California State University, Sacramento
Topics in Humanities and Religious Studies: Envisioning the Divine in Mediterranean Antiquity
Fall 2010

Humanities and Religious Studies 190-01
Mendocino 4008
Tuesday 6:00-8:50

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Office Hours: Tues 5:00-5:45; Wed 12:30-2:00; Thurs 3:30-4:15; and by appointment

Catalog description: Senior seminar for Humanities and Religious Studies majors; focuses on the perspectives and methods of the academic study of religion and of the humanities. Topics chosen by the instructor. Prerequisites: HRS 105, HRS 108 and HRS 140. Paired with (graduate-level) HRS 290; only one may be counted for credit. 3 units.

This is our department’s capstone course and is intended for majors in the senior year. The topic this term is “Envisioning the Divine in Mediterranean Antiquity.” Focus will be on biblical and Greco-Roman cultures and on the integration of art history and textual analysis in the study of religion. Along with the reading of various literary works, including several from the Bible, the Homeric Hymns, Plato’s dialogues, and Ovid’s Metamorphoses, our study will incorporate consideration of relevant art, architecture, history, and other cultural aspects, and will apply the approaches studied in the department’s two core methodology courses (HRS 105: “Approaches to the Humanities” and HRS 108: “Approaches to Religious Studies”). The course will employ a modified seminar format, emphasizing analysis of the literature and related material mainly by way of discussion.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed to provide a culminating intellectual experience for Humanities and Religious Studies majors, and thus will incorporate the primary learning objectives of the program. As they apply to this course, these objectives are:

• Through reading and discussion of a variety of challenging literary works (see “Texts” below), each student will demonstrate the development of analytical reading and oral communication skills.
• Through the writing of an analytical term paper, along with short essays in response to assigned readings, each student will demonstrate writing skills appropriate to our field.
• Through study and discussion of visual representations of themes relating to the literature, each student will demonstrate the development of techniques of formal analysis within an interdisciplinary (i.e. historical, anthropological, psychological, etc.) context.
• Through an emphasis on the historical development of literary genres, religious and philosophical themes, and artistic styles and movements, each student will demonstrate the ability to identify and analyze changing perspectives on beauty and spirituality.
• Students will demonstrate the development of an historical/contextual understanding of religions.
• Especially due to the cross-cultural and trans-historical approach employed in the course, students will demonstrate the appreciation of diverse cultures.
• Virtually all aspects of the course will require students to use and enhance critical reasoning skills.
Texts

Bible (Recommended: The HarperCollins Study Bible, Rev. Ed., ed. Harold W. Attridge)
Hesiod, Theogony and excerpts from Works and Days (Recommended: Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, and Shield, trans. Apostolos Athanassakis)
Homer, Iliad, trans. A. T. Murray
Homer, Odyssey, trans. A. T. Murray
Hesiod, Theogony and excerpts from Works and Days (Recommended: Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, and Shield, trans. Apostolos Athanassakis)
Plato, Symposium (Recommended: translation by Abraham Nehamas and Paul Woodruff)
Alberto Varoli, The Religions of Ancient Greece (University Press of America)
Course Reader:
- The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet XI, lines 1-206 (4 pp.)
- Augustine, City of God, XIV.28 and XV.4 (1 p.)
- Apocryphon of John with chart and supplementary material (12 pp.)
- Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound (21 pp.)
- Ch. I, “The Great Mother,” and Ch. VI, “The Sacred Figure of the Emperor,” from John Ferguson, The Religions of the Roman Empire (with illustrations) (20 pp.)
- Plotinus, Enneads (on the One) (1 p.)
- Church fathers on Christology and Christianity (2 pp.)
- “Nicene Creed” and “Definition of Chalcedon” (1 p.)

Requirements and Grading

Each student will write a term paper (of approximately 15 pages) requiring substantial research and analysis. Each student also will complete several short (app. 500-word) informal essays in response to readings, and will provide a brief presentation to the class on artwork; specific instructions will be provided. Especially due to our modified seminar format, active participation in class is expected. All reading assignments are to be completed prior to the meetings for which they are listed (see “Schedule and Assignments”). Attendance is required, as per departmental attendance policy. Course grades will be based on the following:

- Quality of engagement in class sessions 15%
- Presentation on artwork 10%
- Five responses to readings 25%
- Term paper (and review of another’s draft) 50%

Note: If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008; 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with the instructor after class or during office hours early in the semester.
Schedule and Assignments

- Subject to slight modifications, via one-week advanced notice posted on SacCT
- All reading assignments are underlined; complete prior to class sessions per dates indicated

8/31
Introductions. “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” “What has Humanities to do with Religious Studies?”
(To be read in class: Genesis 1.1; John 1.1; Hesiod, Theogony 114-125; Ovid, Metamorphoses I.1-33)

9/7
Cosmogony and cosmology: myths of creation and world order
Hesiod, Theogony and excerpts from Works and Days (lines 1-201); Genesis 1-25; excerpt from The Epic of Gilgamesh (XI.1-206, in Reader); Ovid, Metamorphoses (1.1-606)

9/14
Platonic concepts of divinity and cosmology
Plato, Timaeus; Plato, Republic 377b-392b (in Books 2 and 3) and 514a-518d (“Allegory of the Cave,” in Book 7); Plato, Phaedrus 243e-257b; Plotinus, Enneads (in Reader); excerpts from Augustine, City of God (XIV.28 and XV.4, in Reader)

9/21
Justice and the divine: issues in theodicy
Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound; Ovid, Metamorphoses 1.786-1037; Apocryphon of John (with summary of Gnostic characteristics and chart of the Gnostic myth, all in Reader); Job 1-19, 31, 38-42

9/28
Ethical monotheism
Exodus 1-24; Deuteronomy 4-6, 34; Isaiah 1-7, 40-55; Ezekiel 1-3; Jonah

10/5
Divine diversity: the “religious stew” of Greco-Roman antiquity

10/12
The Goddess/es
Ch. I, “The Great Mother,” from John Ferguson, The Religions of the Roman Empire (in Reader); Homeric Hymns: 14, 30, 32, 2, 13, 12, 24, 29, 11, 28, 9, 27, 25; Ovid, Metamorphoses III.163-452, IV.572-V.871

10/19
Divine love
Plato, Symposium; Homeric Hymns 5, 6, 10; Ovid, Metamorphoses IV.228-262 and X.618-857
10/26
Apollo and Dionysus

11/2
Divinized heroes. Divine Wisdom, Divine Word
*Homeric Hymns* 15, 16, 17, 33; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IX.1-406, XIV.833-891 and 1171-1243, XV.748-919; Proverbs 8; Wisdom of Solomon 7.1-8.1; Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach) 24.1-22; Philo on the *Logos* (available via SacCT); Gospel of John

11/9
Divine rule and a clash of rulerships
Gospel of Matthew; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV.920-1112; ch. VI, “The Sacred Figure of the Emperor,” from John Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire* (in Reader); excerpts from ch. 9, “Individuals and Gods: Life and Death,” and ch. 10, “Rome Outside Rome,” from Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume 2 – A Sourcebook* (also review sections 2.8a-c from ch. 2; all in Reader)

11/16
Apocalyptic and the Apocalypse
Daniel; 1 Thessalonians 4; Revelation

11/23
An art-historical approach to the history of religions
Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*

11/30
(Continued consideration of *The Clash of Gods*)
**Draft of paper due**

12/7
Envisioning the divine in global perspective
Selected readings from the world’s religions (available via SacCT)
**Peer review of draft due**

12/14
Final draft of paper due to Professor Brodd’s office by 6:00 p.m.