

NT 242: Religion and Religious Practice in the Greco-Roman World

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Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will examine the religious dimensions of the Greco-Roman world as part of the context for the development of early Judaism and Christianity. This will not be a course on religious doctrine(s) in the Greco-Roman world; instead, it will focus on some of the key elements that are at the heart of Greek and Roman religious sensibilities.

COURSE GOALS:

The goals of this course will be to explore the following issues from the perspective of public religion at the local and imperial levels and of domestic religion:

1. How do individuals and social groups conceive of the divine-human relationship?
2. How does the divine world impact the human world?
3. What are the basic cosmological structures and where humans and gods fit into these structures?
4. What significance do various common rituals and activities hold for the divine-human relationship, for human well-being, and for social identity? The emphasis of the course will be on social and cultural analysis of the groups and activities discussed.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Name and describe the major ways that people in the ancient Mediterranean world took part in religious activity.
2. Acquire the tools to analyze any ancient text, ritual, or religious activity to detect its social dynamics, ideological biases, and political ramifications within its ancient context.
3. Situate early Christian texts and activity within its Greco-Roman cultural context.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS:

1. Attendance at all class sessions; the only exception is a serious personal illness or family situation that needs your attention (e.g., serious illness, death, injury, etc.).
2. Careful preparation of all assigned reading with an EMPHASIS ON THE PRIMARY TEXTS. The primary literature should be prepared first and foremost *before* reading the secondary material.
3. Attentive and active participation in all class sessions. Although I will give presentations in class that will supplement your understanding of the topic at hand, the format of the class will be a seminar, which means that you must come ready to participate in class discussion in order for this class to be a success.

GRADING:

Your grade will consist of the following elements:

1. Active participation in class discussions and activities (40%)
2. Final paper proposal (20%)
3. Final paper (40%)

GRADING SCALE:

- 93%-100% **A** (Outstanding work in all areas of the course)
- 90%-92% **A-** (Outstanding work in most of the areas of the course)
- 87%-89% **B+** (Very good work in all areas of the course)
- 83%-86% **B** (Good work in all areas of the course)
- 80%-82% **B-** (Average work in most areas of the course)
- 77%-79% **C+** (Below average work in most areas of the course but good in some; meets the minimum standards of the course)
- 73%-76% **C** (Below average work in most areas of the course; meets the minimum standards of the course)
- 70%-72% **C-** (Below average work in all areas of the course; meets the minimum standards of the course)
- 63%-69% **D** (Unacceptable work in all areas of the course, but passing)
- Below 63% **F** (Failing work; requires repeating the course)

NOTE: Although a grade above 63% constitutes a passing grade in this course, you should consider anything below 80% as an unsatisfactory grade as a graduate student of theological studies. You should consider a **B** good graduate work, i.e. if you engage in the course in a consistent way and do all the assignments in a competent way, you will have learned the baseline of what you should learn in a graduate level course. However, you should push yourself to go beyond the baseline level of knowledge and strive for excellence.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

In accordance with MTSO's policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing AND in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings. In all written assignments, it will be considered a mechanical error, and an appropriate deduction for each instance will result.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 2003) ISBN 9780253216601.

M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, *Religions of Rome, Volume 2: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) ISBN 9780521456463.

Jon D. Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005) ISBN 978-0631232230.

Euripides, *Bacchae*. Translated by Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998) ISBN 9780872203921.

Complete Greek Tragedies: Sophocles I. Translated by David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) ISBN 9780226307923.

Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ancient Religions* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press: 2007) ISBN 9780674025486. Abbreviated **AR** below.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, *Religions of Rome, Volume 1: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) ISBN 9780521316828. Abbreviate **ROR I** below.

COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS:

The primary way that I will communicate with the class is through email. I may change the assignment that is due for a particular class, or I will notify you regarding a change in the schedule for the class. Therefore, it is very important that you CHECK YOUR EMAIL EVERY DAY for notices regarding the class. If there is a change of assignment that I communicate through email, it is the student's responsibility to complete this assignment on time.

