

Theorizing Ancient Religion

Religious Studies 370 Spring 2017

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Lectures

Tues/Thurs. 11:00-12:15

Manly 210

Course Website

www.as.ua.edu/rel/rel370touna.html

Description

In the study of religion scholars often talk about ancient religion in general, and, in particular, ancient Greek religion. But there is always a danger of projecting contemporary assumption backward in time—a concern we likely ought to keep in mind when it comes to studying such things as ancient Greek religion. This course therefore examines how the ancient Greek world is described and represented in the present, in museums, social media, scholarly works, etc. and towards what modern effects. We will also be discussing such topics as heritage, tradition, identity formation and nation-states, as they relate to discourses on the ancient Greek past, all in an effort to develop skills for how we study religion and the past.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Describe aspects of the ancient Greek world.
- Discuss and summarize assigned reading material.
- Implement the above knowledge in writing assignments and oral presentations.

Readings

This course has no required books but PDF readings that will be available through the course's Blackboard site. The schedule below provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day. Doing all of your assigned readings well in advance of class is important because our seminar and the discussions all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings.

Class Visit/Guest Lectures

Dr. Athanasia Kyriakou is a member of the scientific team excavating at the archaeological dig in Vergina (Aegae), one of Greece's most prestigious archaeological sites. She is also teaching at the School of History and Archaeology of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, on ancient history, classical sculpture and ancient topography. Dr. Kyriakou will be visiting our class via Skype throughout the semester, but we are particularly lucky since we will have her with us in March when she will be giving two guest lectures on the 21st and 23rd of March.

Excused Absences

Evidence of your legitimate absence must be presented to the professor in a timely fashion if you wish it not to count against you in the seminar. If you miss a presentation, that you were responsible for, you must contact the professor immediately to explain and document your legitimate absence, and you will be required to hand in your presentation as a writing assignment, the next class. The same applies for the abstracts, that is, if you miss a class for a legitimate reason you will be required to hand in the next time the class meets both the abstract of that day's reading but also the abstract of the day you missed.

Requirements and Assignments

Regular attendance, adequate preparation for each day's readings, and active participation will be necessary requirements for this class as well as the following assignments:

1. Abstracts (60%)

You will be required to write 12 abstracts on the reading of the day (see tentative schedule below), that accurately describe the argument of the reading for that week, avoiding all assessment, commentary, or quotation; each abstract should be a paragraph long, typed, double spaced, and with a 12 point Times Roman or Times New Roman font. Each abstract is worth 5% of your course grade for a total of 60%. They will be graded and returned the following class.

2. Presentations (20%)

Throughout the course each student will have to make 2 presentations (assigned during the first day of class).

Presentation I You will be required to find and present in class a piece of data—whether it is something you read in a scholarly book, a newspaper article, an archaeological site, etc.—related to ancient Greece.

Presentation II You will be responsible for leading the discussion on one of the assigned reading materials. You will have to briefly summarize and present the main points of the article followed by two questions.

Each presentation will worth 10% of your course grade for a total of 20%.

3. Final Assignment (20%)

At the end of the course you will be required to write a paper (of maximum 2500 words) applying things taught in the course at the piece of data you presented in class (see *Presentation I*). Each student is expected, during the last two classes of the semester, to make an informal presentation of their final paper topic to solicit input from the class.

Grading Scale

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|----|---------|----|----------|
| A+ | 95-100% | C | 70-74 |
| A | 90-94 | D+ | 65-69 |
| B+ | 85-89 | D | 60-64 |
| B | 80-84 | D- | 50-59 |
| C+ | 75-79 | F | below 50 |

General Comments

1. Plagiarism is a serious scholarly offence and amounts to using the intellectual labor of another author without proper quotation, citation, and acknowledgment. If the instructor suspects that a student has copied the work of another author (whether that author is a peer, classmate, or published author), the case will immediately be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

2. No grades of "I" (incomplete) will be assigned in this course. In my experience, when awarded at the 100-level a grade of "I" rarely leads to the completion of course requirements. Please speak with me well in advance if you are having difficulties satisfactorily completing the course's requirements on time or if you anticipate your absence from class becoming routine. Although I cannot guarantee that reasonable accommodations can be made for all occasion that may arise, speaking with me before a problem arises will greatly enhance our ability to address the situation in a way that is both fair to your classmates and beneficial to you.

