IMPORTANT NOTICE: THE FIRST SESSION OF THIS CLASS WILL BE ON MONDAY, AUGUST 27—THE SECOND WEEK OF CLASSES

REL 325 Religious Experience in the Greco-Roman World
Units: 4
Fall 2018 MW 2-3.20

Location: VKC 257

Instructor: Sheila Briggs
Office: ACB 232
Office Hours: M 12.50-1.50; W 12.50-1.50 (by appointment)
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Course Description
Varieties of religious experience in the ancient Mediterranean as they developed with the expansion of Greek and (later) Roman culture and power.

The course begins by surveying the basic features of Greek religion (which were often shared with Roman and other religious traditions of the ancient Mediterranean). We read a text that the ancients revered, written by Hesiod who told of how the gods and their relation to the cosmos and humankind came to be. We then look at the mystery religions which afforded the inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean an intense personal religious experience. Finally, we read the one surviving Latin novel whose author, Apuleius, gives us a tour of the religious world at the height of the Roman Empire in the 2nd cent. CE. The focus of the course is not on the two Western monotheisms that survived antiquity—Judaism and Christianity— but they will be discussed in relation to the religious trends of the ancient Mediterranean and their interaction with other Greco-Roman religions.

Learning Objectives
This course examines how religious experience in the Greco-Roman world changed over time, eventually laying the historical and cultural foundations of later Western societies. It encourages students to

• reflect on the diversity of human experience by looking at how the inhabitants of a remote past used a wide range of religious practices and ideas to create frameworks of meaning for their lives;

• cultivate a critical appreciation for how religion in the ancient Mediterranean permeated every form of human expression, including literature, philosophy, and the arts;
• develop an understanding of the political, social and economic contexts from which these cultural expressions of religion emerged;

• understand how Greco-Roman religions came to shape not only the religion of later Western Christian societies but also their broader artistic and intellectual traditions;

• learn to read and interpret ancient texts actively and analytically, to think critically about the distance and differences between us and them, and to make ancient religious texts and cultural worlds intelligible in our own contemporary context;

• learn to distinguish between their cultural assumptions about religion and the expressions of religious experience by others and to understand the multiple perspectives on religion both in the ancient Mediterranean past and our contemporary world before they formulate informed opinions on how religion has contributed to and continues to interact with societal and cultural developments;

• make use of traditional and newer resources for learning about the ancient Mediterranean and reflect on how these can lay the basis for life-long learning in many subjects and contexts.

This course emphasizes the careful reading of ancient texts and students should be comfortable reading Greco-Roman texts by the end of the course. We will also read some secondary scholarly work and discuss the varying interpretations of religious experience in the ancient Mediterranean that they provide a contemporary audience. In this light we will discuss what makes an interpretation plausible or implausible; how the (lack of) evidence from the ancient past constrains interpretation and how contemporary questions can both enrich and distort our understanding of the past. By the end of the course students should be self-reflective on how they interpret texts, what counts for them as evidence and how their own inevitably limited historical and cultural standpoint affects their understanding of what cultures, very different from their own, produce.

All assignments in this course are of essay or paper format and therefore require students to exercise the discursive and argumentative skills that they are being asked to use to interpret the course materials.
Course Notes
All students are expected to use Blackboard. It will provide class information, course content and students will submit electronic versions of the course assignments through the Turnitin tab on Blackboard.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
Books (available through USC bookstore)

Images relating to the visual and material culture of Greco-Roman religion, used in class, will be available through Blackboard

Description and Assessment of Assignments
There will be two mid-term examinations and a final examination. Each of these exams will consist of two questions which will require answers of 4-6 pages in standard typescript per question. They are take-home exams and the answers are to be written in essay format. Students will complete one research paper of 10 pages. This expects students to do research beyond the required reading of the course on a course-related topic which they choose.
Course attendance and participation make up 10% of the grade. Students are allowed six excused absences for any reason but also including illness and personal emergency. After that students will lose a course point (1% of the course grade) for each absence from class.

Grading Breakdown
Including the above detailed assignments, how will students be graded overall? Participation should be no more than 15%, unless justified for a higher amount. All must total 100%.
Two mid-term examinations (20% each of grade)
One final examination (20% of grade)
One research paper (30% of grade)
Course participation (10% of grade)

Grading Scale (Example)
Course final grades will be determined using the following scale
A 95-100
A- 90-94
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76
C- 70-72
Assignment Submission Policy
All assignments are dual submission. As well as handing in a physical printed copy of your assignment on the due date you also need to submit to the instructor an electronic version on Blackboard. This should be either a Word document or a PDF file. This should be submitted no later than 24 hours after the assignment deadline but does not have to be on Blackboard before the paper version is due in class.

Grading Timeline
Mid-tem examinations will be graded within one week of their submission. The research paper (due at the end of the semester) by the time of the final exam. The final exam will be graded according to the USC deadline for the submission of course grades.

Course Outline
Aug. 20 and 22 Introduction to course.

Part 1. Greek Religion
Aug. 27 Practices, spaces and times in Greek Religion. Reading: Mikalson, pp. 2-29.
Aug. 29 Gods and heroes Reading: Mikalson, pp. 32-51.
Sept. 3 Labor Day Holiday
Sept. 5 Greek myths. Reading: Mikalson, pp.54-65.
Sept. 10 The gods, the cosmos and human life. Reading: Hesiod Theogony, pp. intro., pp.vii-xxi.
Sept. 12 Reading: Hesiod Theogony, pp.1-33.
Sept. 17 From myth to cult. Reading: Mikalson, pp. 68-121.
Sept. 26 Greek religion and the individual. Reading: Mikalson, pp.170-184.

Sept. 26 First mid-term examination distributed
Oct. 1 Greek religion in the later Hellenistic period. Reading: Mikalson, pp. 186-203.
Oct. 3 Greek religion and Greek culture. Reading: Mikalson, pp. 206-226.

Oct. 3 First mid-term examination due

Part 2. The Spread of Greek Religion and its Transformation in the Ancient Mediterranean—Focus on the Ancient Mystery Religions
Oct. 8 What were the ancient mystery religions? Reading: Bowden, pp. 6-25.
Oct. 15 Samothrace and other mystery sanctuaries in the Greek world. Reading: Bowden, pp. 49-82.
Oct. 29 Isis and Mithras. Reading: Bowden, pp. 157-197.
Oct. 31 The end of the mysteries but the survival of the encounter with the sacred. Reading: Bowden, pp.198-221.

Oct. 31 Second mid-term examination distributed

Part 3. A Fictional Tour of the Real Religious Landscape of the Roman Empire
Nov. 5 Witchcraft in the Greco-Roman world. Reading: Apuleius, Golden Ass, pp. 1-38.
Nov. 7 The (elite) critique of witchcraft—wicked women, foolish men. Reading: Apuleius, Golden Ass, pp. 39-57.

Nov. 7 Second mid-term examination due
Nov. 14 Is Apuleius providing a moral critique of Roman society? Reading: Apuleius, Golden Ass, pp. 120-137.
Nov. 21 Thanksgiving Holiday
Nov. 26 From degradation to salvation. Reading: Apuleius, Golden Ass, pp. 191-240.
Nov. 28 Course Conclusion
Nov. 28 Research paper due
Nov. 28 Final examination distributed (due Friday, December 7)

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office http://equity.usc.edu and/or to the Department of Public Safety http://dps.usc.edu. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage http://sarc.usc.edu fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp provides 24/7 confidential support.
Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://ali.usc.edu, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://dsp.usc.edu provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.