

**ANTHROPOLOGY/RELIGION 225  
CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL STUDIES 225**

**Gods, Heroes, Magic, and Mysteries:  
Religion in Ancient Greece**

**Bates College — Fall, 2007  
Loring M. Danforth  
(with many thanks to Bob Allison)**

**Course Objectives**

The present course is a study of ancient Greek religion from both a historical and an anthropological perspective. It follows a broadly historical outline and covers these important topics and periods:

- Religion in Minoan and Mycenaean Culture  
(the bronze age on Crete and in the Aegean basin: ca. 2700-1100 B.C.E.)
- Religion in the “Heroic Age” as reflected in Homer and Hesiod  
(the bronze age on the mainland of Greece: ca. 1100-750 B.C.E.)
- Religion in the Classical Age of skepticism and rationality  
(the “Golden age” of Athens, 6th-4th c. B.C.E.)
- Religion in the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods  
(the period of westward movement of foreign or “diaspora” religions into the Greco-Roman world, 2nd c. B.C.E.-2nd c. C.E.)

At the same time this course takes an anthropological approach to the study of religion in ancient Greece. It attempts to understand religion as a system of symbols which provides people with a meaningful world in which to live. It also seeks to explore how religions enable people to legitimate their view of the world by setting it in the context of a reality which transcends them.

From a **historical perspective**, the primary objectives of this course are:

1. to become familiar with central religious beliefs and concepts of each of the periods outlined above and how they relate to the social, political and economic conditions of their times;
2. to learn what sources are available to us for the study of religion in ancient Greece;
3. to learn how to utilize these sources critically, that is, how to recognize what kinds of conclusions the evidence will support. The sources available to us include archaeological, iconic (pictorial) and literary evidence. Literary sources (such as Homer's *Iliad* or Euripides' play, *The Bacchae*) may be studied as evidence either for religious ideas of the time in which they were written, or for the time which the literary sources themselves describe;

4. to learn how to draw analogies between religious ideas of our own culture and those of foreign ones (in this case, those of Ancient Minoans, Myceneans, and Greeks) while recognizing how our own values and beliefs tend to color our reading of the evidence and learning how to resist this tendency.

From an **anthropological perspective**, the primary objectives of this course are:

1. to serve as an introduction to the way in which anthropologists attempt to understand cultures very different from our own;
2. to understand different religions as attempts to “say something” about the relationships between human beings and their gods;
3. to learn how to analyze religious symbols, institutions, beliefs, and practices in their wider socio-cultural context. These include myth, sacrifice, conversion, death rituals, healing rituals, rites of passage, trance and possession, and beliefs about the soul and life after death;
4. to appreciate the power of other religions as well as the beauty of the art and literature they inspire.

### **Required Books**

1. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (R. Graves, ed.)
2. Euripides, *The Bakkhai* (R. Bagg, ed.)
3. Zaidman and Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*
4. Hesiod, *Theogony* (N.O. Brown, ed.)
5. Homer, *The Iliad* (R. Lattimore, ed.)
6. *Gods, Heroes, Magic and Mysteries: Religion in Ancient Greece* (Course Packet)

### **Reserve Reading**

Rice & Stambaugh, *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion*

### **Perseus Project’s World Wide Web Site**

Perseus is a very valuable resource for anyone interested in the classical world. It contains ancient texts, images of ancient art, as well as photographs and plans of archaeological sites. A public version of Perseus is available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu> (select classics), and a much fuller version is available on the Bates College network. Additional information about Perseus will be presented at a Perseus Orientation Session to be held early in the semester.

## CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND READINGS

### 1. Introduction

- Sept. 6            Overview of the course.
- Sept. 10          Perseus Orientation in the Keck Classroom at 7:30 p.m.  
Presented by Bob Allison.
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### 2. Theory in the Interdisciplinary Study of Ancient Greek Religion

- Sept. 11          Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," (*Course packet*).

Zaidman & Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, "Translator's Introduction" (pp. xi-xix), chapters 1-3 (pp. 3-23), "The Necessity of Cultural Estrangement," "Some Fundamental Notions," and "Sources of Evidence."

Starr handout.

Study Questions: Religion, Culture and Society in Ancient Greece

1. Here are three possible definitions of culture:
    - a. Material objects of human manufacture
    - b. Learned behavior
    - c. Rules or patterns for behavior, systems of symbols, shared systems of meaning

Which definition would be more useful to an archaeologist studying ancient Greek culture? Which definition would be more useful to someone studying religion?
  2. Religion is a part, or an aspect, of culture. How is it related to other aspects of culture – politics, art, law, medicine, kinship, athletics?
  3. How would you define religion? What do religions do for people? Why do people all over the world have religions?
  4. In Zaidman and Pantel's terms, is ancient Greek culture "familiar" or "unfamiliar" territory for us? Which should it be? What difference does it make?
  5. How do Zaidman and Pantel say we should study ancient Greek religion? What are the roles of excavation, description, interpretation, translation, empathy, and belief?
  6. Do you have to believe in a religion in order to understand it? Are our own religious beliefs relevant in trying to understand ancient Greek religion?
  7. Does Starr approach ancient Greek culture the way Zaidman and Pantel suggest? How would Zaidman and Pantel evaluate Starr's approach? What grade would they give him?
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### 3. The Aegean in the Bronze Age: Minoan and Cycladic Culture and Religion

Sept. 13 Video on Minoan Crete in the Bronze Age.

