

## Course Outline: Greek and Roman Religion (HUMA 3105; 2017-18; version B)

### *General Information*

- Instructor: Philip Harland (pharland -at- yorku -dot- ca). Office hour (in Vanier 248): Fridays 10:30 or by appointment. Meetings: Thursdays 11:30-2:20 (DB 0011).

### *Course description*

This course explores practices associated with honouring the gods in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, particularly during the first two centuries of the common era. This year the geographical focus in term one is on the Greek-speaking, eastern part of the Roman empire, especially the Greek cities of Asia Minor (what is now Turkey). In term two, we turn to several related phenomena that will provide us further glimpses into the nature and meaning of honours for the gods in various contexts in the Roman empire. In that term, we begin by surveying certain deities and their “mysteries” before moving on to other informal associations and cultural minorities. Throughout, we will draw on both archaeological (especially inscriptions) and literary materials. We will be attentive to variations in practice and belief from one locale to another and from one level of society to another (imperial elites, civic elites, urban populace, rural populace). Through examining rituals and beliefs in their contexts, students will gain an understanding of ancient worldviews that informed the development of western culture. We will also deal with theoretical problems in defining and describing ancient “religion” in modern terms. In particular, honouring the gods (traditionally labelled “religion”) through sacrifice and other means was embedded within what we as moderns distinguish as social, economic, and political spheres of activity.

### *Course Texts*

- James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Blackwell Ancient Religions. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).
- Richard Ascough, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Baylor University Press / de Gruyter, 2012).
- Hugh Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- Readings online and in the library as listed and linked in the schedule

### *Evaluation* (see assignment descriptions at the end of the syllabus)

- Attendance and participation in discussions (10%)
- Quizzes: Beginning of class surprise quizzes on readings (20%)
- York University academic integrity tutorial and quiz (due week 4, Fall term). All students must

read the tutorial website ([link](#)) and complete the academic integrity quiz ([link](#)) before the first assignment, achieving a 10/10 (100%) and submitting a *hardcopy print-out of the results* of their test. Assignment 1 will not be accepted without a completed academic integrity test submitted beforehand.

- Essay 1 (historical analysis of primary source), 5 pages, due FALL WEEK 5 (15%)
- Essay 2 (book review of Bowden), 6 pages, due WINTER WEEK 5 — **\*\*one week extension, now due February 8** at the beginning of class\*\* (15%)
- Test 1 (in class FALL WEEK 11) (20%)
- Test 2 (in class WINTER WEEK 11) (20%)

### **\*\*\*Important things to know\*\*\***

- *Readings and participation:* Participation and interaction is an important part of the process of learning. For this reason it is essential that you do the readings (especially the primary sources) before attending classes and tutorials for a particular week, coming prepared for discussion.
- *Penalties for lateness:* All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late submissions will be penalized by one full grade (e.g. from a B to a C) and a further grade for each additional day beyond the due date. The only exceptions to this standard will be in cases of serious crisis, which should be discussed with the instructor as soon as possible to determine an appropriate solution together. My aim is fairness both to you and to your fellow students.
- *Academic honesty and plagiarism policies:* Absolutely no form of plagiarism will be tolerated. All cases will be prosecuted to the fullest. Students are responsible for reading the university policies concerning academic honesty at: <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69>. There is further information on how to achieve academic integrity at: <https://spark.library.yorku.ca/academic-integrity-what-is-academic-integrity/>.
- *Cell-phones, laptops, and other devices:* All cell-phones and other hand-held devices must be completely turned off and remain unused during class and tutorial times. Laptops are permitted for note-taking only. Any other use of laptops (or other devices) for internet surfing, tweeting, or messaging is a distraction (both to you and to your fellow students) that will not be permitted.

### *Useful online resources*

- Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean (Harland): <http://www.philipharland.com/Blog/>
- Jon Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. Free online edition at: <http://www.escholarship.org/editions/view?docId=ft267nb1f9>

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### *Discussion outline*

#### **Unit 1: Orientation**

Week 1 (Sept 7): Course overview and introductions

How do we approach the study of religion in an academic context? How do we define ancient “religion”? What problems do scholars have in approaching cultural life in the ancient world?

