

CULTS, MAGIC, AND WITCHCRAFT (01:190:325)
Fall 2015
Rutgers University, New Brunswick
Mondays and Thursdays, 12:35-1:55 PM
HSB 106

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Course Description: We will consider “alternative” forms and expressions of belief about the natural and supernatural realms in Ancient Greece and Rome—alternative, that is, to the apparently more “mainstream” mythical traditions and religious institutions devoted to the canonical Olympian divinities (Zeus, Athena, et al.) and their heroic offspring that are typically discussed in courses on ancient history and culture.

On the one hand, we will study elective mystery cults, “secret” religious societies that promised their initiates access to all manner of hidden knowledge and sacred wisdom, particularly concerning the enigmas of mortality and the afterlife, otherwise unavailable to them through the more dominant modes of official, civic religious practice.

On the other hand, we will study the role of magic and witchcraft in the daily lives of Greeks and Romans, the supernatural means by which men and women believed they could affect the natural order of the world and persuade or compel their fellow humans and even the gods to do their will.

After examining both magic and mystery cult—and the occasional intersection of the two—we will see that neither was in fact “alternative” or marginal. Both were in fact entirely in the mainstream of the social and cultural experience of individuals and communities in Ancient Greece and Rome.

Texts: Our way into the often obscure (to us moderns, at least) worlds of magic and mystery cults will be primarily through original (Greek and Latin) texts—a relevant selection of poetry and prose both artistic and functional, including laws inscribed on stone and spells and curses written on papyri—that we will read in English translation. To that end, I have selected these two sourcebooks, which are required.

1. Marvin Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Texts* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999)

2. Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*, Second Edition (Oxford University Press, 2009)

We will also read a number of selected works of modern scholarship. I will post most of these readings on the course Sakai page. The following book of essays on magic, however, is required:

3. Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Harvard University Press, 1999)

Finally, we will devote the final weeks of the course to reading and discussing a Roman novel by Apuleius of Madaura entitled the *Metamorphoses* (or *The Golden Ass*, an alternate title), which deals with both mystery cults and magic. The following translation of this novel is required:

4. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. E. J. Kenney (Penguin Classics, 1999)

THE ABOVE-MENTIONED 4 BOOKS ARE REQUIRED. YOU MUST HAVE FULL ACCESS TO THEM IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS COURSE.

Some other books and articles, which are not required, but which you might find useful, include:

Mystery Cult

Bowden, Hugh, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* (Princeton University Press, 2010)

Burkert, Walter, *Ancient mystery cults* (Harvard University Press, 1987)

Cole, S.G., *Theoi Megaloi: The cult of the great gods at Samothrace* (Leiden: Brill, 1984)

Cosmopoulos, M., *Greek Mysteries: the archaeology and ritual of ancient Greek secret cults* (Routledge: London and New York, 2002)

Edmonds, Radcliffe G. III, *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes, and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets* (Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Graf, F. and Johnston, S.I., *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets*. (Routledge: London & New York, 2007)

Henrichs, A., "Greek and Roman Glimpses of Dionysos." In *Dionysos and His Circle: Ancient Through Modern*, ed. C. Houser, 1–11. (Harvard University Press, 1979)

Larson, Jennifer, *Ancient Greek cults: a guide* (Routledge: New York & London, 2007)

Mylonas, G.E., *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton University Press, 1961)

Nilsson, Martin P., *Greek Folk Religion* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940)

Magic

Ankarloo, B. and Clark, S. eds., *Magic and Witchcraft in Europe: Greece and Rome* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999)

Betz, H.D., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago University Press, 1986)

Gager, J. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press: 1992)

Collins, Derek, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2008)

Dickie, Matthew, *Magic and magicians in the Greco-Roman world* (Routledge: London & New York, 2001)

Faraone, Christopher A., *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass, 1999)

Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D, eds., *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic & Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1997)

Luck, Georg, *Arcana Mundi: magic and the occult in the Greek and Roman worlds* (John Hopkins University Press, 1985).

Ogden, Daniel, *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (Princeton University Press, 2001)

Note too the excellent bibliography at the end of Ogden's sourcebook.

Requirements and Grading

First, attendance. It is crucial that you attend all of our class meetings, or as very many as you possibly can!