In-class study of Minoan artifacts from Palaces, Cave Sites & Tombs, and Mountain-top shrines. Decoding visual evidence to understand the roles of priests and priestesses in ancient Crete.

Marinatos, *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image and Symbol*, chapters 5 (Town Shrines and Nature Sanctuaries) and 6 (The Priesthood), pp. 112-146 (*Course Packet*).

Turner, "Symbols in the Ndembu Ritual" in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, pp. 19-47 (*Course Packet*).

Study Questions: Issues in the Study of Minoan Religion

1. What are the limits of interpretation? What criteria can we use to distinguish a good interpretation from a bad one? Is evidence from other cultures legitimate to use? How does Marinatos use the comparative method (evidence from other cultures) to support her theses? Are there some interpretations Marinatos offers that you find questionable?
2. Does art depict the world realistically? If not, what can we learn about the real world from artistic representations? How can we know when to interpret a scene realistically as opposed to symbolically? (Consider the image of the bull leaping in the video, for example.)
3. Is everything a symbol? Is everything meaningful? How does Marinatos decide where to draw the line between symbol and non-symbol?
4. Why does Marinatos use so many hyphenated terms like "priest-king", "warrior-priest," and "politico-religious"?
5. What is a votive offering? What does "votive" mean? What can we learn from studying votive offering? Do we learn about the gods to whom they were offered or the people who offered them?
6. Marinatos refers to "goddess impersonators" and to a "youth who acted as the impersonator of the Young God." What do you make of her use of the word "impersonator?" Is a Christian minister or priest a "God impersonator?" Was Jesus a "God impersonator?"
7. Was "bull leaping" a sport? Did people really do it? Is it humanly possible? Does that matter? How about walking on water?

Sept. 18 In-class study of the Frescoes from Thera; hunting and gathering coming of age rituals.

Turner, "Betwixt and Between," in *The Forest of Symbols*, pp. 93-111 (*Course Packet*).

Marinatos, *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image and Symbol*, chapters 7 (Goddesses and Gods) and 8 (Shrines and Rituals), pp. 147-200 (*Course Packet*).

Study Questions: Rites of Passage

1. What are the component parts of rites of passage? How do they work? What do they accomplish?
2. Think about some rites of passage that you have participated in. What effect have they had on you?
3. What are the qualities of liminal things? How can they be both sacred and disgusting?
4. What does it mean to describe a female initiation rite as “growing a girl” into a woman? Is a 40 year old Ndembu male who has not been circumcised a “man”? Why?
5. According to Turner what kind of learning takes place during the liminal phase of rites of passage?
6. Do rites of passage mark biological/physiological changes or sociocultural changes? Why? What’s the difference?

Sept. 20

Review Marinatos 147-200.

Study Questions: The Evidence of the Thera Frescoes

1. What kind of scene is depicted in the Thera frescoes?
2. What do the bleeding foot and the veil of red dots mean?
3. What is the significance of the altar (the niche or portal with the bloody bull horns above it)?
4. Can you relate this scene and the “bull dancing” scenes?
5. What does the monkey mean? Why is a monkey like a bull?

Study Questions: Minoan Religious Ideas and Practices

1. Is Minoan religion an example of monotheism or polytheism? Is this a good question? Are these useful categories? Would it be correct to say that all theistic religions must be either monotheistic or polytheistic? Could you argue that Christianity is a polytheistic religion?
2. The concept of epiphany is important in Minoan religion and in ancient Greek religion more generally. What is an epiphany? What would be evidence for epiphanies or the belief in epiphanies in a particular religion? Marinatos says that the “epiphanies” depicted in Minoan art are “symbolic references to epiphanies . . . depictions of a ritual in which priestesses invoke the goddess but the epiphany is not witnessed, only implied.” Marinatos also discusses “visionary” and “subjective” epiphanies. What other kinds are there? What do you think she means by these categories? In what sense is an epiphany “witnessed”? How can we deal with subjectivity and objectivity when it comes to epiphanies?
3. Why does Marinatos say there was no “bull worship” and no “bull god” in Minoan religion? Do you agree?

4. If the Master of Animals “is in control of nature” and if the goddess in Minoan religion is a goddess of nature, what does that say about the relationship between the god and goddess of Minoan religion?
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#### 4. Cosmogonic Myths

Sept. 25 Hesiod, *Theogony*.

Leach, “Cronus and Chronos,” (*Course Packet*).

Zaidman & Pantel, chapter 12 (pp. 143-169), “Myths and Mythology” (includes “Myth of the Races” listed above); pp. 224-228, “The Representation of Rituals.”