SHAREPOINT SITE:

The class website is found on the school's Sharepoint site (academics.mtso.edu). **Facility with this site is imperative for the successful completion of this course** because all the readings not from the required books will be on this site and you will be submitting all assignments through this site. All course materials will be posted on this site in various sections. **IMPORTANT: Although I have the capability of opening most document formats, please submit your assignments in MSWord format (either 1997-2003 [.doc] or the newest 2007 [.docx]).**

YOUR FOLDER: Each student has a folder under the "Submit Assignments" link. Unless there is a problem with the Sharepoint site, you will be expected to submit all your assignments (short papers, reviews, and essays) by uploading them into your folder.

To upload an assignment:

- a. click on your name on the folder
- b. click on the "Upload" button on the blue bar
- c. click on the "Browse" button on the right side of the screen
- d. choose the document you want to upload
- e. click on the "Open", "Choose", or other such button at the bottom of your browsing window
- f. click on "OK" at the bottom of the "Upload Document" window

No one but you and I will be able to see your documents. Once the document is uploaded, I will read it, insert any comments using the MSWord "Comments" function and assign a grade at the bottom of the page. I will then upload it into your folder. When my name replaces yours under "Modified By" then you will know that I have graded the assignment.

To access an electronic reading or other document posted on the Sharepoint site:

- a. click on the appropriate link in the menu on the left side of the page
- b. click on the document or folder for the particular week
- c. choose your download option ("Save", "View", etc.)

Note: You must have Adobe Reader or some similar PDF viewing software installed on your computer to read most of the documents available on the Sharepoint site. This is standard software in most computers.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

Note: The readings in the Schedule of Classes are subject to change at my discretion.

August 25: Introduction to the Course

PART I: THEORETICAL CONCERNS

September 1: Constructing and Comparing Religions

Reading:

Bruce Lincoln, "Epilogue," pp. 241-251 in **AR**.

Scheid, pp. 5-17.

Jonathan Z. Smith, "On Comparison," in *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 36-53.

Fritz Graf, "What is Ancient Mediterranean Religion?" pp. 3-16 in **AR**.

John Scheid, "Religions in Contact," pp. 112-126 in **AR**.

James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 13-52.

PART II: GODS, HEROES AND THE UNIVERSE

September 8: Myth: Cosmogony and Cosmology

Theory:

Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth* (University of Chicago Press, 1999) pp. 141-159.

Russell T. McCutcheon, "Myth," in *Guide to the Study of Religion* (New York: Continuum, 2000), pp. 190-208.

Fritz Graf, "Myth," pp. 45-58 in **AR**.

Primary Reading:

Hesiod, *Theogony* (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>).
 Plato, *Timaeus* (<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html>).

Secondary Reading:

Mikalson, pp. 55-67.

September 15: The Gods and Humans

Primary Reading:

Homer, *Iliad*, Book 14.

Hymn to Demeter (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/demeter.htm>).

ROR II, p. 26-49.

Wisdom of Solomon (especially chs. 7-19).

Secondary Reading:

Mikalson, pp. 32-54.

Scheid, p. 147-170.

Jan Assmann, "Monotheism and Polytheism," pp. 17-31 in **AR**.

Sarah Iles Johnston, ed., *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide* (Harvard University Press, 2004), "Dictionary of Deities and Demons," pp. 417-422.

September 22 Heroes and Deification

Primary Reading:

ROR II, pp. 49-54.

Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (Johns Hopkins, 1998), pp. 110-117.

Secondary Reading:

Larry Kreitzer, "Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor," *Biblical Archaeologist* (December, 1990): 211-217.

Valerie M. Warrior, *Roman Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), pp. 105-118.

Anthony Snodgrass, "The Archaeology of the Hero," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (ed. Richard Buxton; Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), pp. 180-190.

Monika Bernett, "Roman Imperial Cult in the Galilee: Structures, Functions, and Dynamics," in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee* (ed. J. Zangenberg, H. Attridge, and D. Martin; WUNT 210; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), pp. 337-356.

Scheid, pp. 159-162.

PART III: RITUAL AND SPACE, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

September 29: Theoretical Considerations

- Mark D. Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Ritual Theory," in *Vase Painting, Gender, and Social Identity in Archaic Athens* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 96-102.
 Jan Bremmer, "Ritual," pp. 32-45 in **AR**.
 Scheid, 18-38, 79-110.
 Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Domestication of Sacrifice," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (University of Chicago, 2004), pp. 145-159.