Week 2 (Sept 14): The Roman empire – Geographical and cultural overview (photos from Asia Minor)

Key questions: 1) What was entailed in honouring the gods (offerings, sacrifice, meals, prayers, mysteries, festivals, etc.)? What social groupings and contexts were involved? 2) What theoretical issues come to the fore in studying cultural life in the Hellenistic and Roman eras?

Readings:

- Scholarly sources: Rives, intro and chapters 1-2

## ***Unit 2: Civic, Provincial, and Regional Cults***

Week 3 (Sept 21): Civic cults in a Greek city – Case of Artemis Ephesia at Ephesos

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Acts 19:23-41 (in the Bible; [link](#))
  - *AGRW* 164 (Ephesos)
  - Oster, “Holy Days in Honour of Artemis,” *NewDocs* ([link](#); course password required)
  - “Greco-Roman deities: Artemis of Ephesus”, parts 1-3 ([link](#))
- Scholarly sources:
  - Rives, ch. 3

Week 4 (Sept 28): Healing sanctuaries – Case of Asklepios (Asclepius) at Pergamon

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Aelius Aristides, *Orations* 48-49 (= *Sacred Tales* 2-3) ([link](#); course password required)
- Scholarly sources:
  - Rives, ch. 4

Week 5 (Oct 5): Divination and oracular sanctuaries – Case of Apollo at Didyma

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - *AGRW* 179 (Miletos), 202 (Magnesia)
  - Fontenrose, *Didyma*, Inscriptions 20-25 on pp. 194-202 ([link](#); course password required)
- Scholarly sources:
  - Sarah Iles Johnston, “The Divine Experience Part Two: Claros, Didyma and Others,” *Ancient Greek Divination* ([link](#); course password required).
  - Harland, “Consulting the gods about your favourite blanket” ([link](#))

## Week 6 (Oct 12): Honouring the Roman emperors as gods – Imperial cults (provincial, civic, and local)

### Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - *SEG* 4, 490 = [122] EJ 98 ([link](#))
  - *AGRW* 117 (Pergamon), 160 (Hypaipa), 163 (Ephesos)
- Scholarly sources:
  - Rives, ch. 5
  - Harland, "Imperial Cults within Local Cultural Life: Associations in Roman Asia," *Ancient History Bulletin* 17 (2003), pp. 85-107 ([link](#)).

## Week 7 (Oct 19): Regional and indigenous practices – Cults of Phrygia and Lydia

### Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - "Some Confession (or Reconciliation) Inscriptions from Lydia and Phrygia" ([link](#)); *AGRW* 22
- Scholarly sources:
  - Stephen Mitchell, "Pagans, Jews, and Christians from the First to Third Century," in *Anatolia*, pp. 11-31 ([link](#); sections "I. Pagan Worship" and "II. The Indigenous Cults of Anatolia").
  - Rives, ch. 6

\*October 26-29: Reading days with no classes\*

## Week 8 (Nov 2): Elite perspectives 1 – Epictetus the Stoic philosopher and Dio of Prusa the Stoic-Cynic philosopher

### Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 12, especially sections 21-85 ([link](#)).
- Scholarly sources:
  - Luke Timothy Johnson, "Religion as Moral Transformation: Epictetus" ([link](#); course password required).
  - Rives, pp. 21-42 (again)

## Week 9 (Nov 9): Elite perspectives 2 – Lucian of Samosata, an Epicurean-influenced satirical writer

### Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Lucian, *Alexander the False-Prophet* ([link](#))
- Scholarly sources:
  - C.P. Jones, "Alexander of Abonuteichos" ([link](#); course password required)

Week 10 (Nov 16): Film

Week 11 (Nov 23): **\*\*IN CLASS TEST\*\***

Week 12 (Nov 30): Elite perspectives 3 – Artemidoros of Daldis, dream-interpreter

Readings:

- Primary sources:
    - Artemidoros, *Interpretation of Dreams (Oneirocritica)*, books 2.33-40, 2.55-57, 4. 47 ([link](#); course password required); John S. Hanson, “Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity,” especially the dreams described on pages 1401-1405 and 1415-1419 ([link](#); password required).
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### ***Unit 3: Associations and the Mysteries***