Study Questions: Hesiod’s *Theogony*

Please pay special attention to the following passages:

Pp. 57-58 where Sky hides his children in Earth and Cronos castrates his father Sky.

Pp. 66-67 where Cronos devours his children, is given a stone to swallow by Zeus, and then vomits them all up.

Pp. 68-70 where Prometheus tricks Zeus (explaining the origin of sacrifice) and then steals fire. Zeus responds by giving men “the damnable race of women.”

Pp. 78-79 where Zeus swallows Metis, as she was about to give birth to Athena. Then Zeus gives birth to Athena himself.

Also pay close attention to Zaidman and Pantel’s discussion of a structural approach to myth on pp. 147-151, where they discuss myth as a language or a “semantic code” or a system of symbols that gives us insights into the structures of mentality or thought of people in a culture. Myth for structuralists has a logic, a logic of the concrete, that reveals categories of a culture. Myths provide, according to Levi Strauss, a “logical model capable of overcoming contradictions,” capable of solving problems. They provide a conceptual framework for understanding the world. Think about how all this applies to the *Theogony*.

More specifically, here are some questions to think about:

1. What is the major metaphor or image used in the *Theogony* to express the way things are related to each other?
2. Why is there so much incest in the *Theogony*? What kinds are there? What does it mean?
3. What different kinds of birth are there? What does this mean?

4. What is the meaning of Sky putting his children back inside the “bowels” of Earth? How does he get them in there? What is the meaning of Cronos swallowing, then vomiting his children? Could this have anything to do with Jonah being swallowed by the whale or Little Red Riding Hood being swallowed by the wolf?
5. If a *Theogony* - a myth that is about the birth or origin (*gonos*) of the gods (*theoi*) - is one example of a cosmogony, that is, a myth about the origin and order of the cosmos, how does this myth work to create in the minds of the Greeks a vision of the basic organization and order of the cosmos? What are the principles/categories of organization of the world that are expressed in it?
6. Hesiod wrote this work, as he believed, under the inspiration of the Muses. What kinds of claim does that make about the nature of the text? About authorship? About its authority? About the sources of wisdom?

Sept. 27 Review Hesiod, *Theogony*. Read Brown’s introduction.

Study Questions: See study questions above (Hesiod’s *Theogony*)

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## 5. Gods and Mortals in Homer

Oct. 2 Fate and Magic: Alternative Ways of Dealing with Evil.

Homer, *The Iliad*, Books 1, 7, and 19.

Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft and Magic Among the Azande*, pp. 63-83 (*Course Packet*).

Study Questions: Homeric Religion

1. What is Azande witchcraft? What does the belief in witchcraft do for the Azande?
2. How would the Azande explain the fact that a granary fell and injured someone on a particular day at a particular time? How would you explain the fact that someone died of cancer at a particular age? Do Azande believe in witchcraft, and Americans believe in science?
3. What is the difference between magic, religion, and science?
4. What do the gods do in the world of Homer? What role do they play in human affairs? How can we interpret this role?
5. Two passages we will pay particular attention to in class discussion are:
  - a. Book I, lines 188-218, p. 64. Why did Achilles not kill Agamemnon? What are all the factors/elements/causes that were involved in this process?
  - b. Book 19, lines 85-98. What is Agamemnon trying to do here? How is he trying to do it?

Oct. 4 Rites of Sacrifice.

Review Hesiod, *Theogony*, IX, 510-616 (the Prometheus story), pp. 67-70.

Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 2 and Book 6.

Hubert & Mauss, *Sacrifice*, pp. 9-49 (*Course Packet*).

Zaidman & Pantel, chapter 4, "Rituals" (pp. 27-45), chapter 5, "Religious Personnel" (pp. 46-54), plus "Myths of Sacrifice" (pp. 164-169) and "Representation of Rituals" (pp. 224-228).

Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 107-115.

Study Questions: Sacrifice – in preparation for class please focus particularly on the following:

The story of Prometheus in Hesiod's *Theogony* (Brown p. 69), two passages from Homer's *Iliad*: Book 2, line 402-432 (p. 86 in Lattimore) and Book 23, line 160-183 (p. 454), the following passages in Zaidman and Pantel: 27-45 and 224-228, especially the drawings on pp. 225-226.).

Please bring Lattimore, Hesiod, Zaidman and Pantel, and a copy of the questions below with you to class.

1. What are the different categories of being involved in a sacrifice? What qualities do they have? What does a sacrifice do to them?
  2. What kinds of animals and other materials and implements are involved in sacrifices? What do they mean? What do they do?
  3. What animal body parts are involved in sacrifices? List them all and identify what happens to each one. Why? What does this different treatment of different body parts mean? What's the difference between burning, roasting, and boiling?
  4. Why is the sacrificial knife CONCEALED in the basket of barley grains?
  5. What is the relationship between sacrifices and funerals?
  6. What kinds of sacrifices are there?
  7. In addition to the religious significance of sacrifice that we focus on in this course, what is the economic, nutritional, and political significance of sacrifice?
  8. Did Zeus fall for Prometheus' trick? If Zeus saw through Prometheus' deception, why did he take the portion of the sacrifice that Prometheus wanted him to?
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## 6. Patterns of Religion in the Polis: Civil Religion and The Panathenaia Festival and Procession

Oct. 9 Zaidman & Pantel chapters 8-10 (pp. 80-111); chapter 13 (pp. 176-191); and chapter 14 (pp. 214-228).

