

# History of Gods

History 396  
Class hours: TR 2:30-3:45  
Office hours: WF 2:30-3:30 at Opus 2

Spring 2009

Thomas A. Wilson  
Classroom: SCCT 1004  
Office: 219 Elihu Root House

Books for purchase:

Diane Rayor, *The Homeric Hymns: A Translation, with Introduction and Notes* (California, 2004)  
Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda* (Penguin Classics, 1981)  
Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (California, 1997)

\* available on Blackboard under assignments

• electronic reserve reading, Burke Library webpage

Δ JSTOR articles can be accessed through the online Databases link on Hamilton library webpage

† important background reading to be read *before* other assigned readings

[suggested readings]

## I. DECENTERING RELIGION, RITUAL, AND GODS 1/22

• † “Deities and Demons,” *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, Sarah Iles Johnston (Harvard, 2004), 392-422 (especially 392-393, 408-413, 417-422)

Δ Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” *History of Religions* 20 (1980) 1/2: 112-127

\* Talal Asad, “Toward a Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual,” *Genealogies of Religion* (Johns Hopkins, 1993), 55-79

## II. GREECE 1/27

• † Jon Mikalson, “Greece,” *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, Sarah Iles Johnston (Harvard, 2004), 210-219

\* Jean-Pierre Vernant, “The Society of Gods,” *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Zone Books, 1990), 101-119

\* Louise Zaidman & Pauline Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (Cambridge, 1992), 80-101; 112-132

**Jan. 30 Friday WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE:** submit as email attachment: 1000-1400 word essay on readings by 3:00

### A. APOLLO OF DELPHI 1/29

• John Pedley, *Sanctuaries and the Sacred* (Cambridge, 2005), 135-153

“Hymn to Apollo,” *The Homeric Hymns*, 35-53

### B. ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES: DEMETER 2/3

\* Zaidman & Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 132-140

“Hymn to Demeter,” *The Homeric Hymns*, 17-34

### C. PERFORMING CULT 2/5-2/10

Reenactment of rites based on remaining hymns in *The Homeric Hymns*

### D. THE GREEKS AND MODERN THEORIES OF GODS, CULTS, AND RELIGION 2/12-17

\* René Girard, “Generative Scapegoating,” *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford, 1987), 73-105

- Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Domestication of Sacrifice," *Violent Origins* (Stanford, 1987), 191-205  
[Walter Burkert, "Sacrifice, Hunting, and Funerary Ritual," *Homo Nacans* (California, 1983), 1-82]

**Feb. 13 Friday WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE** submit by 3:00 as email attachment

### III. ROME

- † John North, "Rome," *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, Sarah Iles Johnston (Harvard, 2004), 225-232
- A. IMPERIAL CULTS 2/19
- \* George Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman & Christian Discourses in Conflict* (CUA, 2007), ix-41
- \* Mary Beard et al., *Religions of Rome Vol. 2 – A Sourcebook* (Cambridge, 1998), 78-165
- [John Ferguson, "Roman Cults," in Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger, eds., *Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Scribner's), 909-923]

#### B. ROMAN CULTS I 2/24-2/26

*Individual student presentations (approx 15 mins.) on a cult based on the following source book, on reserve in Burke Library:*

Mary Beard et al., *Religions of Rome Vol. 2 – A Sourcebook* (Cambridge, 1998), 288-347

### III. INDIA

- † "Hinduism," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Vol. 6: 3983-3997 (top left)
- A. VEDIC RITES: AGNI 3/3
- The Rig Veda*, 23-40, 59-83, 97-138
- J.C. Hesterman, "Other Folk's Fire," *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar* (Asian Humanities Press, 1983) 2: 77-94

"Altar of Fire," Robert Gardner and Frits Staal (film, 58 mins.) 3/5

\* *Baudhâyana 'Srautasûtra* in *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, ed. Frits Staal (Asian Humanities Press, 1983) 2: 478-665

#### B. BHAKTI DEVOTIONALISM 3/10

- \* † "Hinduism," *Encyclopedia of Religions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, vol. 6: 3998-4008
- \* A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva* (Penguin, 1973), 19-40, 61-90
- \* Richard Davis, "Chola Bronzes in Procession," *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes from South India* (American Federation of Arts, 2002), 46-63
- \* Karen Prentiss, "Joyous Encounters: Tamil Bhakti Poets and Images of the Divine," *The Sensuous and the Sacred*, 64-79

[Films available in Media Library

["Bearing the Heat: Mother Devotion in South India." (45 min.) Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, 1995

["Darubrahma (Wooden Lord): Jagannatha's Recreation in Puri, India." (43 min.) Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, 2000

["Given to Dance: India's Odissi Tradition." (58 min.) Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, 1986

["An Indian Pilgrimage: Ramdevra." (25 min.) Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, 1999

["Wedding of the Goddess." (70 min.) Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, 1987]

**March 13 Friday WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE** submit by 3:00 as email attachment

**IV. INDO-EUROPEAN RELIGION? 3/31**

- Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (Chicago, 1964), 1-60

**V. CHINA**

- \* † “Confucianism,” *Encyclopedia of Religions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, vol. 3: 1580-1613

**A. ANCIENT SHAMANISM 4/2**

- Robert Eno, “Deities and Ancestors in Early Oracle Inscriptions,” *Religions of China in Practice* (Princeton), 41-51
  - “*Jiu ge* ‘Nine Songs,’” *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and other Poets*, Trans. David Hawkes (Penguin, 1985), 95-122
  - “*Zhao hun* ‘Summons of the Soul,’” *Songs of the South*, 219-231
- Δ Yü Ying-shih. “‘O Soul, Come Back!’ A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47 (Dec. 1987) 2: 363-395

