HIST 4260.04: Ancient Religion and Magic  (Monday 3:30-6:20, Wooten 322) syllabus (3.2)

Instructor: Prof. Christopher Fuhrmann (cfuhrmann@unt.edu)
Office hours: Wooten Hall 264, Wednesdays 9:30-11:30 and by appointment
The best way to contact me is by email, but my office phone/voicemail is 940-565-4527

This course explores various aspects of ancient religion, especially as practiced by Jews, Greeks, and Romans from earliest times to circa 300 CE. The class focuses on the formal structures of religion, its everyday practices and beliefs, and the role of religion and magic in people’s lives.

For History majors seeking a BA or Teaching Certification in history, this course can count as a “Group B (Europe)” credit, or “Group C (World).” This course can be applied to the new PHIL interdisciplinary Religious Studies major. It also counts for the following minors: Classical Studies, Jewish Studies, Religion Studies.

List of required books for the first part of the semester (more will be added later):
Valerie Warrior, Roman Religion. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006. ISBN 0521532124 . $25

Several other readings will be posted on our Blackboard space at learn.unt.edu (call 565-2324 for help)

Course requirements:  Quizzes: 20%      Midterm exam (March 4th): 20%
            Papers (due in April): 20%    Participation: 10%       Final exam: 30%

Quizzes will typically be unannounced short-answer tests on primary sources, though there will also be pre-announced review quizzes, and take-home quizzes. The exams will mostly be long, handwritten essays, with some interpretive identifications, and possibly some short answer sections as well. Study guides will be circulated one week before the exam, and expectations for the 6-12 page papers will be clarified in a memo after the midterm exam. Participation includes attendance (having more than one unexcused absence will significantly hurt your grade), engagement in class discussion, and general decorum (absolutely no cell phone use in this class!)

Reasonable ODA accommodations will be made pending receipt of paperwork from them. Students in this class will be held to stringent standards of academic integrity. Be especially careful to avoid any kind of web plagiarism.

Tentative course schedule. “(BB)” means you will find the file on Blackboard. “*” = Optional

Week I. January 14: Introduction to the class
1. Introductions.
2. Overview of evolution and ancient civilizations
3. Discussing religion, culture, magic, philosophy, science, and other things that defy definition
4. Ancient religions: Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Persian, Jewish, Roman

Optional background reading: On problems defining Greco-Roman “religion,” see James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 4-7, 13-14 (BB; see Week V)

January 21: MLK Day, no class.

Week II. January 28: Jews and their neighbors – **BRING A BIBLE**. There will be a **quiz** today covering the lecture from January 14th.

For the first part of today’s class we are honored to have a special guest speaker from UNT’s Jewish Studies Program, Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis, who will share his expertise on **ancient Jewish magic**. To prepare for his presentation, you will read selected passages from the (Hebrew) Bible (a.k.a. the Old Testament); see Blackboard memo for exact passages, and note “BibleGuide.doc” if you need help navigating the Bible.

The second part of today’s class will continue our overview of religion and civilization in the ancient Mediterranean and Ancient Near East. To prepare for this lecture, read the following chapters in Sarah Iles Johnston, ed., *Ancient Religions*:
- Jan Assmann, “Monotheism and Polytheism,” 17-31
- J. Assmann and D. Frankfurter, “Egypt,” 155-164
- Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “Mesopotamia,” 165-172
- John J. Collins, “Israel,” 181-188
- W. Malandra & M. Stausberg, “Iran,” 197-205
- Nanno Marinatos, “Minoan and Mycenaean Civilizations,” 206-209
- Finally, try Jon Mikalson, “Greece,” 210-219

*Optional (but well worth a quick look just to see how difficult this material really is): excerpt from Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (BB)

Week III. February 4: Archaic and Classical Greece

The first part of class will mainly be a discussion of some major literary sources on Greek religion. To prepare:
1. Re-read Marinatos and Mikalson’s chapters in S.I. Johnston, ed., *Ancient Religions*, 206-219
2. Read the following primary sources (as always, expect reading **quizzes** on primary sources), all on Blackboard:
- Homer *Iliad* Book I; *Odyssey* Books I, end of X, XI (all) and the beginning of XII, XX (= Rouse translation pp. 11-21, 122-139, 226-233). = four individual PDF files.
- Hesiod, parts of *Theogony* and *Works & Days* (NB: 2 separate works, excerpted into a single PDF)
- The *Hymn to Hermes*; optional: *Hymn to Demeter*
- If you have time, read the selection of specified Aesop’s Fables listed in the “Aesopic gods” memo, linked to Laura Gibbs’ terrific *Aesopica* website

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The second part of today’s class will be a lecture on the overall traits and structure of Greek religion, to circa 323 BCE. Be sure to bring the Mikalson book, which is the basis of this lecture!


If you have five minutes to waste, watch [http://www.history.com/videos/secrets-of-the-oracle](http://www.history.com/videos/secrets-of-the-oracle).


