Fall 9-2-2005

RELS 495.01: Seminar - Topics in Greco-Roman Religion

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Recommended Citation
Williams, Megan, "RELS 495.01: Seminar - Topics in Greco-Roman Religion" (2005). Syllabi. 9871.
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Week 1 (8/30-9/1)

Introduction (No reading)

Part I: Texts and interpretations

Week 2 (9/7)

Gods
Hesiod, Theogony
ROTAW “Deities and Demons,” “Greece”
Question: what is a god?

Week 3 (9/21)

Myth
Homeric Hymn to Demeter
ROTAW “Myth and Sacred Narratives,” “Writing and Religion”
Question: what is a myth? what is mythology?

Week 4 (9/28)

Dionysus: myth and tragedy
Euripides, Bacchae
ROTAW “Religion and Politics: Greece”
“The Great or City Dionysia at Athens,” on e-reserve
Questions: how is tragic poetry different from epic poetry, in religious terms? who is Dionysus?

Week 5 (10/5)

Philosophy and personal salvation
Plato: excerpt from Protagoras; Republic 10, on e-reserve BRING TO CLASS
Translation of the Derveni Papyrus, on e-reserve BRING TO CLASS
ROTAW “Theology, Theodicy, Philosophy”: read Introduction, skim Egypt, read Mesopotamia, Israel and Greece sections
Muir, “Religion and the New Education: The Challenge of the Sophists,” on e-reserve
“Elective Cults,” on e-reserve
Questions: how do philosophical criticisms of mythology, ritual and poetry differ from each other? Are the goals of the philosophers similar or different to those of the elective cults? How does the worldview of the Derveni Papyrus compare with that of the Myth of Er in Republic 10?

Week 6 (10/12)

Rationalizing myth
Palaiphatus, *On Unbelievable Tales* (e-reserve)
Philo of Byblos, fragments (e-reserve)

Week 7 (10/19)
**Academic tradition and Cicero**
Excerpts from *De natura deorum*, *De divinatione*

Week 8 (10/26)
**Roman re-appropriations**
Virgil, *Aeneid*, excerpts; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, excerpts
Presentation: Bob Stahl

Part II: Sites

Week 9 (11/2)
**Attica: Athens: the archaic and classical Greek city; Eleusis and the mysteries**
Pausanias, “Attica” (e-reserve)
Presentation: Melinda Galloway

Week 10 (11/9)
**Delphi: oracles and panhellenic sanctuaries**
Pausanias, “Phokis,” material on Delphi (e-reserve)
Presentation: Katie Kolwicz

Week 11 (11/16)
**Roman Syria**
Lucian, *De dea Syria*
Presentation: Holly Daviau

Week 12 (11/23)
No class (Thanksgiving)

Part III: Religious Syntheses of Late Antiquity

Week 13 (11/30)
**Isis and philosophy**
Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*; Apuleius, *Golden Ass* (excerpts)
Presentation: Jen Rowe

Week 14 (12/7)
**Neo-Platonism and theurgy**
Porphyry, *On the Cave of the Nymphs in Homer, Philosophy from Oracles*
Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*