**B. CONFUCIANISM AND THE IMPERIAL CULTS 4/7**

- \* † “Confucianism: The Imperial Cult,” *Encyclopedia of Religions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, vol. 3

- Michael Puett, “The Offerings of Food and the Creation of Order: The Practice of Sacrifice in Early China,” *Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China*, ed. Roel Sterckx (Palgrave, 2005), 75-95

Wilson, “‘Sacrifice to spirits as living’: A Confucian Theory of Gods and the Rites that Venerate Them,” *Confucian Gods and the Rites that Venerated them in Late Imperial China* (forthcoming), 1-33

[Miaw-fen Lu, “Religious Dimensions of Filial Piety as Developed in Ming Interpretations of the *Xiaojing*,” *Late Imperial China* 27 (Dec. 2006) 2: 1-37]

“The Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius in Tainan” (film) 4/9

Δ Wilson, “Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius,” *History of Religions* (2002) 251-287

**C. CELESTIAL MASTERS DAOISM (TAOISM) 4/14**

Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (California, 1997), 1-29

Δ Kristopher Schipper, “Vernacular and Classical Rituals in Taoism,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 45 (Nov. 1985) 1: 21-57

*Laozi/Daode jing*, the Xiang’er commentary (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*), 29-148

- Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (California, 2000), 189-225

**D. Numinous Treasure Daoism 4/16**

*The Wondrous Scripture of the Upper Chapters on Limitless Salvation* (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*), 373-438

**E. Tantric Buddhism 4/21**

- Fabio Rambelli, “Tantric Buddhism and Chinese Thought in East Asia,” *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David White (Princeton, 2000), 361-380
- Charles Orzech and James Sanford, “Worship of the Ladies of the Dipper,” *Religions of Asia in Practice* (Princeton, 2000), 383-395
- Charles Orzech, “The Scripture of Perfect Wisdom for Humane Kings Who Wish to Protect Their States,” *Religions of Asia in Practice*, 430-438

**April 24 Friday** WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE submit by 3:00 as email attachment

**VI. DISCUSSION OF PAPER TOPICS 4/28**

presentations stating tentative argument and primary sources on which next paper will be based

**VII. PURITY 4/30**

- “Sin, Pollution, and Purity,” *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, Sarah Iles Johnston (Harvard, 2004), 496-513
- Jean-Pierre Vernant, “The Pure and the Impure,” *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, 121-141, 274-5
- Heinrich von Staden, “‘In a pure and holy way’: Personal and Professional Conduct in the Hippocratic Oath,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 51 (Oct. 1996) 4: 404-437

**VIII. REVELATION 5/5**

**IX. EPIPHANY 5/7**

**May 9 Saturday** WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE submit by 12:00 P.M. as email attachment

Websites:

Asian Historical Architecture <<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/>>

Theoi Greek Mythology <<http://www.theoi.com/>>

Philip Clart, Bibliography of Western Language Publications on Chinese Popular Religions  
<[http://web.missouri.edu/~clartp/bibliography\\_CPR.html](http://web.missouri.edu/~clartp/bibliography_CPR.html)>

Temple of the Cult of Confucius

<[http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian\\_studies/home/TempleCulture.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/TempleCulture.html)>

Final course grade determined on the basis of the following:

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| five essays         | 75% (15% each)  |
| class participation | 25% (10% for regular participation + 15% for presentations) |

Grading criteria: A “good” (i.e., B) essay is clearly written and logically sound. An “excellent” (i.e., A) essay presents a compelling argument for a thoughtful and imaginative interpretation of the sources based on a thorough reading and re-reading of the sources and careful reflection upon the problems raised. A compelling argument meets three criteria: (1) a clear formulation of a problem, (2) analysis of the texts under scrutiny, and (3) a scrupulous use and citation of supporting evidence from the texts (i.e. “documentation,” see below). A thoughtful interpretation requires digging beneath the surface meaning of the texts to a subtler understanding of their connections to broader contexts. A “prose” grade of C– (i.e., less than “satisfactory”) is assigned to grammatically correct but informal and stylistically weak writing; and D+ or below for repeated infractions of basic rules of writing, depending upon frequency and egregiousness of such errors.

Nota bene: Present an argument based on your own interpretation of the sources. Document your claims. Develop your ideas fully. Your most important points should be clearly stated, explicated, and documented. When you quote a passage from the sources, provide enough information so that your reader does not need to consult the source for further clarification.

A thorough understanding of a text requires reading, reflection, and re-reading. A well written paper requires editing, self-critique, and re-writing.

Don’t simply summarize the content of your sources. Don’t assume that any major point you want to make is self-evident. In using evidence to support your argument, don’t assume that the facts speak for themselves.

Documentation: You must cite all sources of information used, even if you don’t quote a source directly. Cite relevant pages when you refer to specific passage in the text. Cite exact page numbers of any source from which you quote directly, although it is rarely necessary to cite the same source more than once in the same paragraph. Use proper citation forms (i.e., footnotes, end notes, in-text parenthetical notes) as described in the Hamilton College Style Sheet. Be consistent in the citation format used. If you do not cite the sources from which you derive information, or on which you base your description of an event, or interpretation of an idea, etc., the implication is that the idea is your own, or that it is based on your own primary research. Failure to cite such sources is plagiarism.