Neils, Jennifer, "The Panathenaia: An Introduction" in Neils, *Goddess and Polis*, pp. 12-27 (*Course Packet*).

Barber, E.J.W., "The Peplos of Athena" in Neils, *Goddess and Polis*, pp. 102-117 (*Course Packet*).

### Study Questions: Panathenaia and Civil Religion

1. Do we have a "civil religion" in the United States? How does it work? What is the meaning of the Panathenaia Festival?
  2. Zaidman & Pantel make the statements that in Athens HERMS functioned to structure space and to affirm the "*indissociability of the human and the divine ascendancy over the city's territory.*" They state that *KOUROI* (singular *KOUROS*) represent attributes and values of the divine, such as "the gifts bestowed by the gods on a victor at the games: vitality, youth, speed, strength, virility and beauty" or corresponding virtues of maidens (*KORAI*, singular *KORE*). How do these things work to accomplish these purposes?
  3. A major feature of the Panathenaia was contests or games, traditionally associated with funerals and commemorations of the dead. Take a look at the description of the games that followed the death of Patroclus in the *Iliad* Book 23, line 257-897 (in Lattimore pp. 457-474). How is a funeral like a state festival so that both should have games?
  4. What do athletic games have in common with competitions in singing and playing musical instruments, that both should be included in a state festival?
  5. What seems to be the symbolic significance of the Panathenaic Festival? Can you relate it to the scenes we studied from the Xeste *Adyton* on Minoan-era Thera? What does this say about the state and values associated with women in the civil religion?
  6. Do the questions in this STUDY QUESTIONS SET suggest similar connections with respect to young men and athletics? Young men and music or poetry?
  7. Can the Panathenaic festival be compared to the opening and closing ceremonies of the modern Olympic games, or to the celebrations that would occur in Boston if the Red Sox won the World Series?
  8. What can we learn from the financial and/or economic aspects of the celebrations of the Panathenaic festival?
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## 7. The Cult of Orpheus. Alternative Religion: Ideas About Immortality and the Soul

Oct. 11 Zaidman & Pantel pp. 155-159, “Uncanonical Cosmogonies” and pp 169-175, “When is the Killing of Animals Permissible?” and “Myths of Deviant Sacrifice.”

Plato, Republic, 10,614-end (The Myth of Er) (*Course Packet*).

The Derveni Papyrus (handout).

Orphic Inscriptions (handout).

Study Questions: Orphism

1. How does Orphism differ from the civic religion we have been discussing in the previous units? With regard to (A) its cosmogony and theogony? (b) its view of the proper relationship between animals, humans, and immortals? How is Orphism's alternative posture manifested in its symbol system?
2. What is an Orphic perspective on sacrifice? What “message” is Orphism sending through the “alimentary code”?
3. What was involved in the Orphic way of life? How would a follower of Orpheus have lived? (Here we can draw on what we take to be the similarities between the Orphic and the Pythagorean way of life. See Rice & Stambaugh, p. 163.) What would it have been like to be a follower of Orpheus in ancient Athens? What would you have done as a follower of Orpheus during a sacrifice or during the celebration of the Panathenaic festival?
4. What is a “wind egg”? (Rice & Stambaugh, p. 41)
5. Can you explain the symbolism of the restrictions on the followers of Orpheus and Pythagoras? How was celibacy like vegetarianism? Why is it wrong to eat beans and eggs? Why stay away from mourning and childbirth?
6. Describe Orphic beliefs about life after death. What do the myths of Orpheus and Persephone have in common? What is the significance of the puns and word play involving “SOMA” (meaning “body” and “safe”) and “SEMA” meaning “tomb” and “sign”)?
7. Draw a diagram or sketch of the scene described in the “tale” of the warrior Er in Plato's Myth of Er.

Oct. 16 Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 39-42, 161-164, 229-31, only for Oct. 13. ???

Study Questions: See study questions above (Orphism)

Oct. 16 First paper due in class.

Oct. 17-21 **Fall Recess**

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## 8. Trance and Possession in the Worship of Dionysos

Oct. 22      **(Evening @ 8:00pm)** Audio Performance of the Bacchae (attendance required).

Oct. 23      Zaidman & Pantel chapter 13 (pp. 198-207), “Dionysos: God of Wild Possession,” and chapter 14 (pp. 218-224), “Anthropomorphic Representations of the Gods.”

Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 195-209.

Danforth, *Firewalking and Religious Healing*, Chapter 2 (*Course Packet*).

