

Course Outline: Conflict of Religions in the Roman Empire (HIST 5025; Winter 2018)

General

Philip A. Harland (pharland AT yorku DOT ca). Office hours: Fridays 10-11, or by appointment (Vanier 248 — either way please email ahead if possible to mention you'd like to meet). Seminar: Fridays 11:30-2:20 in Vari Hall 1152

Description

This course examines cases of ethnic, social, and political conflict relating to honours for the god(s) in the Roman empire. We will consider incidents involving ethnic and other conflicts as well as literary representations that reflect conflict. The relationship between Roman imperial authorities and particular groups will also occupy us. This year the focus will be on cultural minorities in the Roman empire, especially the Judeans (Jews) and a particular set of groups that arose from a Judean context (Jesus-followers). As many conflicts arise from relations between different ethnic groups, we will also give attention to issues of ethnography, namely ancient writings in which an author from one ethnic group describes or critiques the cultural practices of other peoples, particularly with respect to the gods, or god.

Some key questions: What is the nature of our sources? What sort of conflicts do we observe in them (social, religious, political, ethnic factors)? To what degree are such conflicts representative or anomalous, ongoing or incidental? What do incidents of conflict reveal about patterns of relations between different ethnic or minority groups? How do such conflicts relate to the “policy” or approach of civic or Roman authorities towards the groups involved? In what ways can actions by Roman authorities be considered *ad hoc*? Can conflicts involving Judeans and Jesus-followers be understood within broader patterns of relations within the Roman empire?

Required readings

- Erich Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) ([ebook](#); also GB 251 G78 2011 on reserve).
- Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) (available in the York bookstore).
- G.W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) (available in the York bookstore).
- Other articles and sources listed in the syllabus (available through university libraries; also sometimes available online or on reserve): [View list of sources held locally on philipharland.com](http://philipharland.com)

Evaluation

Weekly analytical piece (10%), due each week at the beginning of class

Each week, students will submit (at the beginning of class) a 500 word analytical piece dealing with the readings for the upcoming discussion (2 pages double-spaced, 12 point font maximum). This should not be a summary, but rather a comparative analysis and synthesis focused on key issues raised by the readings, particularly with respect to our approach to the ancient sources. (You do not need to submit this assignment for the week when you lead or present on your book).

Participation (20%)

Participation in discussions is an integral part of the educational experience. All students are required to come to class each week prepared for detailed discussions of the readings, both scholarly materials and, especially, the ancient sources.

Calculation of participation mark:

- 0-30% mark (infrequent or no participation; comments show little or no familiarity with the readings);
- 40-60% mark (occasional participation; comments show general knowledge of readings but not detailed knowledge; comments tend to be personal opinion or ad hoc observations more so than analytical or comparative);
- 70-100% (frequent participation; comments regularly demonstrate detailed understanding of the readings; analytical and comparative contributions stimulate further discussion among students).

Discussion leadership (15%)

Each student will have an opportunity to lead the main discussion of readings from a particular week with a focus on our main course themes (presenting for about 15-20 minutes and then leading discussion for the remainder of 60 minutes total).

Presentation relating to a book (10%)

Students will also have an opportunity to present on a topic relating to the book they reviewed (20 minute presentation + 10 minute discussion; see book options on the discussion schedule). Students should **not** present their book reviews. Instead, each student will use the book as a starting point to explore issues that further our ongoing discussions, engaging both methodological and source-related issues pertinent to the course. Students should meet with me to discuss their approach to the presentation at least one week in advance of presenting.

Academic book review (15%), due week 5

Each student will choose a work (see options on the discussion schedule) and write a five-page

(double-spaced) academic book review, which entails: outlining the main argument of the book and how the author builds up this argument; discussing the author's methods (or approach) and use of evidence to support his or her points; and, providing a critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the work. To familiarize yourself with the genre of the academic book review, read at least five book reviews (but not reviews of the book you are analyzing) that interest you in an academic journal of your choice or online at: <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/> (Bryn Mawr Classical Review – note that reviews on that site are not limited to the typical 5 pages).

Paper proposal and bibliography (5%), due week 8

Choose a research topic relating to the course that interests you. Speak with me to confirm the topic and to get further assistance. Write a succinct proposal (2 pages double-spaced plus bibliography), which entails:

- Stating your topic and the sort of material you expect to cover.
- Outlining your tentative thesis or main argument and how you expect to structure the paper.
- Discussing primary and secondary sources that will be useful in research.
- Providing a bibliography (following an accepted academic style of bibliography correctly).

