

California State University, Sacramento
Paganism in the Roman World
Fall 2009

Humanities and Religious Studies 117-01
Brighton 214
Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30-11:45

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Hrs: TR 9:45-10:15 T 3:45-5:45; and by appt.

Survey of ancient Roman paganism, the wide variety of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions found throughout the Roman world. Topics include Greek influences, traditional religion, state and ruler cults, healing cults, oracles, astrology, mystery religions, priests and priestesses, prayer, sacrifice, and religious philosophies. Along with examining the various forms and functions of Roman religion, we shall strive to explain the place of religion within ancient political, socioeconomic, and private life, and its significance for members of various groups (e.g., citizens, non-citizens, women, children, slaves, and members of various ethnic groups). Emphasis will be on primary sources: ancient texts, archaeological sites, and artistic and other material evidence (ritual objects, inscriptions, coins, etc.). Lectures will be supplemented by visual presentations, and by class discussion of all aspects of our study. The course fulfills Area C4 of the CSUS General Education requirements.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete HRS 117 will be able to

- Describe the basic features of religious belief and practice in Roman antiquity through critical analysis of a wide variety of classical literary sources (e.g. a novel, historical and philosophical writings, political speeches, personal letters, inscriptions, and graffiti) and of various forms of material evidence
- Explain the functions of Roman religious institutions and the place of religion within ancient political, socioeconomic, and private life, including its significance for members of various groups (e.g., citizens, non-citizens, women, children, slaves, and members of various ethnic groups)
- Describe the significant historical developments of Roman religious beliefs, practices, and institutions over the course of one thousand years, from the founding of Rome to the decline of classical paganism
- Explain the relationship of religious beliefs and attitudes to general cultural values of the Roman world
- Explain how features of Roman paganism anticipated religious thought and practice in later phases of Western civilization

Texts

Required

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (trans. P. G. Walsh)
Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd edition
Valerie M. Warrior, *Roman Religion: A Sourcebook*
Marvin W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook*

Library Reserve books (for papers)

Beard, Mary, John North, and Simon Price. *Religions of Rome, Volume 2: A Sourcebook*
Burkert, Walter. *Ancient Mystery Cults*
Ferguson, John. *The Religions of the Roman Empire*
Gregory, John. *The Neoplatonists: A Reader*
Long, A. A. *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*

Long, A. A., and D. N. Sedley. *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1: Translations of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary*
 Turcan, R. *The Cults of the Roman Empire*

Requirements and Grading

Active engagement with course content – readings, visual representations, lecture material – is essential. All reading assignments are to be completed prior to the meetings for which they are listed (see “Schedule and Assignments” below). Vocal participation in class is encouraged. Formal requirements and their correlative grade percentages consist of the following:

Attendance and quality of participation	5%
First assigned paper	25%
Midterm exam	20%
Second assigned paper	25%
Final exam	25%

The assigned papers, the first on material covered during the first seven weeks, the second on material covered the eighth through fourteenth weeks, are both to be approximately five pages in length (typed, double-spaced); good (B) and excellent (A) papers will draw from books on Library Reserve, in addition to the required texts. Detailed instructions on the papers will be provided several weeks before the due dates.

A late paper will be accepted for up to one week only, with daily reduction of grade. Exams must be taken at their scheduled times. Attendance is required, as per departmental attendance policy – a student’s course grade may be reduced due to an excessive number of unexcused absences. Consult with the instructor if ever there is a need to miss class. Use in class of laptop computers must be approved by the instructor; use (or ringing) of cell phones is not permitted. Compliance with rules prohibiting cheating and plagiarism along with principles of courteous conduct are required (i.e., no ‘chatting’ during class, no leaving class without prior permission, no walking in front of the instructor if ever one needs to arrive late) (for the University’s policy on plagiarism, see: <http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>).

Course grades will be based upon the total number of points achieved by the end of the semester. In the meantime, the following table indicates the minimum number of points needed to correlate to each letter grade (determined based on the percentages in the second column) for each of the assigned tasks.