### Study Questions: Trance and Spirit Possession

1. What is the difference between trance and spirit possession? Have you had any experience with either?
2. In Auburn several years ago a man heard God tell him that his daughter, Angela, was possessed by the devil. He shut her in the oven, turned it on, and killed her. In churches in Lewiston and elsewhere people are “slain in the spirit” by the Holy Spirit and utter the words of God as they “speak in tongues.” What is the difference between the first example and the last two?
3. What does it mean to say “I lost my temper” or “I was overcome by a desire to . . .?”
4. Why do skeptics charge followers of Dionysos with engaging in “orgies” characterized by wild, drunken sexual behavior?
5. In rituals involving spirit possession what are the spirits that possess people? What are they symbols of? What do they mean? What do they do?
6. What are the goals of rituals involving trance and spirit possession? Why do people participate in them? What do they hope will happen? What do they hope to experience?

And from the readings in Rice & Stambaugh and Zaidman & Pantel on Dionysos, here are some further questions to think about.

7. What is “alterity?” (See Z & P, p. 198) Make a list of all the ways Dionysos represents alterity. How is alterity achieved and expressed in the worship of Dionysos?
8. On p. 215, Z & P make the following statement: “The special characteristic of all religious representation is to endow the divinity being figured with a presence without obscuring the fact that it is not actually there.” Do you think this is a valid point?
9. Construct a list of traits and characteristics of the cult of Dionysos as you did for Orphism. With this third column describing the cult of Dionysos we should be able to see how the cult of Dionysos presents an alternative to the civil religion of the polis as the cult of Orpheus does, but how it is simultaneously very different from the cult of Orpheus as well.

10. On page 205, Z & P describe two kinds of madness, controlled madness, or *mania*, and uncontrolled madness, or *lussa*. What is the difference? How can you tell them apart? Can you think of examples of both? How can you make sure you experience *mania* but not *lussa*?

Oct. 25 Euripides, *The Bakkhai*.

Student Questions: Dionysos (Euripides' *Bacchai*)

1. Who would you rather be? A *maenad* (bacchant or worshipper of Dionysos) or one of the *ergastinai* (the women who weave the *peplos*).
2. Who do you identify with? Pentheus or Cadmus? Who would you rather have your wife be? A maenad, or one of the *ergastinai*? Why?
3. Why does Pentheus oppose the worship of Dionysos? Why does he want to go watch the maenads dance?
4. How do you deal with the miracles associated with the worship of Dionysos? Honey and milk gushing from the ground? Fire burning in the maenad's hair, snakes licking their cheeks? The palace collapsing and burning, and the shackles falling off the legs of the imprisoned maenads?
5. Think about the theme of power in the play. What kinds of power are there? Who had power? When? What is the power of Dionysos?
6. Think about the themes of gender, gender roles, and sexuality in the play. What is the gender of Dionysos? What does possession by Dionysos do to a person's gender? What are symbols of sexuality in the play?
7. Could the Bacchae be interpreted as presenting a feminist message?
8. What is implied about the concept of the "self" by the Bacchae and spirit possession rituals more generally? What characters in the play exhibit "alter egos," and what are the 2 egos in these cases?
9. Why were plays performed at festivals of Dionysos? What is the relationship between theater as an art form and the worship of Dionysos?
10. What kinds of sacrifice take place in the Bacchae?
11. How does the play relate to the components of the Dionysiac festivals outlined in the Power Point presentation?
12. What ideas do you find expressed in the Bacchae that represent not alterity but validation of the civil religion and the state?
13. What character(s) in the play represent "the way life ought to be" in Athens?
14. Do you think the civil religion civilized and tamed Dionysos?

## 9. The Other Side of Apollo: Oracles, Shamans and Wonder-Workers

Oct. 30 Maurizio, Lisa, *Delphic Oracles as Oral Performances (Course Packet)*.

Zaidman & Pantel, Chapter 11 (pp. 112-128), on the Delphic Oracle; Chapter 13 (pp. 191-198) on Apollo.

Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 93-106.

Parke, pp. 72-89 (*Course Packet*).

Study Questions: The Delphic Oracle

1. Did the oracle of Apollo at Delphi predict the future or was it concerned with “rubber stamping” (Zaidman & Pantel, p. 128) decisions that had already been made? What do you think of the term “rubber stamping?” Are there other ways to understand the functioning of the oracle?
2. Analyze the symbols associated with the oracle of Apollo at Delphi: the qualities and characteristics of the Pythia herself, the tripod, the *omphalos* (navel of the world), the rock crevasse or fissure that some claim existed under the temple, the crypt under the floor of the temple or the lower inner sanctuary where the Pythia prophesied, the vapour(*pneuma*) that some claim emerged from the fissure and “intoxicated” the Pythia, the laurel leaves, holy water, the goat offered to Apollo that had to tremble as the Pythia did, and the bow and lyre of Apollo.
3. How can humans know the will of a God? How can they hear and interpret the words of a God? In the case of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi who was involved in the process of consulting the oracle? How did the will of Apollo reach its audience? What were the steps between the uttering of the oracle by the Pythia and the decision to act taken in the city state of the person who consulted the oracle?
4. Why did the ancient sources “draw no distinction between the answer as spoken by [the Pythia] and as conveyed by the Prophetes [male priest] (Parke, p. 84)? Why did the ancient sources never indicate whether the inquirer could actually hear what the Pythia said? What do you think she said? Why?
5. What is the relationship between the Pythia and the maenads? Similarities and differences?
6. Why after (in the period following the sixth century) was the Pythia only available for consultation nine days a year?
7. What is the significance of the emergence of panhellenic cults and festivals at Delphi, Olympia and elsewhere?
8. Analyze the following cases involving the consultation of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. What can we learn from them about the function and meaning of the oracle?
  - a. the case where the Athenians consulted the oracle before the invasion of Xerxes and the Persians in 480 BCE (Rice & Stambaugh, p. 100, and Zaidman & Pantel, p. 125).
  - b. The case of Croesus, the King of Lydia (R & S, pp. 93-95 and 99)
  - c. The case of Telesilla (R & S, p. 99).

Nov. 1 Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconnesus* (*Course Packet*).

Levi-Strauss, “The Sorcerer and his Magic,” in *Structural Anthropology*, pp. 161-180 (*Course Packet*).

Study Questions: Shamanism and Apollo

1. Can shamans cure diseases? Can they heal illnesses? What is the difference?
2. If shamanistic healing does work, how does it work? What does a shaman's "performance" do? What is the relationship between a shaman's performance and his life history or career, on one hand, and the life of the shaman's patient on the other?
3. Are shamans mentally ill? Crazy? Neurotic?
4. On p. 174 Levi-Strauss writes "Quesalid did not become a great shaman because he cured his patients; he cured his patients because he had become a great shaman." Do you agree?
5. On p. 170 Levi-Strauss concludes his account of one of Quesalid's healing ceremonies with the statement "The sick woman then declares herself cured." What is the difference between this statement and the statement "The sick woman is then cured."?
6. What is the relationship between religious healing, on the one hand, and religious salvation or conversion, on the other? Think about the verses of the song "Amazing Grace:" "I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see."
7. What is the relationship between shamanistic healing and psychoanalysis? Can you think of aspects of mainstream western biomedicine that are similar to shamanistic practices? Can you think of "alternative medical practices" in the United States that are similar to shamanistic practices?
8. What is a "scientific explanation" of the things Aristeas did? What is a "religious explanation?" What is the meaning of the stories told about Aristeas?
9. What is the attitude of Bolton (the classicist who wrote the 1962 book we are reading) toward Aristeas? What is yours?
10. What is the relationship between Aristeas and Apollo? What is the relationship between the body and the soul in the world of Aristeas? What is the relationship between Aristeas and the Pythia? Between Aristeas and the maenads?
11. What do we learn from the stories of Aristeas about power and wisdom in ancient Greek culture?
12. (Quoting from a text Bolton cites on p. 124) do you think Aristeas was suffering from a "disease of self-importance" or did he possess a divine gift? What determines whether Aristeas and people like him earn contempt or honor?

Nov. 6

Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (Course Packet).

Study Questions: Apollonius of Tyana

1. Pick your favorite story from the *Life of Apollonius* and be ready to summarize and analyze it focusing on the nature of the illness or disease involved, the process of healing or curing, and the symbolism involved.
2. What aspects of the way of life adopted by Apollonius are relevant to our understanding of his work? What do you make of Apollonius' name?

3. Book VIII, Chapter VII: What is Apollonius charged with? By whom? Why are these charges leveled against him? Why do they make sense in a way? How does Apollonius defend himself against the charges? What is Apollonius' relationship to mortals and to immortals? How did Apollonius avert the plague in Ephesus?
4. Book VI, Chapter XXV, p.10: A *lamia* is a female cannibal monster that devours children and drinks men's blood when they are asleep. Analyze the symbolism in this story. What do lamias, serpents, vampires, and the other apparitions and phantoms in the story mean? What are Apollonius and the lamia fighting over? What is Apollonius' view of Menippus' marriage? What does this story have to say about gender, romantic love, the power of women? Is homosexuality relevant to the story? How?
5. Book VI, Chapter XLIII, p. 11: How did Apollonius heal the young man? What supernatural powers did he display in the process? Analyze the symbolism of the healing process. Why did the young man behave like a dog? Why did Apollonius have the dog lick the young man's wound?
6. Book III, Chapter XXXVIII: How did Apollonius and the mother diagnose the young man's problems? How would you? Did Apollonius heal him? How? Why does the story end when it does?
7. Book III, Chapter XXVIX, p. 8: How was the woman who had suffered through seven births healed? Analyze the symbolism of the story; what change in social relationships did the woman experience?
8. Book IV, Chapter XXP: What was Apollonius' diagnosis of the young man? What was the diagnosis other people offered? How are the two related? How did Apollonius heal the man? What are the relationships between Apollonius and the devil? The devil and the young man? Apollonius and the young man? What kind of change did the young man undergo when he was healed? Analyze the symbolism of this change.

