Anthropology/Religion 225
Gods, Heroes, Magic, and Mysteries: Religion in Ancient Greece

Bates College -- Winter, 1996
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Infrastructure

How This Electronic Syllabus Works

This syllabus is enriched with links to the Perseus Project’s World Wide Web site. Look up the Perseus editions of the required readings. The Perseus versions are equipped with helps linked to highlighted key words in the readings. Some of these highlighted terms connect you instantly to on-line encyclopedia entries, while others lead you to what other ancient authors have said about the same subject. You can follow these leads where ever your own personal curiosity might lead you, and to find information on any subject which you might like to pursue as a research paper topic. Electronic resources also allow you to cut and paste quotations and illustrations from the text directly into your research papers as you draft them on your word processor. (Don't forget your responsibilities for citing sources and giving credit when you do this!)

For an introduction to Perseus and for on line help using it, take a look at Perseus at Bates.

Course Objectives

The present course is a study of ancient Greek religion from both a historical and an anthropological perspective. It follows a broadly historical outline and covers these important topics and periods:

- Religion in Minoan and Mycenaean Culture
  
  (the bronze age on Crete and in the Aegean basin: ca. 2700-1100 B.C.E.)

- Religion in the "Heroic Age" as reflected in Homer and Hesiod
  
  (the bronze age on the mainland of Greece: ca. 1100-750 B.C.E.)

- Religion in the Classical Age of skepticism and rationality
  
  (the "Golden age" of Athens, 6th-4th c. B.C.E.)
Religion in the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods

(the period of westward movement of foreign or "diaspora" religions into the Greco-Roman world,
2nd c. B.C.E.-2nd c. C.E.)

At the same time this course takes an anthropological approach to the study of religion in ancient Greece. It attempts to understand religion as a system of symbols which provides people with a meaningful world in which to live. It also seeks to explore how religions enable people to legitimate their view of the world by setting it in the context of a reality which transcends them.

From a historical perspective, the primary objectives of this course are

1. to become familiar with central religious concepts of each of the periods outlined above and how they relate to the social, political and economic conditions of their times;
2. to learn what sources are available to us for the study of religion in ancient Greece;
3. to learn how to utilize these sources critically, that is, how to recognize what kinds of conclusions the evidence will support. The sources available to us include archaeological, iconic (pictorial) and literary evidence. Literary sources (such as Homer's Iliad or Euripides' play, The Bacchae) may be studied as evidence either for religious ideas of the time in which they were written, or for the time which the literary sources themselves describe;
4. to learn how to draw analogies between religious ideas of our own culture and those of foreign ones (in this case, those of Ancient Minoans, Myceneans, and Greeks) while resisting the tendency to allow our own values and beliefs to color our reading of the evidence.

From an anthropological perspective, the primary objectives of this course are:

1. to serve as an introduction to the way in which anthropologists attempt to understand cultures very different from our own;
2. to understand different religions as attempts to "say something" about the relationships between human beings and their gods;
3. to learn how to analyze religious symbols, institutions, beliefs, and practices in their wider socio-cultural context. These include myth, sacrifice, conversion, death rituals, healing rituals, rites of passage, trance and possession, and beliefs about the soul and life after death;
4. to appreciate the power of other religions as well as the beauty of the art and literature they inspire.

Using Perseus to Achieve These Objectives

The wider our exposure to ancient evidence, the better equipped we are to do justice to ancient Greek thinking. Perseus is a superb resource for widening our exposure to ancient Greek thinking and religious experience. For example, several World Wide Web-based Perseus tools enable us to find instantly a wide range of evidence on any subject we might want to pursue in our reading:

- Perseus editions of ancient Greek literature
- Perseus English-Greek Word Search
- English Index to Perseus 2

Perseus is also available on the Bates College network in two versions. Perseus 1.0, the original
version, and the new Perseus 2.0. Since the College is a beta-testing institution for Perseus 2.0, we will be using its greatly expanded resources in this course. For information:

- Introduction to Perseus at Bates
- Tutorial on using Perseus at Bates

### Required Books

6. Rice & Stambaugh, *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion*
7. Starr, *The Ancient Greeks*

### Reserve Readings

1. Athanasakis, *The Homeric Hymns* (see also the Perseus On Line edition)
2. Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconnesus*
3. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*
5. Danforth, *Firewalking and Religious Healing*
6. Edelstein, *Asclepius*
7. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*
8. Homer, *The Odyssey* (see the Perseus On Line edition)
9. Hubert & Mauss, *Sacrifice*
10. Kallimachos, *Hymn to Zeus*
12. Lessa and Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion*
14. Mylonas, *Eleusis*
16. Parke, *The Delphic Oracle*
17. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*
20. Rice & Stambaugh, *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion*
22. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*

### Calendar of Topics and Readings
1. Introduction

Jan 8 (M)  Method and Theory in the Interdisciplinary Study of Ancient Greek Religion  
Introduction to our World Wide Web home base and our Newsgroup  
Note: Students are urged to download a copy of  
Netscape to their personal computers in order to  
access and participate in the Greek Religion  
Newsgroup set up for this class. Instructions for  
Setting up Netscape are available on line as  
well as instructions for the Greek Religion  
Newsgroup.

Jan 10 (W)  An Introduction to MacIntosh computers and Perseus.

2. Orientation to the Lands of the Aegean: Their History and Culture

Explore the Perseus Atlas. Locate Minoan cities on the map of Crete.
Jan 15-19  Kirk, Myth, pp. 84-118 (the nature of myths in Ancient Mesopotamia).
(M-F)  Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Lessa & Vogt, pp. 78-89

3. The Aegean in the Bronze Age: Minoan and Mycenaean Culture and Religion

Reading Reviews: Demeter, Hercules

Jan 22-26  In-class study of Minoan artifacts from Palaces, Cave Sites & Tombs, and Mountain-top  
shrines  
Chadwick, The Mycenaean World, Chapters 1, 5, and 6.  
Jan 29 (M)  The Frescoes from Thera; hunting rituals & male coming of age; the birth of Zeus story
Jan 31 (W)  Video on Mycenae and the Bronze Age on the Mainland  
Hesiod, Theogony, pp. 66-67 (The account of the birth of Zeus, see also the Perseus On  
Line ed.).

Groups Posting Class Notes:
5. Jan 22 (M): Semele  
6. Jan 24 (W): Theseus  
7. Jan 26 (F): Thetis  
8. Jan 29 (M): Agave  
9. Jan 31 (W) Gaia

4. Cosmogonic Myths

Reading Reviews: Iris, Kronos

Feb 2-5  Hesiod, Theogony (including introduction. See also the Perseus on Line ed.).
5. Gods and Men in Homer

Reading Reviews: Lucius, Medea


Feb 12 (M) Rites of Sacrifice.

Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 2 and Book 6
Hubert & Mauss, *Sacrifice*, pp. 9-49
Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 107-115

6. The Cult of Orpheus: Ideas About Immortality and the Soul

Reading Reviews: Nereus, Rhea

Guthrie, pp. 307-332.
The Derveni Papyrus (handout)
Orphic Inscriptions (handout)
Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 39-42, 161-164, 229-31
16. Feb 16 (F): Nereus

Feb 19-23 Winter Recess

7. Trance and Possession in the Worship of Dionysos
Reading Reviews: Semele, Theseus

Feb 26 (M) Guthrie, pp. 145-182.
   Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 195-209
   Danforth, Firewalking and Religious Healing, Chapter 2.
-Mar 1 (F)
   Groups Posting Class Notes:
17. Feb 26 (M): Rhea
18. Feb 28 (W): Semele
19. Mar 1 (F): Theseus