Second, 3 short "pop" quizzes. Well, not really "pop." I will announce them in class during the class *before* they will be given. These quizzes are multiple choice, just six or seven questions based on the readings and lectures of the previous week. The questions are relatively easy; these quizzes are really there to make sure you are trying to come to class regularly. If you miss one of these quizzes, you missed it. There are no makeups. These 3 quizzes together are worth **6%** of your final grade.

Third, every few weeks, you will have to submit—through Sakai—brief written responses to 3 or 4 questions I provide about the readings. These assignments are intended to insure that you are keeping up with, and thinking critically about, the course readings. The responses are not required to be that long: typically 4 to five sentences for each response (basically a decent-sized paragraph). (I will provide examples of questions and responses in the second week of class.) The assignments are only graded by

submission—if you submit, you get full credit—but if I feel your responses are insufficient or do not demonstrate that you have in fact done the reading, I will ask you to resubmit in order to receive credit. Together, these assignments are worth **20%** of your final grade.

Fourth, there are two in-class exams. Each will consist of multiple choice questions and a section in which you will be asked to comment, essay style, on selected passages from our readings. The midterm is worth 25% of the grade and the final 34% (and so **59%** combined).

Fifth, a short final paper, 3-4 pp. and double-spaced, on a topic relevant to magic or mystery cult. I will propose paper topics at the end of November; you may also develop your own (subject to my approval). The final paper will be due at the time of the final exam. It accounts for **15%** of your grade.

Note: Much of the work in this course will necessitate access to Sakai. If you do not have access to Sakai (or an internet-connected computer), please let me know so we can work out alternate arrangements.

Policies: There will be no make-ups for quizzes or exams except in cases of illness. I will require a signed doctor's note. "Family emergencies" (deaths, births, weddings, etc.) are not valid excuses without a dean's note. Written assignments handed in late (even one day) will be given only half credit.

All students must take both the midterm and final. Missing either will result in an F.

Cases of cheating and plagiarism will be handled in strict accordance with University disciplinary procedures.

Preliminary Schedule and Readings

NB: This is a preliminary and tentative schedule of assignments; more readings will be assigned as we go along, and readings listed here may change. Please regularly consult the Sakai page tabs "Weekly Assignments" for a fuller picture of what is assigned for particular lectures in a given week.

Week 1: Sept. 3: Introduction: reviewing the syllabus. Overview of what we'll be studying. Greek and Roman society and culture.

{Please watch the following documentaries, accessible online:

1. The Greeks, Crucible of Civilization (PBS, 2000): In two parts, about 2 hours. (<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/greeks-crucible-civilization/>)
2. Rome: Worship in Rome (HBO, 2008): 10-minute mini-doc made to accompany HBO series *Rome* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myAOjN8oYoo>)

Week 2: Sept. 8 and 10: Ancient Greek and Roman religion: what was it? Ancient notions of belief, faith, divinity, worship, mortality and the afterlife. Myth and ritual. The institution of cult. Civic religion. Eschatology. Private and public religion. Official religious cults and mystery cults: contrast or complement?

Readings: (a) Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries* pp. 1–14; (b) J.N. Bremmer *Greek Religion* pp. 1-10; (c) N.J. Richardson, “Early Greek views about life after death,” in *Greek Religion and Society*, pp. 50–66; (d) J. Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults*, pp. 1-14; (e) J. Scheid, *Introduction to Roman Religion*, pp. 18-38; (f) J. Rüpke, *Religion of the Romans*, pp. 3-38 [b-f on Sakai]

Week 3: Sept. 14 and 17: The Eleusinian Mysteries

Readings: (a) Meyer, pp. 17–45; pay special attention to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (pp. 20–30), which narrates the *aetiological myth* at the heart of the Eleusinian rites; (b) excerpt from L. Zaidman and P. Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (Cambridge 1992), 132–140 [b is on Sakai]; (c) a third reading TBA

FIRST RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT DUE FRIDAY SEPT. 18, 8 PM

Weeks 4-5: Sept. 21 and 28 [NO CLASS ON THURS. SEPT. 24] and Oct. 1: The Mysteries of Dionysus and Orpheus in Greece and Rome

Readings: (a) Meyer, pp. 63–109; (b) Euripides’ *Bacchae*, in full (parts of the plays are excerpted in Meyer); online translation may be found here:

<https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/euripides/euripides.htm>

(c) R. Parker, “Early Orphism,” in *The Greek World*, ed. A. Powell (Routledge 1995), pp. 483–510;

