History of Gods

History/Religious Studies 396
Autumn 2014
Thomas Wilson

Class hours: TR 1:00-2:15
Office: KJ 140

Classroom: KJ 110
Office hours: T 2:30-3:30, W 11-12

Accommodation requests:
I will make reasonable accommodations on assignment deadlines for a student who requires them because of a documented disability as allowed by the Dean of Student’s office. If you need such accommodations, please discuss them with me no later than the end of the second week of classes so that we can make necessary arrangements for the semester.

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
∆ JSTOR articles can be accessed through the online Databases link on Hamilton library webpage
† important background materials to be read before other assigned readings; understanding of these materials is essential, assumed, and not discussed in class

[suggested readings]

I. Religion, Ritual, Gods 9/2

II. Greece 9/4-9
A. Gods & Cults in the Ancient Greek City 9/4
* Louise Zaidman & Pauline Pantel, Religion in the Ancient Greek City (Cambridge, 1992), 80-101; 112-132
The Homeric Hymns, 1-13

B. Case studies in Greek Cults: Apollo of Delphi 9/9
* John Pedley, Sanctuaries and the Sacred (Cambridge, 2005), 135-153
“Hymn to Apollo,” *The Homeric Hymns*, 35-53

C. CASE STUDIES IN GREEK CULTS II: ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES: DEMETER 9/11
* Zaidman & Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 132-140
“Hymn to Demeter,” *The Homeric Hymns*, 17-34

D. PERFORMING CULT 9/16
Reenactment of rites based on remaining hymns in *The Homeric Hymns*

III. ROME 9/18
A. IMPERIAL CULTS
* Mary Beard et al., *Religions of Rome Vol. 2 – A Sourcebook* (Cambridge, 1998), 78-165

B. ROMAN CULTS 9/23
Individual student presentations (approx. 10 mins.) on Roman cults based on Mary Beard et al., *Religions of Rome Vol. 2 – A Sourcebook* (Cambridge, 1998), 78-165, 288-347
Select at least two documents in the *Sourcebook* and post on Discussion Board and prepare a ten-minute presentation for Feb. 18 that addresses the heterogeneous nature of Roman culture and the concrete aims of cult activity. Each presentation should (a) briefly introduce the historical context and/or place of the cults in question (e.g., who were a cult’s patrons, (b) consider how or did the patrons differ from mainstream or more predominant sectors of Roman society, (c) describe the nature of a cult’s main activities, such as its principal rite, and (d) examine the concrete aims of the cult – what did the patrons derive from participation in the rite.

Sept. 24 Wednesday 1st WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE: submit as email attachment: 1400 word essay on readings by 3:00

IV. GODS & CULTS 9/25-30
A. THEORIZING CULTS: formulating critical approaches to understanding gods through cults

9/30
* Talal Asad, “Toward a Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual,” *Genealogies of Religion* (Johns Hopkins, 1993), 55-79
* Kathryn McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence: A Comparative Study of Sacrifice* (Johns Hopkins, 2008), 44-64, 171-174

V. INDIA
A. VEDIC RITES: AGNI 10/2
The Rig Veda, 23-40, 59-83, 97-138

10/7
“Altar of Fire,” Robert Gardner and Frits Staal (film, 58 mins.)
Discussion Board post: Select a few pages in the Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra, post a short synopsis that addresses the concrete aims of the cult actions described in your passages, such as what did the patrons derive from participation in the rite.

B. BHAKTI DEVOTIONALISM 10/9-14
* Richard Davis, “Chola Bronzes in Procession,” The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes from South India (American Federation of Arts, 2002), 46-63 (with catalog images)

10/13: LECTURE: Richard Davis, “Shiva Crowned King of Madurai”

10/14
* Karen Prentiss, “Joyous Encounters: Tamil Bhakti Poets and Images of the Divine,” The Sensuous and the Sacred, 64-79 (with catalog images 1, 3, 5, 6)
“Wedding of the Goddess.” (70 min.) Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, 1987

[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]

Oct. 31 Friday 2nd WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE submit by 3:00 as email attachment (approx. 2500 words)

VI. CHINA
A. DEATH AND AFTER IN ANCIENT CHINA 10/21
* “Zhao hun ‘Summons of the Soul,’” Songs of the South, 219-231
images of burial shroud of Marquis of Dai, Mawangdui, tomb no. 1 (Changsha, Hunan)
B. MEDIEVAL DAOISM (aka TAOISM) 10/23
Stephan Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (California, 1997), 1-29
“Commands and Admonitions for the Families of the Great Dao” (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*), 149-185

10/28
“Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens” (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*), 186-229

C. UPPER CLARITY DAOISM 10/30-11/4
* The Upper Scripture of Purple Texts Inscribed by the Spirits (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*), 275-372
* Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (California, 2000), 189-225

D. NUMINOUS TREASURE DAOISM 11/6
* The Wondrous Scripture of the Upper Chapters on Limitless Salvation (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*), 373-438

E. DAOISM TODAY 11/11

11/13
“Bored in Heaven” (videorecording), Kenneth Dean, director

VII. CONFUCIANISM AND THE IMPERIAL CULTS
11/18
[∆ 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]

11/20
“The Autumnal Sacrifice to Confucius in Tainan” (1999, film)
Randall Telfer, *Ritual Dance in the Sacrifice to Confucius*
THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/22-30

VIII. PURITY 12/2

IX. IN-CLASS WORK ON FINAL PROJECTS 12/4

X. The Cults 12/9-11

Dec. 12 Friday writing assignment due submit by 3:00 as email attachment (approx. 3000 words): analysis of one or more Daoist scriptures in Bokenkamp’s Early Daoist Scriptures; incorporate at least two other sources listed in Bokenkamp’s bibliography and/or others sources by authors listed in the bibliography. Other scholarly articles or monographs may be used, subject to the instructor’s advanced approval. Examine the ritual practices described in the scripture(s) as a means to accomplish specific goals, which your essay should describe and analyze. Send me an email listing the scripture you plan to study and at least two scholarly articles or monographs by 12:00 pm December 1.

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://www.uni-leipzig.de/~clartp/bibliography_CPR.html>
Temple of the Cult of Confucius
http://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/TempleCulture.html

Final course grade determined on the basis of the following:

- first essay (1400 words) 15%
- second essay (2500 words) 20%
- third essay (3000 words) 20%
- class participation 15%
- Discussion Board posts 15%
- presentations 15%

Revision Policy: The first two writing assignments may be revised, which are due ten days after the graded assignment is returned to the student. The grades earned for original version will be averaged with that earned for the revision in calculating the final grade. Revisions must respond to comments and suggestions on the first version. The more significantly you develop the argument of the original version, either in conception or use of evidence, the more likely the revision grade will improve upon the original.
Grades for revised versions that just correct mistakes noted in my comments on the original version are not eligible for change. When submitting the revision, briefly and concretely describe in your email how your revised version addresses the instructor’s comments on the original.

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.