October 6 No Class, Fall Break

October 13 Ritual Offering (a.k.a. Sacrifice) and Society I

ROR II, pp. 148-165.
 Sophocles, *Antigone*.

Secondary Reading:

- Robin Osborne, "Women and Sacrifice in Classical Greece," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (ed. Richard Buxton; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 294-313.
 Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "What is Polis Religion?" in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (ed. Richard Buxton; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 13-37.
 Mary Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2008), pp. 276-308.
 Carin Green, "Holding the Line: Women, Ritual, and the Protection of Rome," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (ed. Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, James A. Kelhoffer, and Paul A. Holloway; WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

Optional Reading:

Harold W. Attridge, "Pollution, Sin, Atonement, Salvation," pp. 71-83 in **AR**.

Final Paper Proposal Due (upload to Sharepoint and save as "yourlastname.proposal.doc" or "yourlastname.proposal.docx")

October 20 Ritual Offering and Society II

Primary Reading:

ROR II, pp. 38-41 (Interpretations of the goddess Vesta), 102-106.
Homeric Hymn to Hestia

Secondary Reading:

- Deborah Boedeker, "Family Matters: Domestic Religion in Classical Greece," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan; Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 229-247.
 John Bodel, "Cicero's Minerva, Penates, and the Mother of the Lares: An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan; Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 248-275.
 Celia E. Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2006), pp. 121-138.

Robin Lorsch Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins: A Study of Rome's Vestal Priestesses in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 37-63.
 Mikalson, pp. 133-159.
 Scheid, 165-70.

October 27 Sanctuaries and Worship

Primary Reading

Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (3d ed.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), §§394, 399, 400, 402, 404, 406, 408-411, 425-440.
ROR II, pp. 86-102.

Particular Sanctuaries:

DELPHI: Mary Emerson, *Greek Sanctuaries: An Introduction* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2007), pp. 25-46;

John G. Pedley, *Sanctuaries and the Sacred in the Ancient Greek World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 135-153.

MARS ULTOR AT ROME: **ROR II**, pp. 80-83.

Secondary Reading:

Ulrich Sinn, "Greek Sanctuaries as Places of Refuge," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (ed. Richard Buxton; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 155-179.

Scheid, pp. 60-78.

Mikalson, pp. 1-31.

November 3 Festivals

Primary Reading:

Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (3d ed.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), §§394-395.
ROR II, pp. 116-137.

Secondary Reading:

Scheid, pp. 41-59.

Frank Bernstein, "Complex Rituals: Games and Processions in Republican Rome," in *A Companion to Roman Religion* (ed., Jörg Rüpke; Malden, MA; Blackwell, 2007), pp. 222-234.

Scott Scullion, "Festivals," in *A Companion to Greek Religion* (ed., Daniel Ogden; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 190-203.

November 10 Mystery Cults

Primary Reading

Euripides, *Bacchae*.

Livy, *History of Rome XXXIX*, viii-xix.

ROR II, pp. 288-319.

Review the *Hymn to Demeter*.

Secondary Reading:

Mikalson, pp. 68-132.

Sarah Iles Johnston, "Mysteries," pp. 98-111 in **AR**.

Kevin Clinton, "The Mysteries of Demeter and Kore," in *A Companion to Greek Religion* (ed., Daniel Ogden; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 342-356.

Eric S. Gruen, "The Bacchanalian Affair," in *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy* (U of California Press, 1990), pp. 34-78.

November 17 Magic and Divination

Primary Reading:

Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (3d ed.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), §§414-424.

Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 121 (§96), 124-136, 275-286.

Secondary Reading:

Scheid, pp. 111-128.

Sarah Iles Johnston, "Magic," pp. 149-152 in **AR**.

Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), pp. 1-32, 144-182.

Robert Parker, "Greek States and Greek Oracles," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (ed. Richard Buxton; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 76-108.