Week 1 (Jan 4): Introduction to honours for the gods in associations (including “the mysteries”)

- Primary sources:
  - Household associations: *AGRW* 121, 330
  - Ethnic / Immigrant associations: *AGRW* 128, 196, 226
  - Neighbourhood associations: *AGRW* 118, 172d
  - Occupational associations: *AGRW* 129, 137, 138, 146, 169, 186, 217
  - Initiate associations: *AGRW* 50, 60, 93, 188, 327
- Scholarly sources:
  - Harland, “2 / Purposes: Honoring the Gods, Feasting with Friends,” in *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, pp. 45-70 ([link](#))
  - Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World*, introduction

Week 2 (Jan 11): Initiates in the Mysteries of Demeter and Kore and the “Great gods” of Samothrace

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
  - Homeric Hymn to Demeter ([link](#)).
  - Demeter and Kore: *AGRW* 159 (Ephesos), 163 (Ephesos), 200 (Smyrna), 217 (Pessinous)
  - Samothracian gods: *AGRW* 34 (Amphipolis), 162 (Ephesos), 258 (Syme island)
- Scholarly sources:
  - Bowden, chs. 1-2

Week 3 (Jan 18): Associations devoted to the Mother of the gods, Cybele and other “Anatolian” deities

Readings:

- Primary sources:

- Mother, Cybele, and Attis: *AGRW* 19-20 (Piraeus), 95 (Apameia Myrleia), 127 (Sardis), 142 (Thyatira), 216 (Pessinous), 327 (Rome)
- Other Anatolian deities: *AGRW* 22 (Men at Laurion), 121 (Agdistis at Philadelphia), 126 (Sabazios, Agdistis, and Ma at Sardis); *AGRW* L3 (Sabazios)
- Scholarly sources:
  - Bowden, chs. 3-4

Week 4 (Jan 25): Associations devoted to Dionysos, part 1 (Italy and Rome)

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Euripides, *Bacchae*, selections ([link](#))
  - *AGRW* L23 (Bacchanalia incident of 186 BCE described in the time of Augustus)
    - Senatorial decrees on the Bacchanalia online at York library ([link](#))
    - *AGRW* L22-54 ([browse](#) imperial actions and decisions about associations)
  - Harland, "Paintings of Pompeii 1: Villa of the Mysteries of Dionysos (Villa Item)" ([link](#))
  - *AGRW* 328, 330
- Scholarly sources:
  - Bowden, ch. 5

Week 5 (Feb 1): Associations devoted to Dionysos, part 2 (Greece and Asia Minor)

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Gold leaves cited in Bowden (chapter 7)
  - *AGRW* 7 (Athens), 115 (Pergamon), 176 (Miletos), 178 (Miletos), 189-193 (Smyrna), 195 (Smyrna), 202-203 (Magnesia)
  - *AGRW* L16 (Lucian on dancing)
  - *AGRW* B1, B2, B6 (buildings)
- Scholarly sources:
  - Bowden, ch. 7

**\*\*ESSAY DUE IN CLASS\*\***

Week 6 (Feb 8): Associations devoted to Isis, Sarapis, and other Egyptian deities

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Apuleius' *Metamorphoses, or the Golden Ass*, book 11 ([link](#))
  - Isis and Sarapis: *AGRW* 4 (Athens), 52 (Thessalonica), 97 (Kios), 98 (Prusa), 100 (Prusa), 109 (Kyzikos), 169 (Ephesos), 205 (Tralles), 221\*\* (Delos), 291 (Krokodilopolites), L40 (Nikomedia)
  - Anubis: *AGRW* 47 + figure 6 (Thessalonica), 185 (Smyrna), 294 (Narmouthis)

- Scholarly sources:
  - Bowden, ch. 8

Week 7 (Feb 15): Associations devoted to Mithras

Readings:

- Scholarly and primary sources:
  - Bowden, chs. 9-11
  - Examine images on “The Roman cult of Mithras: Catalogue of monuments and images of Mithras,” especially CIMRM 390, 1083 (both sides), 1283 ([link](#) to online site)

*\*\*Reading Week Feb. 17-23 – no classes\*\**

Week 8 (March 1): Honouring the gods within other associations: A study of some regulations

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - AGRW 8-9 (Liopesi), 22 (Laurion), 121 (Philadelphia, Asia), 195 (Smyrna), 295 (Philadelphia, Egypt), 300-302 (Tebtunis)
- Scholarly sources:
  - Philip A. Harland, “Banqueting Values in the Associations: Rhetoric and Reality” ([link](#)).