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**Week IV. February 11: “Hellenistic” religion: Jews, Greeks, and other polytheists**

First there will be an overview lecture on the Hellenistic world, its philosophies (very important!) and its religions. Read the following:

- Jon Mikalson’s chapter on Hellenism in his *Ancient Greek Religion*, second edition, pp. 186-202
- Luther Martin, *Hellenistic Religions*, 4-12, 35-84, 98-102; optional: 155-162 (BB)
- James A. Evans, *Daily Life in the Hellenistic Age*, chapter on religion (BB)
*I will also make available part of World Civ textbook which covers some of this same material

- Also read the selection of specified Aesop’s Fables listed in the “Aesopic gods.docx” memo on Blackboard, linked to Laura Gibbs’ terrific *Aesopica* website


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After break, we will discuss Jews and Judaism during the Hellenistic era. Read (on Blackboard) the “Letter of Aristeas,” 1 Maccabees 1-2, excerpts from Elias Bickerman’s *The Jews in the Greek Age*, and note carefully part of the assignment above that deals specifically with this topic (viz. pages 102-111 of Luther Martin’s *Hellenistic Religions*).

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**Week V. February 18: Introducing the Etruscans, and “Roman religion.”**
On the Etruscans, read
-Georges Dumézil, Appendix to *Archaic Roman Religion*, vol. 2, pp. 625-626 only; remaining pages are *optional. (BB)
*I will also make available some of de Grummond and Simon’s excellent book *The Religion of the Etruscans*; and the novelist D. H. Lawrence’s rollicking observations of Caere from his *Etruscan Places: Travels through Forgotten Italy.*
*Also optional: Jean MacIntosh Turfa, “Etruscan Religion at the Watershed” in *Religion in Republican Italy* (YCS 33, 2006), 62-89 (BB)

To get a start on background/overview of Roman religion, begin with
2. Valerie Warrior, *Roman Religion*, first five chapters (i.e. to p. 66)
4. On the “otherness” of Roman religion, read Chapter 2 of John Scheid’s *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, pp. 18-29 (BB. Thought-provoking, but take with a grain of salt).


*Fay Glinister, “Reconsidering “Religious Romanization.””

*For something completely different, read Ingrid Edlund-Berry, “Hot, Cold, or Smelly: The Power of Sacred Water in Roman Religion.”

To make sure we’re all on the same page regarding some fundamental Roman “myths” (viz. the religious elements of the most important stories Romans told each other about their origins), read *Jane Gardner’s Roman Myths* 7-40, 52-78 – okay to skim over material which is not very pertinent to religion.

VI. February 25: Livy and early Roman religion

Today we will first focus on some of the surviving books of the *Ab urbe condita* of Titus Livius, a.k.a. *Livy*. Read all of his Preface and all of Book I to II.1. Also III.6-8, and III.10. Then all of Book V, and Appendix 3 of Warrior’s edition, “Roman Religion in Livy’s First Pentad.”

There will also be a lecture on the Roman calendar and major festivals. This material is covered in the following readings:
-Valerie Warrior, *Roman Religion*, 67-78
- Jörg Rüpke, *Religion of the Romans*, 186-201 (BB)

VII. March 4: Midterm exam. I will provide the exam booklet.

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March 11: Spring Break, no class. Bring all your books with you to the beach.

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VIII. March 18: Problems in the history of Roman Religion during the middle and late Republic (ca. 264 to 43 BCE).

Today we will discuss particular friction points in Roman republican-era religion, including the Bacchanalia scandal in the aftermath of the Second Punic War, Publius Clodius’ violation of the *Bona Dea* rites, and the deification of Gaius Julius Caesar in 43.

Beard/North/Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 2 (sourcebook), pp. 172-173, 288-292 (Bacchanals); *Dumézil, Archaic Roman Religion* vol. 2, pp. 457-489


On “divus” Caesar and deification, Beard/North/Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 2 (sourcebook), pp. 119-122 (on the Lupercalia), 216-23; 202-205 is optional (note Vestals!).
*Also note Ittai Gradel’s *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 32-44, 54-79 (BB)


*For an overall survey, see Jörg Rüpke’s chapter “Roman Religion,” from H. Flower (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic* (BB); the very brave can try the available excerpt from his book *Religion in Republican Rome: Rationalization and Ritual Change*.

See Blackboard for reading assignment, which will include excerpts from Livy, Dumézil, Rüpke, and Edlund-Berry.

