

THEORIZING ANCIENT RELIGION REL 372

LECTURES: TH. 3:30 – 5:50 AT MA210

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 (and by appointment)

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Course Website

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-372-001-theorizing-ancient-religions-2/>

Description

Although this course looks at aspects of the ancient Greek world (from Gods and Heroes to people's daily lives) the main focus will be in examining the way in which contemporary categories, used by modern scholars, have been anachronistically projected backwards in time, through their interpretations of the ancient Greek material (textual and non textual)—one such anachronism being the category religion itself. The course considers anachronism as a socially formative identification technique that not only enables current scholars to identify their object of study in the otherwise ambiguous archive of the past (and more specifically the ancient Greek past) but which also allows them to extend and thereby authorize their own social world by portraying it as universal and thus timeless.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Describe aspects of the ancient Greek world
- Identify modern categories (anachronisms) such as “religion” used by scholars to talk about the ancient Greek world.
- Analyze, categorize, and compare secondary sources on ancient Greek material in terms of the differing ways in which they approach the challenge of talking about the past.
- Implement the above knowledge in writing assignments.
- Develop skills necessary for making public presentations by presenting in class, individually or in small groups, summaries and analyses of assigned reading material.

Readings

This course has no required books but PDF readings that will be available through the course's Blackboard site—you are required to print each reading and have a hard copy with you in class. The tentative schedule below provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day (marked in **BOLD**). Doing all of your assigned readings well in advance of class is important because our lectures and discussions all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings.

Excused Absences and Late Assignment Policy

If you miss a class you must contact the professor immediately to explain your absence. There will be several assignments throughout the semester (see Requirements below) that you will need to hand in in class at the date specified in the syllabus (see tentative schedule below). Late assignments will not be accepted which will reflect in your final grade. Students who fail to hand in their abstracts, assignments, and final paper at the date determined by the tentative schedule of the syllabus must speak with the professor immediately to discuss their options.

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 40%.

2. Presentations (20%)

Throughout the course each student will have to make **3 presentations** (assigned during the first day of class) related to the reading material of the assigned day.

1) Two presentations will be on the reading material, and you will be required to present the main points of the article's argument followed by two questions in order to set the discussion. (Each presentation is worth 5% for a total of 10%)

2) For the second presentation you will be required to find and present a news story that has to do with the past. (10%)

3. Final Assignment (20%)

At the end of the course you will be required to write a paper (between 1700 and 2000 words) on your second presentation (see above) and apply things taught in the course—a draft of your final will be handed in a week before the end of the semester (see schedule below).

Grading Scale

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. There will be no extra credit opportunities after the last day of classes.

4. 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>.

5. 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

6. 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

Th. Jan. 9	Introduction to the Course—Just the Facts
Th. Jan. 16	Mikalson "Greek Religion" _____
Th. Jan. 23	Nongbri "Embedded Religion" _____
Th. Jan. 30	Nongbri "The Modern Origins of Ancient Religions" _____
Th. Feb. 6	Ramey-Nostalgia and the Discourse concerning "Nones" _____
Th. Feb. 13	Braun "The Past as Simulacrum" _____
Th. Feb. 20	Papazoglou "Between Texts and Contexts" _____
Th. Feb. 27	White "The Fictions of Factual Representation" _____
Th. Mar. 5	McCutcheon "Filling in the Cracks with Resin" _____
Th. Mar. 12	McCutcheon "Why do you Seek the Living" _____
Th. Mar. 19	Spring Break
Th. Mar. 26	Touna "Locating the Past" and "From Out of the Head of Zeus" _____
Th. Apr. 2	Touna "Scholars and the Framing of Objects" and "The Political Utility of the Past" _____
Th. Apr. 9	Touna "Imagining the Past" _____
Th. Apr. 16	Mikalson "Greek Religion" Revisited—Hand in draft final assignment
Th. Apr. 23	Individual meetings to discuss final assignment

FINAL Paper Deadline: Hand in on Tuesday April 28 between 12p.m-2:00 p.m. at Manly 202.