Grade	%	Midterm (100 pts)		Paper (125 pts)		Final (125 pts)	
			15 pts (essays)		25 pts (rubric)		15 pts (essays)
A	92	92	13.8	115	23	115	13.8
A-	88	88	13.2	110	22	110	13.2
B+	84	84	12.6	105	21	105	12.6
B	78	78	11.7	97.5	19.5	97.5	11.7
B-	74	74	11.1	92.5	18.5	92.5	11.1
C+	70	70	10.5	87.5	17.5	87.5	10.5
C	64	64	9.6	80	16	80	9.6
C-	60	60	9.0	75	15	75	9.0
D+	56	56	8.4	70	14	70	8.4
D	50	50	7.5	62.5	12.5	62.5	7.5
D-	46	46	6.9	57.5	11.5	57.5	6.9

(Below 46% is failing)

Schedule and Assignments (Complete all underlined reading assignments by the dates indicated)

Introduction to the Roman World

- Tues 9/1 Preliminaries
- Thur 9/3 Overview of Roman political history. RR, 15-18 (2.1-3); BEC, 20-47; *Golden Ass*, Bk 1
- Tues 9/8 The Roman social order. Primary Roman values. BEC, 48-96; *Golden Ass*, Bk 2
- Thur 9/10 Aspects of Roman culture. Apuleius and *The Golden Ass*. BEC, 96-147; *Golden Ass*, Bk 3
- Tues 9/15 The myth of Cupid and Psyche. *Golden Ass*, Bks 4-8
- Thur 9/17 Lucius transformed. *The Golden Ass* as historical source. *Golden Ass*, Bks 9-11

Traditional Paganism of the State and the Public Sphere

- Tues 9/22 Greek and Etruscan influences. *Religio* and Roman religion. Roman conceptions of divinity. BEC, 148-177; RR, vii-viii (Prologue), 1-13, 83-90
- Thur 9/24 Communicating with the divine: divination, vows, prayer, oracles. Sacrifice. BEC, 188-195, 213-221, 461-462; RR, 15-23 (15-18 previously assigned), 36-46
- Tues 9/30 Priesthoods and religious institutions. BEC, 182-188, 195-199; RR, 47-57, 59-69
- Thur 10/1 Sacred time and sacred space. Religious aspects of war and games. RR, 71-81, 89-90 (two sections on the games to Apollo, previously assigned), 115-125
- Tues 10/6 Worship of the emperor. BEC, 199-212; RR, 127-138

Traditional Paganism of the Domestic and Private Spheres

- Thur 10/8 Religion in the home and countryside. BEC, 177-182; RR, 24-30
- Tues 10/13 Magic, witchcraft and astrology. Healing cults. BEC, 227-243, 221-226; RR, 139-150, 87-88 ("The importation of Aesculapius," previously assigned)
- Thur 10/15 Death and afterlife. BEC, 243-251; RR, 31-35
- Tues 10/20 **Midterm exam**

The Mysteries

- Thur 10/22 Introduction to the mysteries. The Eleusinian Mysteries. BEC, 251-259; AM, 1-14, 17-45

- Tues 10/27 Mysteries of Dionysos. BEC, 259-265; AM, 63-109; RR, 99-107
- Thur 10/29 **First paper due.** Mysteries of Dionysos (cont.)
- Tues 11/3 The Great Mother and her consort. BEC, 277-287; AM, 113-154; RR, 91-97
- Thur 11/5 Mysteries of Isis and Osiris. BEC, 266-276; AM, 157-196
- Tues 11/10 Mysteries of Isis and Osiris (cont.). Sarapis. RR, 107-111
- Thur 11/12 The Cult of Mithras. BEC, 287-296; AM, 199-221; RR, 111-113
- Tues 11/17 The Cult of Mithras (cont.)

Philosophy as Religion

- Thur 11/19 Greek philosophical background. Skepticism and Cynicism. BEC, 319-354
- Tues 11/24 Stoicism. Epicureanism. BEC, 354-379; RR, 151-161
- (Thur 11/26 is Thanksgiving)
- Tues 12/1 Pythagoreanism and Platonism in the Roman world. BEC, 379-395
- Thur 12/3 Apuleius the Platonist. Introduction to *The Golden Ass*, sections V-VII (xxx-xliii)
- Tues 12/8 Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Roman world. RR, 163-172, 173-186
- Thur 12/10 Summary and conclusions. **Second paper due**

Final exam: Thursday 12/17, 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.