing: You don't need anything to do ritual or magic. The only tool required is your self.

Be patient and tolerant in the face of intolerance, and don't worry about getting things "by the book," but rather worry that they work for you. Religion is something between you and your deities, not you, your tools, your roommate, your RA, and your deities.

Resources:

From Pagan shops to groups that do ritual to websites to read for ideas, here's a list of things to help:

Books/magazines:

Rocking the Goddess, by Anthony Paige

A guide to campus and college practice. Page 200 details the OSU PSA.

New Witch Magazine

A Pagan magazine targeted at college-age Pagans. Some of the articles are kinda fruity (e.g. "Invoking Johnny Depp" is a recent article), but you can hit some good articles with it.

Oak Leaves

ADF's newsletter, it's starting to get younger submitters (including several from PSA) and a number of articles on topics that relate to this are in the works, I understand. You can find info at

<<http://www.adf.org/publications/periodicals/oak-leaves/>>

Groups that do Ritual locally

Three Cranes Grove, ADF

This ADF Grove does rituals for each of the 8 High Days, and tries to work at least generally with the schedule of OSU and the other colleges around Columbus. All rites are open to the public, and you can find more info at:

<<http://www.threecranes.org/>> and <<http://www.adf.org/>>

Pagan Community Council of Ohio

This group puts on 4 festivals per year in the Central Ohio area. Unfortunately, even though I was just at one of their festivals, I don't have a lot of other information to offer, not even a website.

Green Faerie Grove (description from their website)

The Green Faerie Grove (GFG) is a pagan brotherhood for queer (i.e., gay, bisexual, and transgendered) men in central Ohio. GFG was founded shortly after Yule 1998 to provide a safe space for queer pagan men to grow and prosper. We

follow an eclectic path emphasizing Queer Spirit, with strong influences from Wicca and Druidry, with bits of Greek and Roman mythos, Celtic Shamanism, men's mysteries, and Radical Faerie thrown in for good measure. We celebrate the solar sabbats, as well as the occasional full moon. GFG is a consensus-based group framed within a structure of written bylaws. While we are a closed group, we welcome contact with others. We do periodically take on new dedicants, though we are trying to grow slowly (please see our Dedicant Guidelines, above). Membership is limited to queer pagan men age 18 or older, although younger dedicants may be admitted with parental permission. GFG is unaffiliated with any other local, state, or national group at the present time. We take pride in the fact that our members are active in various community service organizations, and we participate in the annual Pagan Spirit Gathering festival. More info at: <<http://www.greenfaeriegrove.org/>>

Great Ash Kindred

An Asatru (Norse) group, you can find information about them at <<http://www.speakeasy.org/~barhelm/gak/greatash.htm>>

Pagan stores in Columbus:

Fly-by-Night

2275 N. High Street (just south of Oakland Ave.)
299-7930
<http://www.flybynightbookstore.com/>

Mystic Forest Treasures

3169 N. High Street
784-1436

Pearls of Wisdom

3522 N. High Street (just North of North Broadway)
262-0146
<http://www.pearlsofwisdominc.com/>

Salem West

1209 N. High Street (corner of High and 5th Ave., in the Short North)
421-7557
<http://www.pagannation.com/>

The Cat and the Caldron

(possibly out of business)

(Inter)National Organizations and general information websites:

ADF

The ADF (Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship) website includes rituals for all the High Days that can be adapted to solitary practice, and some that are already formatted for such. Many rituals require few (if any) tools, though tools are suggested, and they have this to say about themselves:

The Irish words, pronounced "arn ree-ocht fane", mean "Our Own Druidism", and that's just what ADF is - a completely independent tradition of Neopagan Druidism. Like our sisters and brothers in the other Neopagan movements, we're polytheistic Nature worshipers, attempting to revive the best aspects of the Paleopagan faiths of our ancestors within a modern scientific, artistic, ecological, and wholistic context. Like our predecessors and namesakes the Druids, we're people who believe in excellence - physically, intellectually, artistically, and spiritually.

We're researching and expanding sound modern scholarship about the ancient Celts and other Indo-European peoples, in order to reconstruct what the Old Religions of Europe really were. We're working on the development of genuine artistic skills in composition and presentation. We're designing and performing competent magical and religious ceremonies to change ourselves and the world we live in. We're adapting the polytheologies and customs of both the Indo-European Paleopagans and the Neopagan traditions that have been created over the last fifty years. We're creating a nonsexist, nonracist, organic, and open religion to practice as a way of life and to hand on to our grandchildren. We're integrating ecological awareness, alternative healing arts, and psychic development into our daily activities. Together, we're sparking the next major phase in the evolution of Neopaganism and planting seeds for generations to come.

More info at: <<http://www.adf.org/>>

The Troth

We in the Troth practice the Germanic/Norse religion of Heathenry, commonly referred to as Asatru. We realize that there are many variations, names, and practices in Germanic Heathenry, including Theodism, Irminism, Odinism, and Anglo-Saxon Heathenry. What we all share is a defining personal loyalty to, or Troth with, the Gods and Goddesses of the Northlands. Our Gods are of two tribes: the Æsir, and the Vanir. These Gods are: Odin, Thor, Frigga, Frey, Freya, Tyr, Idunna, and many others. We are deeply proud of our Norse/Germanic religious, cultural, and historical heritage. We welcome all, whatever their religious background, who have heard the call of our Gods, and would like to know more about Germanic/Norse Heathenry.

More info at: <<http://www.thetroth.org/>>

The Covenant of the Goddess (COG)

The Covenant of the Goddess is one of the largest and oldest Wiccan religious organizations. Wicca, or Witchcraft is the most popular expression of the religious movement known as Neo-Paganism, which, according to the Institute for the Study of American Religion, is the fastest growing religion in the United States. Its practitioners are reviving ancient Pagan practices and beliefs of pre-Christian Europe and adapting them to contemporary life. The result is a religion that is both old and new, both "traditional" and creative.

More info at: <<http://www.cog.org/>>

Chaos Matrix

The Chaos Matrix is a fond stop for many PSA members, because it's full of such good ideas and magical theory. Check it out if you have a few hours to kill.

More info: <<http://www.chaosmatrix.org/>>

Isaac Bonewits' homepage

Isaac is the founder of ADF, but he's also got a lot of great stuff on his site. Spend some time browsing through it.

More info at: <<http://www.neopagan.net/>>

MJD's webpage – Chronarchy.Com

Yeah, it's a shameless plug to point you all to my personal site, but you'll find some of my articles on there, as well as a hell of a lot of magical theory. Check under "Essays" in particular. Most of the magical essays are listed under "Chaos", but some aren't. You can also find all sorts of things about the practice of Druidry in tight corners under the "Dedicant" materials.

These notes will also be available on there in the near future, in case you ever need them again.

Two essays of particular interest are these:

<http://www.chronarchy.com/mjournal/altar/>

<http://www.chronarchy.com/mjournal/altar/3bowlsandastick.html>

The first essay is about the evolution of my personal altar, and the second is about how an altar doesn't need to be all that fancy.

More info at: <http://www.chronarchy.com/>