There is a helpful online bibliographical guide (“Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide”) for the two Chicago Manual of Style options here:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

For this assignment, please print out two hardcopies. You will submit one to me and another to a fellow student (to be determined), who will also provide feedback and suggestions.

Research paper (25%), due week 11

20 pages double-spaced maximum. A good research paper focuses its attention on analyzing primary sources (in our case ancient materials) with the help of scholarly sources. You may also choose to do a historiographical paper, which analyzes and assesses the history of scholarship on a particular topic. We will discuss the options at more length in class. (You will need to hand in a hardcopy in addition to sending an electronic version of your paper as an email attachment. Papers may be processed through turnitin.com).

DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

Delay in class start due to Society of Classical Studies annual meeting January 4-7.

Week 1 (Jan 12): Introduction – Problems with the category of “religion” and usefulness of “ethnicity” as a category in understanding conflict – Encounters between different peoples in the Roman empire

- Reading for first meeting:
 - Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University

Press, 2013), especially pp. 1-64, 132-153 ([link](#) to ebook).

- Also familiarize yourself with: James B. Rives, "Graeco-Roman Religion in the Roman Empire: Old Assumptions and New Approaches," *Currents in Biblical Research* 8 (2010), especially 240-276 ([link](#)).

Context: Greek and Roman Perspectives on the Cultural Practices of "Others"

Week 2 (Jan 19): "Encounters" in literature, part 1: Romans and Greeks on the cultures of other peoples (ancient ethnography) (Harland leads)

- Primary sources:
 - Strabo, *Geography* 7.1-3 (especially 7.2.1-7.3.10) ([link](#)) (on Strabo's approach to ethnography and ethnographic sources [Germans])
 - Tacitus, *Germania*, especially books 1-27, 42-45 ([link](#) to English translation by Rives — after entering Scholar's Portal, click on "read this book", then "press the export to pdf" button and export pages 91-111 of the book so that you can print and bring the translation itself; [link](#) to Latin)
- Scholarly sources: Erich Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, especially intro, chapters 6-7, 11-12, and conclusion ([link](#) to ebook; also on reserve).

Week 3 (Jan 26): Incidents of conflict: Roman authorities' actions against foreigners and foreign practices – the case of the Bacchanalia

- Primary sources:
 - Livy, *History of Rome* 39.6, 8-19 ([link](#) to newer translation by Bettenson [password required]; [link](#) to English Loeb translation; [link](#) to Latin and English Loeb)
 - "28. Decree of the Senate on the Bacchanalia, 186 BC" and "28a. Edict of the Consuls on the Bacchanalia, 186 BC" in *Ancient Roman Statutes: A Translation with Introduction, Commentary, Glossary, and Index*, 26-28 ([link](#)).
 - Additional primary source for consultation: Livy, *History of Rome* 29.10-11 ([link](#); on the importation of the Phrygian Mother goddess)
- Scholarly sources:
 - Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, "The Boundaries of Roman Religion," in *Religions of Rome* ([link](#); course password required).
 - P. G. Walsh, "Making a Drama out of a Crisis: Livy on the Bacchanalia," *Greece & Rome* 43 (1996), 188-203 ([link](#)).
- Further scholarly sources (not required): R. A. Bauman, "The Suppression of the Bacchanals: Five Questions," *Historia* 39 (1990), 334-348; Erich S. Gruen, "The Bacchanalian Affair," in *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*, Cincinnati Classical Studies 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 34-78; J. A. North, "Religious Toleration in Republican Rome," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 25 (1979), 85-103; Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1999); Sarah Iles Johnston, et al., "Panel Discussion: 'Magic in the Ancient World' by Fritz Graf," *Numen* 46 (1999)

291–325 ([link](#)), especially Frankfurter's response.