(d) Graf, pp. 96–117

Week 6: Oct. 5: Other Mysteries: Andania and the Cult of the Mother

Readings: (a) Meyer, pp. 49-59, 113-154; (b) further reading TBA

Oct. 8: Mithras and Mithraic Mysteries in the Roman Empire

Readings: (a) Meyer, pp. 197-221; (b) further reading TBA

SECOND RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT DUE FRIDAY OCT. 9, 8 PM

Week 7: Oct. 12: The Cult of Isis and Osiris

Readings: (a) Meyer, pp. 157-176; (b) further reading TBA

OCT. 15: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8: Oct. 19 and 22: Introducing Greco-Roman Magic: Culturally conditioned concepts of magic and sorcery. Types of magic. Magic and religion.

Readings: (a) Graf, Chapters 1, 2, 7; (b) J. Bremmer, “The Birth of the Term ‘Magic’,” *ZPE* 126 (1999) 1–12 (available here: <http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil->

fak/ifa/zpe/downloads/1999/126pdf/126.html); (c) Ogden, pp. 9–32 ('Greek Sorcerers')

THIRD RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT DUE FRIDAY OCT. 23, 8 PM

Weeks 9 and 10: Oct. 26 and 29 and Nov. 2: Representations of magic and witches in Greek and Latin poetry: Circe, Medea, and others; Love Magic
Readings: (a) Ogden, pp. 78–101 ('Medea and Circe'), pp. 102–114 ('Witches in Greek Literature'), 225–244 ('Erotic Magic') (b) Euripides' *Medea* (available online here: <https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/euripides/medea.htm>)
(c) excerpts from R. Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," in Ankarloo and Clark, eds. *Magic and Witchcraft in Europe: Greece and Rome* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); (d) C.A. Faraone, "Introduction," in *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, pp. 1-39; (e) C.A. Faraone, "The construction of gender in ancient Greek love magic," in *The World of Ancient Magic: papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4-8 May 1997*, eds. David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery and Einar Thomassen (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999) 279–282; (f) Graf, pp. 175–190 [c, d, and e on Sakai]

Weeks 10 and 11: Nov. 5 and 9: Curses and Binding Spells; 'Voodoo Dolls'
Readings: (a) Ogden, pp. 210–226 ('Curses'); 245–260 ('Voodoo Dolls') (b) Graf, Chapter 5; (c) further reading TBA

Nov. 12: Professional Magicians and wonder-workers; Legislation of magic; shamanism
Readings: (a) Graf, chapters 3 and 4; (b) Ogden, pp. 275–299 ('Magic and the Law'); pp. 61–77 ('Rivals of Jesus'); (c) M. Witzel, "Shamanism in Northern and Southern Eurasia" [c on Sakai]

FOURTH RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT DUE FRIDAY NOV. 13, 8 PM

Week 12: Nov. 16: Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet*
Reading: (a) Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet*; (b) further reading TBA

Nov. 19: Raising the Dead: Necromancy; ghosts
Readings: (a) Ogden, pp. 146–209 ('Ghosts', 'Necromancy'), 121–124; (b) excerpt from S.I. Johnston, *Restless Dead* [b on Sakai]; (c) further reading TBA

Week 13: Nov. 23: Apuleius: Magic and Mystery Cult in the Roman Empire; Witches in Latin literature; Apuleius on magic and witchcraft
Readings: (a) Ogden, pp. 115–145 ('Witches in Latin Literature'); (b) Apuleius *The Golden Ass*, chapters 1–4 (Kenney, pp. 7-76) (note that Ogden calls *The Golden Ass* by its alternate title, *Metamorphoses*)

Week 14: Nov. 30 and Dec. 3: Apuleius: Magic and Mystery Cult in the Roman Empire,

cont.

Reading: (a) Apuleius *The Golden Ass*, chapters 5-11 (Kenney, pp. 77-214); (b) S. Takacs, "Initiations and Mysteries in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*" (available online here: <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ElAnt/V12N1/takacs.pdf>)

FIFTH RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT DUE SUNDAY DEC. 6, 8 PM

Week 15: Dec. 7: mystery cult, Christianity, and Judaism

Reading: (a) Meyer, pp. 225-254; (b) a college paper by Dr. Martin Luther King on mystery cults and Christianity: <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/influence-mystery-religions-christianity> (c) further reading TBA

Dec. 10: Course review

Final exam: Dec 21, 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM