

**FALL 2020**

**REL 524.001 PAST and PRESENT**

Lectures: Tuesdays 3:30 – 5:50

Audio/Video

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**Prof. Vaia Touna**

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Office Hours: Email the professor to schedule a zoom meeting appointment.

Office: Manly Hall 202—Department Office: Manly Hall 212 (348-5271)

**Course Website**

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-524-001-past-and-present/>

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**I. Description and Objectives**

The course examines the discursive relation between Past and Present and the implications in social formation and identification. Through examples from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Rome and Greece the course looks at how scholars study religion in the ancient world and complicates the tools they use while reconsidering how scholars study the past in general. Related to these issues, students will be expected to find and present examples also from their own research area.

**II. Learning Outcomes**

In this course students will be able to:

1. Describe aspects of religion from ancient cultures (Greek, Egyptian, Roman, Mesopotamian).
2. Identify scholarly trends and debates in relation to the study of the past both within and outside the field of religious studies.
3. Implement the above knowledge in writing assignments.
4. Effectively make oral presentations with the use of technology.

**III. Readings**

This course has no required books but PDF readings that will be available through the course's Blackboard site. The tentative 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 lectures and discussions all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings.

**IV. Class Meetings**

**COVID-19 Adjustments**

Given the numbers of new infections in the state and elsewhere in the country along with UA's response (e.g., mandated social distancing in all classrooms, thereby reducing each room's capacity by 80%) and concerns student have expressed regarding the risks associated with in-person meetings, we will begin this course in a remote fashion, this means that the course's regular class meeting time still holds but the course is now being offered remotely and will meet through Zoom videoconferencing. **All students are therefore required to have sufficient technological resources and competencies to participate fully in each weekly class.** Should the risks of in-person meetings lessen sufficiently at a later point in the semester then we will discuss, as a class, whether to shift to in-person meetings.

## V. 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.

## VI. Requirements

### 1. Attendance

Regular attendance, and adequate preparation for each day's readings are expected and required to do well in this course. See the tentative schedule, below, for each day's readings.

### 2. 1 Writing assignment (20%)

Each student will write one short paper that will be assigned on the first day of class and should be between 1000-1500 words.

### 3. 1 Oral presentation (20%)

Each student will choose one reading (to be assigned on the first day of class) and be prepared to lead a discussion. Presenters are expected to introduce the author of the article and summarize its arguments and conclusion.

### 4. Final Paper (60%)

The final paper will be discussed in detail the week before Thanksgiving. The final paper bearing the name of the student on a cover sheet, should be double spaced, between 2500-3000 words.

## VII. Grading Scale

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| A | 90 – 100 |
| B | 80 – 89  |
| C | 70 – 79  |
| D | 60 – 69  |
| F | below 60 |

## VIII. General Comments

1. All University faculty, staff, and students are expected to maintain a commitment to the health and safety of our campus community. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, specific health and safety standards are in place to minimize exposure and community spread on campus. In the interest of your health and safety and that of all UA students, faculty and staff, the University reserves the right to change the mode of instruction or schedule of instruction at any time, based upon prevailing public health and other guidance. While the method of delivery may change, educational instruction and opportunities will continue. As such, the University will not provide a refund of tuition, in whole or in-part, based on any such changes. Detailed information on changes in format or schedule can be found at:

<https://studentaccounts.ua.edu/> and <https://financialaid.ua.edu/>.

2. All students must be familiar with and abide by the requirements outlined in the UA Return Plan | UA System Comprehensive Health and Safety Plan. Students must (1) wear a mask or face covering at all times while participating in face-to-face class; (2) adhere to social distancing standards; and

(3) comply with all other health and safety restrictions. If a student refuses to comply with the requirements, the student will be asked to leave the class and reported for a conduct violation. Unless a student has an exemption from the requirement to wear a face covering, (more information can be found at <http://ods.ua.edu/covid-19-disability/>), the student will be reported to Student Life for further disciplinary action. More information on these requirements and UA Healthcheck system and screening can be found at [healthinfo.ua.edu/returnplan](http://healthinfo.ua.edu/returnplan). You are expected to visit the site and comply with all noted requirements related to in-person class attendance.

2. 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.

3. 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.

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](http://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](http://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](http://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.

## IX. Tentative Schedule

**T Aug. 25** Introduction to the course

**T Sep. 1**

Case studies in Mesopotamia

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**T Sep. 8**

Case studies in Egypt

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**T Sep. 15**

Case studies in Rome

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**T Sep.22**

Case studies in Greece

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**T Sep. 29**

Complicating our Tools

**T. Oct. 6**

Complicating our Tools

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**T. Oct. 13**

Complicating our Tools

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**T. Oct. 20**

Reconsidering the Past

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**T. Oct. 27**

Reconsidering the Past

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**T. Nov. 3**

Reconsidering the Past

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**T. Nov. 10**

Reconsidering the Past

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T. Nov. 17      Discuss Final Assignment

T. Nov. 24      **Thanksgiving week—No Class**

T. Dec. 1        **No Class—Work on Final Paper**

**FINAL Paper due Wednesday December 9 by 2:00 p.m.**