

Monmouth College: Fall 2009

**Ancient Religious Reflections: Classical Mythology and Religion**

INTG 305/CLAS 245, 3 credits

MWF 9:00-9:50, WH 201

Instructor: Dr. Wine, office WH 16, x2332; office hours: MW 10:00-10:30

**Course description:** This course is primarily directed towards students desiring to meet the requirement for graduation in the Reflections rubric. It is a humanities course without prerequisite, designed for the student of any major. Ancient Religious Reflections also covers themes and subject matter of interest to the Classics major and other students interested in Classical antiquity and its place in Western civilization. The Monmouth College catalogue gives the following description of courses that meet the Reflections requirement:

**In these courses we will**

- 1. Learn how our society and other societies past and present have struggled to formulate ethical and moral frameworks, to understand and represent their place in the cosmos, and to grapple with the realities of human existence, including joy, death, pain, suffering, and evil and**
- 2. Critically evaluate how these fundamental questions can, do, or should affect the manner in which we choose to live our lives, interact with others and live in the world.**

Every time it is offered Ancient Religious Reflections deals with a different aspect of religion in the world of the ancient Mediterranean. Topics include "Sacred Places," "Mystery Religions Past and Present," and "Classical Mythology and Religion." While special attention is given to the ancient Greeks and Romans, the civilizations of other Mediterranean peoples, such as the Egyptians, are also discussed and special effort will be made to put these ancient reflections in a modern context

Classical Mythology and Religion uses the myths and religions of the ancient Greeks and Romans as a framework for discussing issues of religion and spirituality in the modern world. The course challenges students to reflect upon and to develop their feelings about how spirituality and deity factor in their lives and how humanity fits into the "grand scheme of things." Classical Mythology and Religion starts from the premise that one people's religion is another people's myths and considers the relationship between religion and mythology. The issues and ideas addressed in this course include the following:

- What is religion and religious truth?
- What is the role of deity in human life?
- What is the place of a human being in the world?

Course readings and class discussions will provide background on the relationship between religion and mythology in the ancient world, especially among the Greeks and

Romans. Students will be expected to use this material in order to reflect upon their own religious beliefs and world views.

**Texts:**

Mikalson, Jon. *Ancient Greek Religion*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2005 (978-0-631-23223-0) or 2009 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) 978-4051-8177-8

Warrior, Valerie. *Roman Religion: A Sourcebook*. Focus Publishing, 2002 (978-1-58510-030-9)

Trzaskoma, Stephen M., ed. *Anthology of Classical Myth*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004.

**Class format:** The emphasis of this class is discussion of the assigned readings in terms of one's own religious beliefs and world view. Willingness of class members to read and reflect upon assigned readings in advance and to express their opinions in class is essential to the success of each class. It is expected that everyone attend class regularly, read the assignments carefully, and come to class prepared to discuss them.

**Goals, requirements, and evaluation:** The final grade will comprise Class Participation and Quizzes (25%), Personal Statements (30%), Individualized Project (30%), Group Presentation (5%), and Final (10%).

Extra credits are available for attendance at the **archeology lectures** listed in the schedule. Submission of a response paper incorporating both summary and commentary on what you found of interest from the lecture earns 3 points for one and 2 points for any others, added on to the final average. Attending at least one lecture is strongly encouraged and as many other lectures as you can is recommended as well, because they provide a dimension to the Roman and Greek life which will help you understand the culture we are reading about and discussing.

**Grading scale:** A (100-91), B (90-80), C (79-68), D (67-57).

**Class participation** requires daily readiness when called upon and volunteering information and opinions. **Quizzes**, whether announced or not, may not be made up.

**Personal statements (R: reflection)** will be assigned approximately each week on class discussion and course reading. At least 600 words (two full typed pages) in length, these statements are informal, short essays on discussion topics. They are not just summaries of what was said or what was read. They should go beyond mere recording of events to include personal analysis and commentary. Emphasis will be on (1) integration of the student's own ideas and thoughts with the subject matter of the course and on (2) coherent and logical expression of these ideas. In these statements you will briefly summarize the main points, offer your own opinion and thoughts about the topics raised, and support your statement with specific data, gathered from any combination of reading,

research, and experiences. Submission of the work on time earns the student one point. Additional points will be earned for following content and stylistic requirements and for personal analysis and commentary.

