

CLS/HIS/REL 295: Greek Religion

Fall 2009

MWF 11:00–11:50 ARH 224

Professor Hugh Bowden

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Office Hours: TTh 9–11

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ABOUT THE COURSE

The Greeks have been considered to be the source of many aspects of western culture – for example drama, history–writing and philosophy – and politics – above all democracy. On the other hand Greek religious practices and ideas appear to have left little trace in modern western religion. This is a paradox, because for the ancient Greeks their relationship with the gods informed every aspect of their lives. This course explores the religious practices of the city–states of archaic and classical Greece (c. 800–300 BC). It examines ritual practices including animal sacrifice, divination and the use of oracles, ecstatic worship, mystery cults, and the relationship between myth and ritual, and between religion and other areas of life.

OUTCOMES

By the end of the course students will be able to demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding of ancient Greek religious practices;
- The ability to interpret the ancient literary and material evidence for Greek religion;
- The ability to put forward their own arguments, appropriately supported, both orally and in writing;
- The ability to discuss constructively the views of others, both orally and in writing.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

The requirements for the course are as follows:

Participation (15%) This will be based on active involvement in discussion throughout the course, demonstrating that you are up–to–date with the reading. I will base this part of your grade on several criteria, including attendance, frequency of participation, the insightfulness of your classroom comments; although I hope that everyone will participate

regularly, note that the insightfulness of your comments is more important than the frequency of your participation.

Short Paper (15%) A five-page paper to be submitted by October 16. The focus of the paper will be on making sense of some aspect of Greek religious practice. Papers must be double-spaced and have one-inch margins, and should not employ anything larger than 12-point font.

Research Presentation (15%): A ten minute presentation on the subject of your research paper, using PowerPoint and including a handout. Each paper will be followed by 5 minutes of questions. I will base this part of the grade on the clarity and organization of the presentation,

Research Paper (30%): A ten-page paper on a topic of your choice (by agreement with me). You will make a presentation which should outline the central question you will be addressing, and how you are planning to answer it. As well as discussion in the presentation session, I will give you individual feedback, and you will have the opportunity to discuss any problems, in the sessions after Thanksgiving. Papers must be double-spaced and have one-inch margins, and should not employ anything larger than 12-point font.

Final Examination (25%) Format to be arranged.

READINGS

The principle text books for the course will be:

Price, S.R.F (1999), *Religions of the Greeks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burkert, W. (1991), *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Other readings from the work of modern scholars will be made available online or in the library.

There will also be readings from ancient authors, all of which are available in translation online via the Perseus Project

(www.perseus.tufts.edu) and elsewhere. These will include:

Homer, *Iliad*, *Odyssey* (extracts)

Homeric Hymns (selections)

Hesiod, *Theogony*

Pindar, *Odes* (selections)

Herodotus, *Histories* (extracts)

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Euripides, *Bacchae*

Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, *Thesmophoriazusa*
Xenophon, *Anabasis* (extracts)
Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* (extracts)
Plutarch, *Moral Essays* (selection)

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 0

Aug 28 Introduction

Week 1: Animal sacrifice

Aug 31 Sacrifice in Homer

- Burkert, ch. II.1
- Homer, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (extracts)

Sept 2 Sacrifice in Greek cities

- Price, pp. 33–37
- Inscriptions (to be provided)

Sept 4 Explanations of sacrifice

- Hesiod, *Works and Days*, *Theogony* (extracts)

Week 2: Knowledge about the gods: myths and philosophies

Sept 7 LABOR DAY

Sept 9 What did the Greeks *know* about the gods?

- Price, pp. 11–25
- Burkert, ch. III (especially III.1, III.4), V.1

Sept 11 ‘Myth’ and ‘Research’: Hesiod and Herodotus on the gods

- Hesiod, *Theogony*
- Herodotus, *Histories* (extracts)

Week 3: Communicating with the gods

Sept 14 Forms of Divination

Sept 16 Seers

- Burkert, ch. II.8.2
- Xenophon, *Anabasis* (extracts)

Sept 18 Oracles

- Price, pp. 73–76
- Burkert, ch. II.8.3
- Herodotus, *Histories* (extracts)

- Plutarch, *Oracles in Decline*

Week 4: Religious Places

Sept 21 Elements of Greek Sanctuaries

- Price, ch. 3
- Burkert, ch. II.5

Sept 23 Temples and Cult Statues

Sept 25 NO CLASS: WORK ON SHORT PAPER

Week 5: Organizing religious practice: personnel

Sept 28 Cities

- Price, pp. 67–73, 76–88

Sept 30 Priests & Priestesses

- Burkert, ch. II.6

Oct 2 Religious Experts

Week 6: Organizing religious practice: festivals

Oct 5 Cities and Festivals

- Price, pp. 25–46
- Burkert, ch. II.7, V.2
- Aristophanes, *Acarrians*

Oct 7 Dramatic Festivals

Oct 9 Women's Festivals

- Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae*

Week 7: Olympic Games and others: Panhellenic festivals

Oct 12 What does 'Panhellenic' mean?

Oct 14 Olympic Games

Oct 16 Other Panhellenic Festivals

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF SOURCE STUDY: MIDNIGHT

FALL BREAK

Week 8: Ecstatic Cult and Initiation

Oct 26 What are mystery cults?

- Price, ch. 6

- Burkert, ch. VI

Oct 28 The Eleusinian Mysteries
 • Price, pp. 102–107
 • *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*

Oct 30 Bacchic cult
 • Euripides, *Bacchae*

Week 9: Individuals and Families

Nov 2 Household cults
 • Price, pp. 89–102

Nov 4 ‘Life–cycle’ rituals

Nov 6 Death ritual
 • Burkert, ch. IV.1
 • Sophocles, *Antigone*

Week 10: Student Presentations

Nov 9 Presentations

Nov 11 Presentations

Nov 13 Presentations

Week 11: Student Presentations

Nov 16 Presentations

Nov 18 Presentations

Nov 20 Presentations

Week 12: Student Presentations

Nov 23 Presentations

Nov 25 General discussion of presentations

THANKSGIVING

Week 13: Feedback on Presentations

Nov 30 Individual feedback sessions

Dec 2 Individual feedback sessions

Dec 4 Individual feedback sessions

Week 14: Greek Religion and Modern Culture

Dec 7 Literature

Dec 9 Film

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF FINAL PAPER: MIDNIGHT

Dec 11 Other Cultural Forms