

USEM27a: *Ancient Mysteries, Cults, and Myths* Spring 2009
Patricia A. Johnston, Department of Classical Studies
MW 2-3:30 pm, Olin-Sang 112
Syllabus

The Ancient Mysteries were so-named from the Greek word, *mystes*, which means "initiate." Membership in the various cults was based on initiation into rituals and doctrines which were kept secret from the outside world, and hence much that we know about them comes from related myths. In this course we will examine these cults and their related myths as revealed in literature and art, and consider the degree to which many of these cults' practices persist in the modern world. We will begin by studying the phenomenon of Mystery Cults generally, and then proceed to the art and literature through which we know of particular cults. We will first examine the phenomenon of a cult, and then consider later reflections of the practices, principles, etc.—to the extent we can identify them—in later organization, religions, or general beliefs. Students will make presentations in class on given assignments, and then will choose a particular cult to research and write a paper about, which they will present in class.

Primary Course Goals: The purpose of this course is to open students' minds to a range of religious beliefs which are far removed from modern experience, yet influence modern religion in subtle ways. Ancient cults embody many of the roots of our behaviors and beliefs, yet can be dealt with objectively and hence open the students' minds to examining their own mode of thought about things sacred. Students will examine certain of these cults and then make oral presentations in class about them and discuss whether—and to what extent they have an impact in the modern world. The extended bibliography is intended to assist students preparing their oral and final presentations.

Course Requirements: One critical essay (6-10 pages) presented orally and discussed in class, one midterm identifying the various gods and their related cults, and a final exam.

Grading: Papers 40% (20 % each); midterm 20%; final exam 20%; active participation 20%.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a suitable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

R. Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, Oxford 1996.
M. W. Meyer (ed.), *The Ancient Mysteries: a Sourcebook*, San Francisco 1987.

SCHEDULE

- Jan 14 W Introduction
19 M *No Class - Martin Luther King Day*
20 T (= *Monday schedule*) The Eleusinian Mysteries--Demeter and Persephone. Meyer 15-32
21 W Meyer 32-46
26 M Andanian Mysteries of Messenia (Greece)
28 W "
- Feb 2 M - 11 W: Magna Mater/Cybele: The Great Mother (Cybele/Kubebe) and Attis. Compare Diana/Artemis; Demeter, and Cybele. Meyer 111-54; Turcan 28-74.
4 W "
9 M "
11 W "
16 M *Feb. 16--20 N Classes*
23 M 25 W: The Egyptian cults: Isis, Zeus-Serapis; Fortuna. Meyer 155-197; Turcan 75-129.
25 W
- Mar 2 M - 4 W: A comparison of Mother goddess figures in the mystic context (Demeter, Isis, Cybele; Diana): Film: Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute*
4 W "
9 M **Midterm**
11 W Dionysus and Orpheus Film: Euripides: *Bacchae*; Meyer 61-64.
16 M Meyer 65-99;
18 W "
23 M Dionysus and Sabazius, Turcan 291-327
25 W "
30 M Mithras. Turcan, pp. 195-247; Meyer, pp. 197-222.
- Apr 1 W
6 M Syrian deities: Dea Syria, Baal, Jupiter Heliopolis and Dolichenus. Turcan
8 W Horsemen gods; mothers of Ephesus, and Serpents. Turcan
13 M *No Classes April 9-16*
20 M Mysteries of Judaism and Christianity. Meyer 223-251; 252-54.
22 W "
27 M "
29 W *Last Day of Classes*
- May (1-8) Exams Block K

ON RESERVE IN THE LIBRARY:

General:

- A. Baring and J. Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*, London 1991.
R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery Religions*, Pittsburgh 1978.
A. D. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, 2 vols., Oxford 1972.
A. Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews and Christians*, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan U.P. 1987.

Eleusis:

- G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Princeton 1961.
H. Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.

Isis:

- R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, Ithaca, 1971.
F.C. Babbitt, trans., *Plutarch's Moralia, Vol. V: Isis and Osiris*, Cambridge and London

Cybele:

- M. J. Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis: the Myth and the Cult*, London: Thames and Hudson 1977.
L. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*, 1999.
Eugene N. Lane, ed., *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults*, Leiden 1996.

Mithras:

- F. Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, London: Kegan Paul 1903.
M. J. Vermaseren, *Mithras, the Secret God*, London: Chatto and Windus 1963.
R. Beck, "Mithraism since F. Cumont," *ANRW* II.17, 4 (1984) 2002-2115.
R. Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders in the Mysteries of Mithras*, Leiden: Brill 1988 (EPRO 109).
D. Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*, Oxford 1991.

Dionysus:

- M. P. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*, Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup 1957.
W. F. Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, trans. R. B. Palmer, Bloomington 1965.
M. Tacheva-Hitova, *Eastern Cults in Moesia Inferior and Thracia (5th Century BC-4th Century AD)*, Leiden 1983 (EPRO 88).
D. Tudor, *Corpus Monumentorum Religionis Equitum Danuviorum (CMRED), II: The Analysis and Interpretation of the Monuments*, Leiden 1976.

Sabazius:

M. J. Vermaseren, *The Hands, Corpus Cultus Iovis Sabazii (CCIS), I*, Leiden 1983. (BL 325 .H75 V47 19983.)

E. N. Lane, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Sabazii (CCIS), III: Conclusions*, Leiden 1989.

S. E. Johnson, "The Present State of Sabazius Research," *ANRW* II. 17,3 (1984) 1583-1613.

Orpheus:

A. N. Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns: Text, Translation and Notes*, Missoula, Mont. 1977.

W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, London 1935; reissued Princeton 1993.

M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems*, Oxford 1983.

OTHER SOURCES:

General:

B. Metzger, "A Classified Bibliography of the Graeco-Roman Mystery Religions 1924-73, with supplement 1974-77," in *ANRW* II.17,3 (1984), 1259-1423.

A. Faraone, D. Obbink (eds.), *magika hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, Oxford 1991

ON INDIVIDUAL CULTS:

Eleusis:

G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Princeton 1961.

H. Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.

Isis:

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (most translations). (sometimes titled: *Metamorphosis*)

J. Gwyn Griffiths, ed., *Apuleius of Madauros: The Isis-Book*, Leiden 1975.

Cybele:

M. J. Vermaseren, *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque (CCCA) (EPRO 50):* Volumes I – VI.

G. Thomas, "Magna Mater and Attis," *ANRW* II.17, 3, 1500-1535.

[Note: *ANRW* volumes: DG 209 T36]

Note: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, Zurich: Artemis 1981. vols. 1-7 (2 parts per volume). Available in Goldfarb Art Library Reference Room