## 10. Panhellenic Cults: The Cult of Asclepius: Dreams and Ritual Therapy in Ancient Greece

Nov. 8 Zaidman & Pantel, chapter 6 (pp. 55-62), "Places of Cult," and chapter 11 (pp. 128-132) "Panhellenic Cults" and "Epidauros: The Healing powers of Asklepios."

Crapanzano, "Saints, Jnun, and Dreams" (*Course Packet*).

Levi-Strauss, "The Effectiveness of Symbols," (*Course Packet*).

### Study Questions: Asklepios

1. What were the taboos (ritual prohibitions) governing behavior at the sanctuary of Asclepius? Analyze them.
2. Zaidman & Pantel (p. 131) present various interpretations that archaeologists have offered for how the basement of the tholos tomb at the sanctuary of Asclepius in Epidauros was used. What are they? Which do you find the most convincing? Why? Can you suggest others?

3. The snake can be considered a dominant symbol (to use Victor Turner's term) in the cult of Asclepius. What does it mean? Why is it a powerful symbol of Asclepius?
4. What was the procedure suppliants followed when they traveled to Epidaurus to be healed by Asclepius? What does it mean? Why is it a powerful symbol of Asclepius?
5. Levi-Strauss presents an account of a shaman's treatment of a woman having a difficult childbirth.
  - a. According to the Cuna people of Panama what is the cause of the woman's problem? What, in other words, is the shaman's diagnosis?
  - b. What does the shaman do to solve the problem and heal the woman?
  - c. How does Levi-Strauss analyze and explain the shaman's healing? How are symbols effective in the process of shamanic healing?

Nov. 13      Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 69-80.

Edelstein & Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (Course Packet).

Study Questions: Testimonia and Healing

1. As you read through the Testimonies pick one or two that really interest you and analyze the symbolism in them.
2. What aspect of the Cuna shaman's healing described by Levi-Strauss can be understood as parallel to these testimonies? How are these testimonies part of the healing process itself?
3. (Testimony # 30) Where in your opinion did the arrow point come from that Gorgias held his hand when he left the sanctuary? Is this a useful question for an anthropologist to ask? What do we learn from our answer?
4. (# 3 and 4) What do you notice about the narrative structure of these accounts? Why was the man whose fingers were healed given a new name? If his new name were translated "Doubting" instead of "Incredulous," can you think of parallels with accounts of healing by another shaman?
5. (#17) What happened in the patient's dream? What *really* happened (from the patient's perspective)? What *really* happened (from your perspective)?
6. (# 39 and 42) What does "thereupon" mean in #39? Who was the father of the children born later?
7. (#36, 22, 11, and 6 and 7) What do we learn about Asclepius' powers from these accounts? What do we learn about the relationship between Asclepius and humans?
8. (#33) What do we learn about the relationship between individual healing and the spread of the cult of Asclepius?
9. (#33) The Delphic Oracle was normally consulted whenever a new cult was to be founded. Why? How does this Panhellenic sanctuary relate to the role of individual healing in the spread of the cult of Asclepius? How is the approval of the Delphic Oracle related to the collection and display of testimonia? Do you think that the officials at the Delphic Oracle felt in control of the spread of this cult?

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## 11. Panhellenic Cults: The Eleusinian Mysteries

Nov. 15 Leach, "Time and False Noses" (*Course Packet*).

Zaidman & Pantel, Chapter 7 (pp. 63-79), "Rites of Passage."

Mylonas, *Eleusis*, pp. 224-243 (*Course Packet*).

Study Questions: Eleusinian Mysteries

1. What are the component parts of rites of passage? How do they work? What do they accomplish?
2. Think about some rites of passage that you have participated in. What effect have they had on you?
3. What are the qualities of liminal things? How can they be both sacred and disgusting?
4. What does it mean to describe a female initiation rite as "growing a girl" into a woman? Is a 40 year old Ndembu male who has not been circumcised a "man"? Why?
5. According to Turner what kind of learning takes place during the liminal phase of rites of passage?
6. Identify an example of a rite of passage from among the various forms of Greek religion that we have studied this semester. How does Turner's model apply to that example?

Nov. 17-25 **Thanksgiving Recess**

Nov. 27 "The Hymn to Demeter," in Sargent, *The Homeric Hymns* (*Course Packet*), or in Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 171-183.

Zaidman & Pantel, chapter 11 (pp. 132-140), "The Eleusinian Mysteries."

Mylonas, pp. 243-285 (*Course Packet*).

Rice & Stambaugh, pp. 184-193.

Study Questions: Eleusinian Mysteries

1. Analyze the celebration of the *Greater Mysteries* as a rite of passage:
  - Identify as many points of separation, liminality, and incorporation as possible.
  - Identify as many symbols of separation, liminality, and incorporation as possible.
  - Identify as many liminal periods and points of passage as you can.

Remember that Leach's model of rites of passage can be applied in many different ways to any one ritual; i.e., there are many points of separation and incorporation and many liminal periods in any one ritual.