December 1 Greek and Roman Religion in the Holy Land

December 8 **Final Papers Due**

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. Final Paper Proposal: No later than October 13th, you should submit a proposal for your final paper of no longer than 500 words, double spaced. The proposal should contain an initial thesis statement and description of the plan for your paper. An initial bibliography of primary and secondary sources is required. NOTE: The MTSO library system may not have many secondary sources on non-Christian material, so be advised to plan well ahead in obtaining secondary sources using OPAL and OhioLINK. Use the secondary material I have assigned both as possible sources for your paper and to identify other possible sources.

2. Final Paper: No later than December 8th, you should submit a 3000-3600 word double-spaced page paper that follows through with the feedback you received from me regarding the paper proposal. (Note: Deviation of more than 50 words from these parameters will result in a deduction from your paper grade.) The paper should be centered on a cultural analysis of a text, ritual, myth, theme, activity, or other appropriate topic that interested you in the course. You are not limited to the primary texts or rituals we discussed in class, but it might be best to use these as a starting point for developing your topic. Comparative analysis is oftentimes a very effective way of recognizing emphases of a particular phenomenon, so you are strongly encouraged to use this method. This is a research-oriented assignment, and you are expected to incorporate in a critical manner respected secondary sources in your paper. However, since this is a cultural analysis of something "religious" from the ancient world, your argument should always deal with primary texts from the ancient world that deals with your topic.

Grading Criteria for Term Paper:

Proposal:

1. How clear and developed your initial thesis statement is.
2. How well you demonstrate critical thinking about your topic.
3. How reasonable the plan for your paper is.
4. Proper use of the English language.

Final Paper:

1. How clear and probing your thesis statement is.
2. How well you argue your thesis statement.
3. How well you demonstrate critical thinking skills.
4. How well you incorporate secondary sources into your argument.
5. Proper use of the English language.

IMPORTANT SUGGESTION: Most of you will probably be unfamiliar with much of the material we talk about in this class. The nature of this class is also one where we will not cover a huge amount of material for each topic. So, I suggest that you keep your topic as simple as possible and the scope as small as possible. The goal of your paper should not be to present an exhaustive treatment of the topic at hand. It should be a careful cultural analysis of one religious phenomenon from the ancient world. So, for example, instead of doing a paper where you try to argue that sacrifice is the fundamental religious ritual for Greeks, Romans, and Jews, you should argue something about one sacrificial ritual from one time and place using the tools of cultural analysis that we have discussed in class. Avoid big, generalizing statements and focus on one thing as an entrance point into this field. You will be surprised at how much you learn about the topic, and your paper will be better in the end.

VERY IMPORTANT:

Accurate and proper use of the English language is imperative for every graduate student. You will be penalized for excessive errors as follows:

On your final paper, if you have accumulated more than 10 errors by the second page, I will cease to correct the errors and automatically REDUCE THE ASSIGNMENT'S GRADE BY TWO LETTER GRADES. So, the HIGHEST grade you will receive is a C. It is very likely that you will receive a lower grade than a C in the end.

If you do not accumulate 10 errors by the second page, then I will REDUCE THE ASSIGNMENT'S GRADE BY ONE LETTER GRADE for every 1 error per 200 words you average throughout the assignment. For example, for a 3000-word paper, if you make 15 errors on the assignment, the highest grade you can receive is a B. If you make 20 errors, the highest grade you can receive is a B-. If you make 25 errors, the highest grade you can receive is a C+. And so on.

In other words, I am serious about receiving proper writing from you. If you have trouble proofreading your own writing (which is common), then pair up with someone in class with whom you can trade proofreading.

CLASS PREPARATION

In order to prepare for each class, you should read all the required readings (obviously), taking notes that summarize the main points of each secondary reading, and getting a sense of what are the most important themes or features in the primary readings. Once you have completed the reading, write down three questions that you would like to address in class discussion. The first two questions should be specific in nature, that is, dealing with one text or reading. The other question should be synthetic in nature, that is, dealing with an issue that you see running through multiple texts and readings.

At the beginning of most class sessions, you will break up into small groups and discuss for about 20-25 minutes the questions you prepared for that day. Try to answer as many questions as you can within the small group. Each group will then decide which two questions they want to bring to the large group discussion or formulate one or two new questions that developed as a result of the small group discussion.

The remainder of each class session will be devoted to large group discussion of the small group questions.