The **individualized project** will be described in a separate handout.

The **group presentation** will be the way in which each student informs the class about the outcome of his or her project and discusses it with the class.

The **final** will offer a comprehensive reflection on the outcome of the course, which looks at the student's development with the material and understanding of the topic, and a response to the topics presented by the other students. Attendance and participation will be necessary to earn these points.

**Schedule:** The following schedule outlines discussion topics, reading assignments, and due dates for assignments. The instructor may make modifications announced in class, however, as necessary, based on class needs and preferences; it is the student's responsibility to be aware of changes made in class.

### Week 1. Myth and religion

Wed, Aug 26. Discuss the Reflections description and three big questions.

R #1: Reflect on the three big questions above. How do you respond to them now based on your experiences and personal belief system?

Read: *R.* 1. Introduction; *A.* p.383 (purpose)

Fri, Aug 28. Discussion: relationship between myth and religion. What elements of myth do you see in Roman religion? What features of Roman religion are similar to our current beliefs. Which are different? How different are they? Variations or incompatible?

Read: *R.* 13 Skepticism, *A.* Homeric Hymn 23 (to Zeus) p. 207, Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus (p. 84), Xenophanes of Colophon

Mon, Aug 31. Discussion: How is the Homeric Hymn to Zeus similar to Cleanthes' Hymn? How is it different? In what ways are the Cleanthes and Homeric hymns to Zeus myth? In what ways are they religion? To what extent do modern religions contain myth?

Read: *R.* 2 Early Divination

### Week 2. Anthropomorphism

Wed, Sep 2. R#1 due; R #2: What are the advantages of anthropomorphism? Does the Christian or other contemporary view of a deity allow for any bit of anthropomorphism?

Discussion: To what extent does your god have anthropomorphic features? Compare images of Christian God with images of Zeus. How do the Greeks represent Zeus? What does Xenophanes think about this? What is your image of God? Does your god have anthropomorphic features? How does your image of god compare to the Greek image of Zeus?

Read: *G.* 1. Sanctuaries and Worship, *A.* Homeric hymns, intro. (p. 168)

Fri, Sep 4. What do you learn about the Homeric Hymns from the introductory materials?  
Read *A. Hesiod*, pp. 129-160

Mon, Sep 7. Images of deity, skepticism

Read: A. Xenophanes; review of *A World Full of Gods* by Keith Hopkins (available in Public Documents under All Public Folders/Departments/Academics/Classics/ISSI402); What image of Christianity and ancient religions does Hopkins create in this statement?: “But I wanted to recover the passion of that time. Re-create the confusion of voices. Think of it: Religion absolutely everywhere. Gods and goddesses and demons and nightmares, and sex mixed up into all of it. Christianity must have seemed so strange, so absurd to good, decent pagans.”

What relationship between Christianity and the ancient religion is suggested by Hopkins’ quote? What are the advantages and disadvantages of polytheism vs. monotheism?

### Week 3. Polytheism

Wed, Sep 9. R #2 due; R #3: monotheism versus polytheism (Why would someone believe in only one god? Why would others believe in many gods? Does it matter? Where do you stand?)

Read: finish *Theogony*

Fri, Sep 11. Hesiod’s *Theogony*, origin of the world, how Zeus gets power

Read: *G. 2. Gods, Heroes, Polytheism*

Mon, Sep 14. [See Sep 21] The Greek world of deities

Read: *A. Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus, Lord’s Prayer*

7:30 pm, *Morgan Room*: “*New Excavations and Approaches in Jordanian Archaeology*”

### Week 4. Prayer and religious sacrifice

Wed, Sep 16. R #3 due: R#4: Write a reflection comparing Cleanthes’ hymn to a prayer, other than the Lord’s prayer, which is important to you personally. Be sure to discuss the purposes of prayer and the relationship between god and the person praying. Please submit a copy of the prayer you chose along with your reflection.