8. The Other Side of Apollo: Shamans and Wonder-Workers
Reading Reviews: Thetis, Agave, Rhea

   Guthrie, pp. 73-87 and 183-204
   Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 93-106
   Parke, pp. 72-89
   Bolton, Aristeas of Proconnesus.
Mar 6-8 Philostratus, The Life of Apolouius of Tyana.
   Groups Posting Class Notes:
20. Mar 4 (M): Thetis
21. Mar 6 (W): Agave
22. Mar 8 (F): Gaia

9. Death & the Underworld
Reading Reviews: Gaia, Demeter

   (W-F) The Iliad, Book 23 (the funeral of Patroclus) in the Perseus On Line edition
   Groups Posting Class Notes:
23. Mar 11 (M): Demeter
24. Mar 13 (W): Hercules
25. Mar 15 (F): Iris

10. The Cult of Asclepius: Dreams and Ritual Therapy in Ancient Greece
Reading Reviews: Hercules, Iris, Semele

Mar 18      Guthrie, pp. 242-253 (*Chthonioi*).
(M)      Crapanzano, "Saints, Jnun, and Dreams."

Mar 20-22  Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 69-80

Groups Posting Class Notes:
26. Mar 18 (M): Kronos
27. Mar 20 (W): Lucius
28. Mar 22 (F): Medea

11. The Eleusinian Mysteries
Reading Reviews: Kronos, Lucius, Theseus

Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 184-193

Mar 27-29  Mylonas, pp. 243-285

Groups Posting Class Notes:
29. Mar 25 (M): Nereus
30. Mar 27 (W): Rhea
31. Mar 29 (F): Semele

12. Conversion and Salvation
Reading Reviews: Medea, Nereus, Thetis

Apr 1-3   Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*.

Groups Posting Class Notes:
32. Apr 1 (M): Theseus
33. Apr 3 (W): Thetis
34. Apr 5 (F): Agave

Course Requirements

*Minoan Religion Paper*, due anytime during the week following completion of our study of
Minoan religion. A short paper (2-3 pp.) written in the form of a short encyclopedia article on the subject: "Minoan Religion." (20% of course grade)

**The Cave Project, to be completed by March 31.** When you look at the Perseus On Line encyclopedia, or observe what special terms in Greek literary texts have been indexed in Perseus, you will notice that caves have been missed. Yet it will be obvious to you by the second week of the semester that caves played a very important role in Greek religion.

Our class is going to carry out a coordinated class research project on the the significance of caves in ancient Minoan and Greek religion. Due date for completion of the whole project is March 29. Students will work in groups, conducting research on Perseus and in traditional sources. Each group will decide upon a group topic related to caves in Minoan and Greek religion. The papers of individuals in the group will be no more than five pages in length and will examine in depth some passage or passages from a primary source important to the group topic (e.g., Homer, Hesiod, Apollodorus) in light of the theoretical ideas and approaches discussed in class. Each group project will include a group-authored introduction, table of contents, and conclusion integrating the results of the individual papers. Further information regarding the time frame and use of the Greek Religion Newsgroup for this project will be posted in the Greek Religion Newsgroup. (40% of course grade)

Several short exercises in the use of Perseus will be announced from time to time during the semester. The first, the **Altar Project**, will begin in the Perseus Orientation Session. (20% of course grade)

Class attendance and participation in class discussion and contribution to the work of your group. Regular and valuable contribution to class discussion and group work will raise a student's grade. Poor attendance and participation will lower it.

**Final Exam - Tuesday, April 9, 1:15 p.m.** Half of the final exam will be an essay on religious symbolism in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass)*. The topic will be circulated in advance, but the essay will be written in the exam period. Special arrangements will be made for students with learning disabilities who need extra time for exams and quizzes. (20% of course grade)

*All students are responsible for reading and understanding the Bates College statements on academic honesty, crediting of sources, and plagiarism.*