2. Mylonas (p. 230) states the high priest of the cult of Demeter at Eleusis, the *Hierophant* (the person who shows or reveals sacred things), “was a *hieronymos*” (that is, he was a cultic functionary who had a sacred name) and that “especially during Roman times his personal name could not be spoken.” Why do you think that was the case? What does that practice mean? Can you relate it to other aspects of the Eleusinian mysteries?
3. What did people get out of being initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries? What did it do for them? How did they benefit?
4. There are several hypotheses about what was “shown” or “revealed” at the climax of the Greater Mysteries. What are they? Which one do you find more persuasive? Why?
5. What do the following components of the rite mean?
  - a. the washing and sacrifice of the pig on the second day.
  - b. the *krokosis*, which took place at the bridge at Rheitoi on the fifth day.
  - c. the *gephyrismoi*, which took place at the bridge over the Kephisos in Eleusis also on the fifth day
6. What is the relationship between the *Hymn to Demeter* and the rites of initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries? Can this relationship be compared to the relationship between the account of the Last Supper in the New Testament and the modern Christian rite of communion?
7. What is the relationship between the initiates and Demophoon, the son of Metaneira in the *Hymn to Demeter*?
8. Why did Zeus give his consent when Hades took Persephone down into the underworld? Does this account represent the event as a rape or a marriage?

## 12. Conversion and Salvation

Nov. 29 Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, chapters 1-10 (pp. 1-161).

Dec. 4 Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, chapters 11-appendix (pp. 162-293).

### Study Questions: *The Golden Ass*

1. Think of some things that are disgusting and polluting because they are liminal.
2. Think of some things that are monstrous because they are liminal.
3. Think of some things that are sacred because they are liminal.
4. How does the concept of liminality help us understand *The Golden Ass*?
5. Sex, love and romance figure prominently in *The Golden Ass*. What do we learn from the book about love and sex as they were understood by Lucius and members of his society? How was the power that love and sex hold over people understood in this world?

6. Make a list of all the animals into which humans are transformed in the story. Analyze these animals as symbols. What do they mean?
7. Think about the roles that magic and witchcraft play in the book. Who uses magic against whom? Why? What roles do magic and witchcraft play in Lucius' world?
8. What kind of person was Lucius before his conversion? What was his personal philosophy or world view? How did he explain things that happened to him and the people around him?
9. What was Lucius' conversion experience like? What were the symbols associated with it? Analyze his conversion experience as a rite of passage; what do we learn about religious conversion from the story?
10. What kind of person did Lucius become after his conversion? How did he change? How did his world and the things that make it up change?

Dec. 6          Discussion.

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### **Course Requirements**

**Two short papers on topics of your choice. Each paper is 33% of the course grade.**

The paper should be 4-5 pages long and should examine in depth a very narrow and specific subject in light of the theoretical ideas and anthropological approaches studied in class. It is essential that you present an original analysis of some literary text, ritual, artwork or archaeological site. It is also essential that in doing so you make explicit use of one of the theoretical readings we have done (Geertz, Turner, Levi Strauss). Use the theoretical approach to “get beneath the surface” of the text or ritual and offer some interpretation of their meaning that would not have been available to you without it.

### **Your papers should include the following elements:**

- I. An introduction.
- II. A brief description of the text or other subject (for example, a ritual, an art work, or a building or site) that you chose for analysis.
- III. A clear and explicit statement of the method or theoretical perspective you plan to adopt in which you state why that method is appropriate to the subject and define clearly the important terms and concepts you use.
- IV. The analysis. The most important part of your paper is the actual analysis itself, in which you apply the theory to the text (or other subject of analysis) in order to offer an interpretation of what it means. This is what we do in class day by day throughout the semester, so the approaches taken in class should provide you with models for your papers. For example, you could analyze Achilles' claim that Athena prevented him from attacking Agamemnon using Evans-Prichard's discussion of causality or analyze one of the miraculous cures attributed to Apollonius or Asclepius using Levi-Strauss' insights into religious healing.
- V. A conclusion in which you summarize both your findings and how the theoretical approach adopted has led to insight about the meaning of the subject that you chose.

**Final Exam – (33% of course grade)**

The final exam will include short answer questions (identifications of names, concepts and terms) as well as essays on more general topics, one of which may be circulated in advance to facilitate advance preparation. Special arrangements will be made for students with diagnosed learning disabilities who need extra time for exams.

**Class Attendance and Participation**

Regular and valuable contribution to class discussion will raise your grade. Poor attendance will lower it.

**Please note these matters of common courtesy in class**

Students are expected to refrain from wandering in and out of the classroom for personal reasons during class sessions and to turn off their cell phones before the start of class. Cell phones are not allowed in the classroom during exams.

**Due Dates**

First short paper:     October 16  
Second short paper:   November 27  
Final Exam:            Wednesday, 10:30am

**All students are reminded that they are responsible for reading and understanding the Bates College statements on academic honesty, crediting of sources, and plagiarism.**