Discussion: How is the Hymn to Zeus a prayer? How is it like the Lord’s Prayer? How is the prayer “myth”? How is it “religion”? What purpose does Cleanthes’ hymn serve?

Read: *A. Hesiod’s Theogony* 508-572 (Prometheus), p. 13 (#27, Iphigeneia), p. 245 (#98); the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 12-22 (18-22).

Fri, Sep 18. How is Prometheus’ sacrifice a form of worship? How is it a trick? What does this story suggest about the Greek attitudes towards relationship between human and god? How do these attitudes compare to your own? Compare Greek animal sacrifice to modern forms of religious sacrifice.

Prepare: Read and freewrite on topics for your individual project.

Mon, Sep 21. discussion of individual projects (prospectus, guidelines; prospectus due Oct. 23)

Read *R. 2. Early Roman Religion and Divination*

**Week 5. Worship in the Roman religion**

Wed, Sep 23. R #4 due; R #5: personal statement on religion; this reflection should give your religious background and describe your personal beliefs about god and religion. Include a comment on how looking at ancient religion and mythology so far has helped you understand your own beliefs better.

Read *R. 4. Prayer and Sacrifice*

Fri, Sep 25.

Read: *R. 5. Priests*

Mon, Sep 28. What do the documents dealing with the sources of Roman religion suggest to you about the Romans and their religious beliefs? Why do you think humans have developed religious beliefs? What purposes does religion serve in human life?

Read: *R. 6. Celebrations and Calendar*

*Tues, Sep 29, 7:30, Augustana College: "From Sea to Sahara: The Romans in North Africa"*

**Week 6. Greek religion**

Wed, Sep 30. R #5 due; R #6: How are myths important in a society? How does looking at the Roman calendar and foundation myths for Rome and Athens enlarge our understanding of myth? How are foundation myths important to the religion of a society? How does the calendar reflect this?

Read: *G. 3. Seven Greek Cult Myths*

Fri, Oct. 2. Cult myths: Zeus, Artemis, Erechtheus

Read: *G. 4. Major Greek cults, A. HH 11, 28 (Athena); p. 19: B4, p. 264: #164*

Mon, Oct 5. **Athena**

Read: *A. HH 2, 13 (Demeter)*

**Week 7. Greek major cults**

Wed, Oct 7. R #6 due; R #7: What human needs do Demeter, Dionysus, and Apollo satisfy? To what extent are each similar to a modern concept of deity (consider issues of anthropomorphism, forms of worship, and ethics)? Why do you think that ancient Greeks and Romans were afraid of Dionysus' cult?

**Demeter and the Eleusinian Mysteries**

Read: *A. HH 1, 7, 26 (Dionysus)*

Fri, Oct 9. **Dionysus and the Dionysian Mysteries:** What divine powers does Bacchus (Dionysus) have? How does he seem less divine to you? To what extent does Dionysus fit his modern stereotype? What personal needs does the mystery religion of Dionysus satisfy? Do we in modern religion or society observe any of the same aspects of the Dionysian Mysteries? Even if we do, is there a difference in our interpretation or use of them?

Read: *A. HH* 3, 21 (Apollo), 9, 27 (Artemis)

Mon., Oct. 12. **Apollo and Artemis:** What kind of deities are Apollo and Artemis? Compare the story of Apollo to the life of Jesus Christ. How does he compare to your beliefs about deity? What characteristics does Artemis have in common with Mary the Mother of Jesus? How is Artemis similar to and different from a god? What makes Delphi and Delos sacred places?

Read *G* 3. (Zeus)

### Week 8. Zeus, Hermes

Wed, Oct 14. R#7 due; R#8: Why is the hymn to Hermes different from the other hymns?

**Zeus**

Read: *A. HH* 4, 18 (Hermes)

Fri, Oct 16. **Hermes:** What kind of god is Hermes? How does he compare to your idea of deity? What do the Homeric Hymns as a group tell you about Greek religion and especially belief in god?