3. Students with documented physical and/or learning disabilities should contact the professor outside of class time as soon as possible to review documentation and discuss accommodations. Also, students should familiarize themselves with the Office of Disability Services at <http://www.ods.ua.edu>.

4. UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at www.ua.edu. In the event of an emergency, students consult this site for further directions. Also familiarize yourselves with UA's Severe Weather Protocol at www.prepare.ua.edu

5. The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides a list of reporting channels that can be used to report incidences of illegal discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, sexual violence, retaliation, threat assessment or fraud.

Tentative Schedule

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| Th Jan. 12 | Introduction to the Course—(all readings are posted as PDFs on Our Blackboard site) |
| Jan. 17 | Ancient Greece – Overview |
| Th Jan. 19 | Case Study “Religion among Chimbs” |
| Jan. 24 | Movie “O Brother where art thou” |
| Th Jan. 26 | Mitchell’s “Representation” |
| Jan. 31 | Bremmer’s Greek Religion |
| Th Feb. 2 | Nongbri’s “Lost in Translation” |
| Feb. 7 | Hobsbawm’s “The Social Function of the Past” |
| Th Feb. 9 | Case Study—Ancient Greece I |
| Feb. 14 | Trouillot’s “The Presence in the Past” |
| Th Feb. 16 | Case Study—Ancient Greece II |
| Feb. 21 | Athanasia Kyriakou |
| Th Feb. 23 | Case Study—Ancient Greece III |
| T. Feb. 28 | Braun’ “The Past as Simulacrum in the Canonical Narratives of Christian Origins” |
| Th. Mar. 2 | Case Study—Ancient Greece IV |
| T. Mar. 7 | McCutcheon’s “Why Do You Seek the Living Among the Dead?” |
| Th. Mar. 9 | Case Study—Ancient Greece V |
| T. Mar. 14 | N CLASS – Spring Break |
| Th. Mar. 16 | N CLASS – Spring Break |
| T. Mar. 21 | Dr. Kyriakou’s visit – Aegae |
| Th. Mar. 23 | Dr. Kyriakou’s visit – Vergina |
| T. Mar. 28 | Lincoln’s “The Politics of Myth” |
| Th. Mar. 30 | Case Study—Ancient Greece VI |
| T. Apr. 4 | White’s “The Fictions of Factual Representation” |
| Th. Apr. 6 | Case Study—Ancient Greece VII |
| T. Apr. 11 | Bourdieu’s “Identity and Representation” |
| Th. Apr.13 | Case Study—Ancient Greece VIII |
| T. Apr. 18 | Lowenthal’s “Fabricating Heritage” |
| Th. Apr.20 | Touna’s “The Always Present Past” |
| T. Apr. 25 | Bremmer’s “Greek Religion” Revisited |
| Th. Apr.27 | Final project presentation |

Final Papers Due: Tuesday May b 2:00p.m.

Bibliography

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Identity and Representation: Elements for a Critical Reflection on the Idea of Religion." In P. Bourdieu and J.B. Thompson (eds.), *Language and Symbolic Power* 220-228. Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 1992.
- Braun, Willi. "The Past as Simulacrum in the Canonical Narratives of Christian Origins." In *Religion & Theology* 8/3-4 (2001): 213-228
- Bremmer, Jan. "Greek Religion [Further Considerations]." In Lindsay Jones(ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion Vol.6* 3677-3687. 2nd Edition. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005.
- Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In D.F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* 139-164. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. "The Social Function of the Past: Some Questions." *Past & Present* no. 55 (1972): 3-17.
- Lowenthal, David. "Fabricating Heritage." *History and Memory* 10, no. 1 (1998): 5-24.
- Lincoln, Bruce. "The Politics of Myth." In *Discourse and the Construction of Society* 25-35. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- McCutcheon, Russell T. "Why Do You Seek the Living Among the Dead?" (Luke 24:5). In *A Modest Proposal on Method: Essaying the Study of Religion*, 117-139.
- Mitchell, W.J. "Representation." In Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, *Critical Terms for Literary Study* 11-22. 2nd Edition. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Nongbri, Brent. "Lost in Translation: Inserting 'Religion' into Ancient Texts." In *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013.
- Touna, Vaia. "The Ever-Present Past." In *Fabrications of the Greek Past* [Forthcoming with Brill of the Netherlands]
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "The Presence in the Past." In *Silencing the Past* 141-153. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.
- White, Hayden. "The Fictions of Factual Representation." In *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* 121-134. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985 [1978].