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IX. March 25: The early empire, and religious life in the Roman city

Beard/North/Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 2 (sourcebook), pp. 78-102, 132-140, 231-235, 239-245; skim 141-151, 246-259 (we will discuss in class)

Suetonius on some religious tendencies of the Julio-Claudian (i.e. early) emperors (BB)
Ittai Gradel’s *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 103-109 (BB)

John North’s obituary of Simon Price: {www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/aug/21/simon-price-obituary}

R. Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods in the Age of Augustus*, 112-125 (BB)

On imperialism and religion, Greg Woolf, *Rome: An Empire’s Story* Chapter 8 (pp. 113-127, BB)

Kurt Raaflaub on war and peace (BB)


*A. E. Cooley, “Beyond Rome and Latium: Roman Religion in the Age of Augustus.”*

*J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* 60-81 (on Augustus and ruler cult)

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After break, we will focus on ways religion was woven into the fabric of city life. There is much material on this in the above Beard/North/Price assignment. Also (all on BB):

1. Robert Knapp, *Ordinary Romans*, 5-33, 90-96

*Simon Price, “Religions of Rome”
*Chapters 6-7, 23 in Jörg Rüpke, ed., *Companion to Roman Religion*

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X. April 1: Death, ghosts, afterlife, and foreign influence on Rome and the Jews (incl. mystery cults)

Excerpts from Cassius Dio,”Speech of Maecenas” (BB)

On foreign influences, Beard/North/Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 2 (sourcebook), 209-212, 288-329


*Chapters 25, 27, 30 in Jörg Rüpke, ed., *Companion to Roman Religion*

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Oh, Death!

Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, chs. 8 (ghosts) and 9 (necromancy) (BB)

Debbie Felton, *Haunted Greece and Rome: Ghost Stories from Classical Antiquity*

J. Strubbe, “Cursed be he that moves my bones,” in Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera*, 33-59 (BB)

Graham Anderson, *Fairytale in the Ancient World*, 112-122 (folklorist perspective)


(*?) Luther Martin, *Hellenistic Religions*, 58-118 (BB)  
(*?) Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* v. 1, 356-369 (BB)  
(*? HIGHLY RECOMMENDED): George Kittredge, “Arm-Pitting among the Greeks” (1885)  
* E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, ch. 17 (on the resurrection accounts regarding Jesus)

EVERYTHING BELOW IS IN PROGRESS

XI. April 8: Magic, part I: Binding spells, curses, apotropaic magic

See Blackboard for other assigned readings, which will include excerpts from Warrior, Fraser, Graf, Gager, Faraone, Collins, Ogden

For some preliminary issues, questions, and problems, see  
Christopher Fuhrmann, *Policing the Roman Empire*, 45-49  
Sarah Ruden, *Pauk among the People*, 3-5  
Graham Anderson, *Fairytale in the Ancient World*, 103-111 (folklorist perspective)

On apotropaic forces:  
John R. Clarke, *Looking at Laughter*, 63-73 (excellent);  
*J. N. Adams, Latin Sexual Vocabulary* 4-5 (contains untranslated Latin)

On malicious forces:  
*David Frankfurter, “Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt.”*  
(grbs.library.duke.edu/article/view/391/1731 -- excellent)

On historiography of the study of ancient magic:  
*Fitz Graf, Magic in the Ancient World*, ch. 1  
*Derek Collins, Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, xi-26

XII. April 15: Astrology, lots, dreams, and horoscopes

Beard/North/Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 2 (sourcebook), pp. 179-193  
Excerpt from Roger Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*. Note: This little book shows you how to construct your own ancient horoscope.

See Blackboard for more of the reading assignment, which will include excerpts from Artemidorus’s dream interpretation book, Franz Cumont, Ransey MacMullen (“Social History from Astrology”), Tamsyn Barton, Hansen (*Sortes Astrampsychi*), and Klingshirn.
Also watch the excellent hour-long lecture by Angelos Chaniotis: youtube.com/watch?v=OUkHLb7o3cs

XIII. April 22: Magic, part II: Other spells; magicians and astrologers in relation to society and the state

Everything below is on Blackboard (BB):
John Gager, Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World, start with ch. 8, then skim around chs. 4, 5, 6.
E. P. Sanders, The Historical Figure of Jesus, ch. 10 (on miracles)
Naomi Janowitz, Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews and Christians, 1-8, 86-100
Richard Phillips, In Pursuit of Invisibility: Ritual Texts from Late Antique Egypt, excerpt.
Derek Collins, Magic in the Ancient Greek World, skim 104-131 (Homeric incantations), read 132-162 (law)
Andrew Riggsby, Roman Law and the Legal World of the Romans, ch. 20: “Roman Religion.”

(*?) David Potter, Prophets and Emperors (excerpt)
(*?) J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, Continuity and Change in Roman Religion, 119-139
*David Frankfurter, Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance, excerpt

See Blackboard for other reading assignment, which will include excerpts from Betz, Greek Magical Papyri (note admixture of Egyptian, Greek, and Jewish elements)

XIV. April 29: The Evil Eye. And, magic in late antique Judaism.
Readings will include articles from the Encyclopedia of Judaism, Cambridge History of Judaism, Beth Berkowitz’s Execution and Invention: Death Penalty Discourse in Early Rabbinic and Christian Cultures, and Richard Kalmin, “The Evil Eye in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity.” Also, John Gager, Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World, ch. 7; and Roy Kotansky, “Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets.”

Catch up, sum up, wrap up.
See Blackboard for reading assignment and review.

May 6th, 3:30-6:00pm: Final exam