Read: *A. HH* 5, 6, 10 (Aphrodite), Sappho

Mon, Oct 19. Fall Break

### Week 9. Aphrodite

Wed, Oct 21. R#8 due; R#9: What do you think of a deity like Aphrodite?

**Aphrodite:** Focus on the encounters between Aphrodite and the mortals Anchises and Sappho. Compare these encounters with that of Apollo and the sailors. What do these episodes suggest about the Greek attitude toward deity in general? Human interaction with deity? Human free will? What ethical issues are suggested in these episodes? What do you think about all of these issues? Why do you think the Greeks had a goddess like Aphrodite? What do you think about a goddess who seduces mortal men?

*Thurs, Oct 22, 7:30, Morgan Room: "Big Men, Little Women: Art and Society in Early Greece"*

Fri, Oct 23. What personal needs does religion satisfy?

Prospectus for individualized project due.

Read: *R. 3. Family*

Mon, Oct 26.

Read: *G. 5. Greek Family and Village*

**Week 10. Individual and family**

Wed, Oct 28. R#9 due; R #10: What personal needs for the family does religion satisfy in the Greek and Roman societies? What comparison (both similarities and differences) can you make between ancient attitudes toward death and other religions you are familiar with?

Read: *G. 7. The Individual*

Fri, Oct 30. Death and the Afterlife

Mon, Nov 2. conferences on individualized project; progress report due Nov. 7.

Read: *G. 6. City-State*

**Week 11. Politics**

Wed, Nov 5. R#10 due; R#11: How is the relationship between religion and politics influenced by society's religious beliefs?

Read: *R. 7. War*

Fri, Nov 7. Project progress report due

Read: *R. 10. Games*

Mon, Nov 9.

Read: *R. 8. New Gods*

**Week 12. New Gods and cults**

Wed, Nov 11. R#11 due; R#12: Reflect on what was attractive in the worship of Cybele to the ancients and what is attractive and not attractive in her worship today.

Cybele and the Cult of the Great Mother: Compare the Great Goddess to deities like Demeter and Aphrodite. How is she similar and different?

Read: *G. 8. Hellenistic Period*

Fri, Nov 13.

Read *R. 9. Control of Non-Roman Cults*

Mon, Nov 16.

Read: *R. 11. Becoming a God*

7:30 pm, Morgan Room: "Excavating in Romania 2009"

**Week 13. Apotheosis, Magic**

Wed, Nov 18. R#12 due; R#13: Reflect on what your research for your individualized topic is helping you to discover or understand for the topic of this course.

Read: A. Pausanias, Apollodorus I (Bellerophon), Hellanicus 145 (Patroclus), Apollodorus K2, K15 (Heracles)

Fri, Nov 20. Religion and myth

Read *R. 12. Magic*

Mon, Nov 23.

Read *R. 14. Jews*

Week 14. Jews, Christianity

Wed, Nov 25. R#13 due; R#14: To what extent do you see the Roman and Greek religion influencing Christianity, and to what extent was it a threat or obstruction?

Read: *R. 15. Christianity*

Fri, Nov 27. Thanksgiving break

Mon, Nov 30.

Week 15. Integration

Wed, Dec 2. R#14 due; R#15: Reflect on your reflection on the answers to the three big questions at the beginning of the semester. What has changed? What has been clarified or strengthened because of increased understanding?

Fri, Dec 4. group discussion of individualized projects. Individualized project due today.

Mon, Dec 7. group presentations

Wed, Dec 9. group presentations  
R#15 due

**Final Exam:** Monday, December 14, 8:00 am

**Honesty and Plagiarism:**

Students are encouraged to do their homework together (identical work which is submitted should be acknowledged). All other classwork, especially quizzes and exams, must be the student's own work. Plagiarism, i.e., copying someone else's work without giving credit, is to be avoided. Such copying--from a book, another classmate's paper, or any other source--is dishonest. Any student submitting plagiarized work will receive a failing grade for that assignment. If two papers with identical or nearly identical work are submitted by different students, both papers will receive a failing grade.