The Case of Judeans and Judean Culture

Week 4 (Feb 2): "Encounters" in literature, part 2: Romans and Greeks on Judean culture

- Primary sources:
 - Tacitus, *Histories* 5.1-13 ([link](#) to English and Latin)
 - Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.35-37 ([link](#) to English; [link](#) to Greek)
 - Other primary sources cited or discussed in Schäfer, including Hecataeus (pp.15-16), Manetho (pp. 18-19), Diodorus Siculus (p. 22), Strabo (p. 24), Varro (pp. 36-37), Celsus (pp. 42-44), Cassius Dio (p. 45), and Agatharcides (p. 83).
- Scholarly sources:
 - Schäfer, *Judeophobia* (entire book – for overall discussion of his argument and approach in comparison with Gruen's approach).
 - Further scholarly sources (not required): Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 3 vols.
- Presentation: Eric M. Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 2010). ([link](#) to ebook) (Julie presents)

Week 5 (Feb 9): Incidents of conflict: Greeks, Egyptians, and Judeans at Alexandria, Egypt in the 30s-40s CE (available for leading)

- Primary sources:
 - Philo of Alexandria, *Against Flaccus* ([link](#) to English and Greek; course password required)
 - Edict(s) of Claudius (in Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 145-152; edicts also [online in English](#) and [Greek](#)).
 - Additional primary source for consultation: Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*
- Scholarly sources:
 - Richard Alston, "Philo's 'In Flaccum': Ethnicity and Social Space in Roman Alexandria," *Greece & Rome* 44 (1997), 165-175 ([link](#)).
 - Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 136-160.
 - Further scholarly sources (not required): Andrew Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt: The Case of the Acta Alexandrinorum* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008); Benjamin Kelly, *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt*, Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents. (Oxford: OUP, 2011) ([link](#) to ebook).
- Presentation: Sandra Gambetti, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A*

****Book reviews due at the beginning of class in week 5****

Week 6 (Feb 16): Conflicts / encounters in literature: Josephus' *Against Apion* (first century CE)

- Primary sources:
 - Josephus, *Against Apion*, especially book 2 ([link](#) to English; [link](#) to Greek and Latin texts).
 - "Structure of *Against Apion*" handout ([link](#))
- Scholarly sources:
 - Kenneth R. Jones, "The figure of Apion in Josephus' 'Contra Apionem'" *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 36 (2005) 278-315 ([link](#); course password required).
 - John M. G. Barclay, "The Politics of Contempt: Judaeans and Egyptians in Josephus's *Against Apion*" in *Negotiating Diaspora: Jewish strategies in the Roman Empire* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 109-127 ([link](#)).
- Presentations: Presentation: James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). (Victoria presents)
- For other years: Leonard Victor Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), or John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

****Feb 23 – No class during reading week****

Week 7 (March 2): The Roman authorities and diaspora Judeans: Roman "policy" (available for leading)

- Primary sources:
 - Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.185-260 ([link](#) to Loeb volume); *Antiquities* 16.162-178 ([link](#)) (edicts by authorities mainly relating to Asia Minor in the mid-late first century BCE).
 - Expulsions under Tiberius and Claudius (collected in one document [[link](#)], except Josephus and Acts)
 - Tacitus, *Annals* 2.85.4-5; Suetonius, *Tiberius* 36.1; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.65-81 ([link](#)); Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 57.18.5 (expulsions from Rome under Tiberius in 19 CE)
 - Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 60.6.6; Acts 18.2 ([link](#)) (expulsions from Rome under Claudius in the 40s CE)
- Scholarly sources:
 - Tessa Rajak, "Was There a Roman Charter for the Jews?," *Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984), 107-123 ([link](#)).
 - V. Rutgers, "Roman Policy towards the Jews: Expulsions from the City of Rome during the First Century C.E.," *Classical Antiquity* 13 (1994), 56-74 ([link](#)).
 - Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 106-111 (on expulsions)
- Further scholarly sources (not required): Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'empire romain: Leur condition*

juridique, économique et sociale (New York: Burt Franklin, 1914) ([vol. 1](#); [vol. 2](#)); Horst R. Moehring, "The *Acta pro Judaeis* in the Antiquities of Flavius Josephus," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 3, SJLA (Leiden: Brill, 1975); Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev, *Jewish Rights in the Roman World: The Greek and Roman Documents Quoted by Josephus Flavius* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) (documents in Josephus); Horst R. Moehring, "The Persecution of the Jews and the Adherents of the Isis Cult at Rome A.D. 19," *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1959): 293–304 ([link](#)); Dixon Slingerland, "Suetonius 'Claudius' 25.4 and the Account in Cassius Dio," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 79 (1989): 305–322 ([link](#)); Dixon Slingerland, "Suetonius Claudius 25.4, Acts 18, and Paulus Orosius' 'Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII:' Dating the Claudian Expulsion(s) of Roman Jews," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 83 (1992): 127–44 ([link](#)); Pauline Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers At Rome," *Classical Philology* 106 (2011): 115–54 ([link](#)) (expulsions from Rome).

