

University of Calgary, RELS 601.11/701.11
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Religious Studies
Winter 2007

December 12, 2006

Mystery Religions in Late Antiquity

Instructor : Ayse Tuzlak

Office hours : By appointment only.

Please e-mail ayse.tuzlak@ucalgary.ca, and allow at least 24 hours for a response.

Class Meets: Mondays, 9:00 – 11:50

In the ancient Mediterranean, what we call ‘religion’ was, more often than not, something that one was *born into* rather than something that one *chose*. However, some cults in late antiquity required that their members be initiated, bringing an interesting new dimension into Greek and Roman culture: a religious marketplace, as it were.

This course will use these ‘mystery religions’ as a tool to understand important methodological issues about religion, culture, and choice.

Core competencies:

This is a graduate seminar. Therefore, it will place a strong emphasis on the analysis of primary texts and the critical assessment of scholarly literature. Students will be expected to master a variety of ancient sources and interpret them from a variety of methodological perspectives. Students will also strengthen their abilities to present their insights both orally and in writing.

Texts:

The following texts are available in the university bookstore in Mac Hall. They are also on reserve in the MacKimmie Library.

Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*
Euripides, *Bacchae* (David Franklin, tr.)
Helene Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*
Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook*
David Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*
R.E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World*

Grading and policies:

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|----------------------|-----|-----------|
| Six position papers | 30% | (5% each) |
| Oral presentation | 20% | |
| Final research paper | 50% | |

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|---|---------|----|----------|
| A+ | 100 - 96 | A | 95 - 90 | A- | 89 - 85 |
| B+ | 84 - 80 | B | 79 - 75 | B- | 74 - 70 |
| C+ | 69 - 65 | C | 64 - 60 | C- | 59 - 55 |
| D+ | 54 - 53 | D | 52-50 | F | Under 50 |

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

The position papers:

The position papers are due at the beginning of class and will cover the reading that we *will* talk about that day. In other words, you will write on material which has not yet been covered in discussion. I expect the position papers to run between 3-5 pages apiece.

You may choose any six weeks to write. If you write more than six essays, the best six will be counted toward your final grade. **No late position papers will be accepted. Period.** Plan ahead, and allow a couple of extra “buffer weeks” in case of emergencies.

You are permitted to write two position papers on the same cult, but the papers must be significantly different from one another, and my standards for the second paper on the same topic will be higher than they were for the first.

The presentation:

In one week, to be determined on the first day of class, you will present a version of your position paper to your colleagues. The presentation should take about 15-20 minutes. **Note that reading a five-page paper aloud takes less than ten minutes** (and, let’s be honest, it’s boring to listen to), so make sure that your presentation goes well beyond the text of the paper itself.

After your presentation, **you will be expected to field questions and facilitate discussion for at least the next half-hour**, though you are welcome to take as much class time as you like.

If you like, you may use your presentation as a chance to present a draft or outline of your final project to the class. However, if your presentation is on a different subject than the scheduled class session, please warn me at least two weeks ahead of time.

March 19:

Readings:

Mithraism

Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries* (entire)

March 26:

Readings:

Was Christianity a Mystery-Religion?

Meyer, Chapter 8 (Plutarch, Clement, Philo, *Gospel of Philip*, etc.)
Witt, Chapters XIV-XV, XIX-XX

April 2:

Readings:

State Religion, 'Competition,' Empire

Witt, Chapter XVII
Photocopied readings to be distributed

April 9:

Readings:

Conclusion: What is a mystery religion?

Return to Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar. If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor.

Gnosis:

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: gnosis@ucalgary.ca or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.