Week 9 (March 8): Immigrant Associations – Phoenicians, Syrians and others

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Phoenicians / Syrians: AGRW 223\* (Tyrians), 224\* (+ B8), 225, 226, 227, 228 (Berytians), 229\* (Syrians), 258, 317\* (Tyrians)
  - Kitians from Cyprus: AGRW 10
  - Thracians: AGRW 18, 208
  - Asians: AGRW 64, 71, 77, 78
- Scholarly sources:
  - Harland, “Other Diasporas: Immigrants, Ethnic Identities, and Acculturation,” from *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* ([link](#)).
  - Rives, ch. 6

Week 10 (March 15): Immigrant Associations – Judeans and devotees of the Judean god in the diaspora

Readings:

- Primary sources:
  - Judeans: AGRW 46\*, 86\*, 145\*, 152\*, 305–307\*
  - Israelites: AGRW 222a\*, 222b\*

- AGRW L9, L10, L33, L37
- Scholarly sources:
  - John M. G. Barclay, “The Province of Asia” ([link](#); course password required)
  - Mitchell, “Pagans, Jews, and Christians...”, pp. 31-37 ([link](#))
  - Rives, chapter 7

Week 11 (March 22): **\*\*IN CLASS TEST\*\***

Week 12 (March 29) : Judeans and devotees of the Judean god in the diaspora: Followers of Jesus (Film)

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

### ***Analysis of primary source*** (5 pages double-spaced)

Preparation: Carefully read and study Aelius Aristides’s *Sacred Tales (Orations 48-49; )* ([link](#); course password required)). Also carefully review your readings in Rives’s *Religion in the Roman Empire* (chapters 1-4) and your notes from class discussions for important background information.

Paper assignment: In some respects, Aristides is representative of common Greco-Roman perspectives on the gods and their involvements in human affairs. Write a 5 page paper that draws on Aristides in order to illustrate Greco-Roman perspectives or worldviews regarding (1) how humans honour the gods and (2) how the gods’ intervene in the lives of humans. You want to show that you are beginning to *understand* these perspectives from an *historical point of view* without judging them as good or bad, commendable or silly. Be sure to provide concrete examples of the points you make regarding these worldviews, drawing on specific passages in Aristides’s writing (noting in parentheses the relevant sections). As usual with any academic paper, you will want to have a clear argument which is succinctly expressed in your thesis statement and supported throughout the paragraphs.

### ***Academic book review paper*** (6 pages double-spaced)

Step 1: To familiarize yourself with the genre of the academic book review, read at least 10 book reviews (reviewing single-author books, not edited ones) that interest you in *The Classical Review* (accessible through JSTOR on our library system) or in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* online at: <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/>

Step 2: With a focus on the arguments and main points, read the book (Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World*).

Step 3: Write an academic book review of the book (in the form of an essay), which entails:

- Explaining the main arguments of the book and how the author builds up these arguments with sub-arguments throughout the chapters.
- Discussing the author’s methods or approach and the author’s use of evidence to support the author’s points.



- Providing a critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. Does the author achieve what he or she set out to do? Is the argument convincing or not, and in what ways? What theoretical assumptions and/or value judgments influence the author's reconstruction of history? Be sure to provide concrete examples (citing page numbers in parentheses) of the problems or strengths you discuss.

The review paper should have a clear thesis statement or argument (concerning your evaluation of the book) which is supported throughout the paragraphs. The paper should be clearly written and structured with no spelling or grammatical errors. Be succinct and do not exceed the prescribed length.

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