- Presentations: David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2000).

Week 8 (March 9): Symbolic representations of conflict with the empire – *4 Ezra* and the *Sibylline Oracles* (Julie leads)

- Primary sources:
 - *4 Ezra* = *2 Esdras*, chapters 3-14, especially focusing on 10:60-12:36 ([link](#) to English; course password required; [link](#) to Syriac and Latin)
 - *Sibylline Oracles* book 3 (especially section 350-380) and book 5 ([link](#) to English; [link](#) to [Greek](#))
- Scholarly sources:
 - John J. Collins, "After the Fall: 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the Apocalypse of Abraham" and "Apocalyptic Literature from the Diaspora in the Roman Period", especially pp. 194-212 and 233–238 ([link](#); course password required).
 - Philip Francis Esler, "The Social Function of 4 Ezra," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 53 (1994), 99-123 ([link](#)).

Research paper proposal due at the beginning of week 8

The Case of Jesus-followers

Week 9 (March 16): Incidents of conflict – Greeks, Roman authorities, and Jesus-followers (Victoria leads)

- Primary sources:
 - Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.37-44 ([link](#) to English and Latin)
 - Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 10.96-97 ([link](#) to English; [link](#) to Latin).
 - Hadrian's rescript to Minucius Fundanus, governor of Asia, translated in an article ([link](#)).
- Scholarly sources:
 - G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," *Past & Present* 26 (1963),

6-38 ([link](#)); A. N. Sherwin-White, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? – An Amendment," *Past & Present* 27 (1964), 23-27 ([link](#)); G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? – A Rejoinder," *Past & Present* 27 (1964), 28-33 ([link](#)).

- Also consult: T.D. Barnes, "Legislation Against the Christians," *Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968), 32-50 ([link](#)).

- Douglas R. Edwards, *Religion and Power: Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greek East* (Oxford: OUP, 1996). (Christina presents)

Week 10 (March 23): Incidents of conflict – The nature of persecution in Asia Minor / Origins of "martyrdom" (discussion of Bowersock's theory) (Ariel leads)

- Primary sources:
 - 1 Peter ([link](#) to English and Greek).
 - *Martyrdom of Polycarp* ([link](#) to English and Greek).
 - *2 Maccabees*, esp. chapters 6-7 ([link](#)).
- Scholarly sources:
 - G.W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
 - Further scholarly sources (not required): F. Gerald Downing, "Pliny's Prosecutions of Christians: Revelation and 1 Peter," *JSNT* 34 (1988): 105–23 ([link](#)); David Horrell, "The Label Christianos: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity," *JBL* 126 (2007): 361–81 ([link](#)); Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: OUP, 2010) ([link](#) to ebook).
- Presentation:

Week 11 (April 6): Conflicts / encounters in literature – Ethnographic traditions and criticism of Jesus groups as cultural minorities (Christina leads)

- Primary sources:
 - Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 5-13 and 28-31 of the dialogue ([link](#) to English; [link](#) to Latin).
 - Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (entirety); *Second Apology* 12 ([link](#) to English; [link](#) to Greek).
 - Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.1-26 ([link](#) to English; [link](#) to Greek).
- Scholarly sources:
 - James B. Rives, "Human Sacrifice Among Pagans and Christians," *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995), 65-85 ([link](#)).
 - Harland, "Perceptions of Cultural Minorities: Anti-Associations and their Banquets" ([link](#)).
- Presentation: Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

Research paper due at the beginning of class

Week 12 (April 13 or to be determined): Symbolic representations of conflict with the empire – John's Apocalypse (available for leading)

- Primary sources:
 - Apocalypse (Revelation) of John ([link](#) to English and Greek).
 - Scholarly sources:
 - David A deSilva, "The Revelation to John: A Case Study in Apocalyptic Propaganda and the Maintenance of Sectarian Identity," *Sociology of Religion* 53 (1992), 375-395 ([link](#)).
 - Steven J. Friesen, "Satan's Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27 (2005), 351-373 ([link](#)).

 - Presentation: Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).
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