

**PAGANS, CHRISTIANS AND JEWS:
RELIGION AND CULTURE IN LATE ANTIQUITY**

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This is a course which studies the development of various religious traditions within late antiquity. We begin briefly with the classical Greek world and the Persian Empire – the two superpowers in the world around 600-400 BCE. This struggle between Greeks and Persians greatly impacted the Middle East and Mediterranean world and prompted the East's on-going encounter with Hellenistic culture and beliefs. This was the world which produced the Monotheistic traditions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. But it was also the world which became increasingly important for Greco-Roman and Persian powers. These empires struggled to maintain control of this part of the ancient world. For most of this course the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East were claimed by Rome. The Romans referred to the Mediterranean as "our Sea." Rome's "pagan" world was to merge with the traditions of the east. This combination of conflict and assimilation produced what we think of in the West as Christianity and Judaism.

The history of this period is part and parcel of understanding the vast and varied religious and cultural developments. The contestation between first Greece, then Rome and finally "new Rome" or the Byzantine Empire, with Persia, Parthia and then Sassanid empires was precisely the context which gave rise to the three great Monotheistic traditions of the east. We will cover these developments and this history this semester.

There are two in-class quizzes and two mid-length (8-10 pages) papers in this course. They are of equal value. Paper topics and bibliographies must be approved by me. Prior to each paper deadline I will hand out possible paper topics. Below is a working outline of the course.

Aug. 28-Sept.4;

Introduction, requirements, issues and arguments which form the course;

The Middle East in the Persian period (595-333 BCE); Athens during this period; the "Golden Age" Of Athenian politics and expansion; the Persian empire – the other Superpower; Zoroastrianism
Judith; Ezekiel; Daniel; Isaiah chapter 40; Psalm 137

Sept. 9-18:

Texts from and about Babylon; captivity and redemption

The construction and ideology of *one world* (oikoumene); Alexander and the forging of a global Empire; Stoic notions, Greek colonialism, language, image, art and architecture; the polis; the Greeking of the world. **I and II Maccabees; The Letter of Aristeas; Documents from Qumran**

Sept. 23-30:

The collapse of Alexander's empire; the Ptolemies and Seleucids; the collapse of the Seleucid empire;

The Hasmoneans and the Maccabean revolt; embrace of and resistance to Hellenism; Hasmonean high Priests and Kings/client lords; Qumran and the DSS; enter Rome; The enemy of my enemy...; Persian resurgence and Roman concern **MacMullen, PAGANISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE**

Oct. 2-9:

The world Rome and Greco-Roman paganism inherited; Rome's idea of world-rule; *imperium*; uniting the world through religion, cult; unity and diversity In Greco-Roman paganism; The late Roman Republic and early Empire; the Roman Emperor; local cults; family/domestic deities; civic gods and goddesses; global deities; *invocation*; a world full of gods; review for quiz; Possible Paper topics.

Oct. 14 – Mid-term in-class exam

Oct. 21-30:

Second Temple Judaism; Galilee and Judea under Rome; Jewish Revolts; Romanization and Urbanization of Palestine, Jordan and Levant; The Herodians; Jewish reactions to Rome and the Fall of Jerusalem; Jesus and Judaisms; **Flavius Josephus; The Gospel of Mark; the Book of Revelation; Gospel of Matthew**

FIRST PAPER DUE OCT. 30

Nov. 4:

Judaism outside of Palestine; diaspora realities; Sardis, Rome, Aphrodisias, Alexandria et al; Goyim/Gentiles; **Paul's Letter to the Romans; Jewish Manumission inscriptions; Philo of Alexandria**

Nov. 6-11:

The rise and development of Rabbinic Judaism from c.100-400 CE; J. Neusner, **The Economics of the Mishna; Pirke Avot; Tractate Berakot**

Nov. 13-25:

The Christianization of the empire; the embrace of Church and empire; Christian anti-Semitism; the angst of the empire over Christianity; the problems with exclusivity; Pliny to Trajan; Perpetua's Passion; Architectural Supersessionism; the "conversion of Constantine; a Christian empire; new Rome, old struggles; Constantinople and Ctesiphon – the Christian empire and the Sassanid empire; prelude of the rise of Islam; a whirlwind from the desert; **MacMullen, Christianizing the Roman empire A.D. 100-400; Pliny to Trajan; Perpetua; Architectural supersessionism; the Life of Constantine; the House of Khusro; Justinian; Acts of the Apostles chps. 10-ff.;**

Dec. 2-4;

The Byzantine world; Sassanid struggles; the deterioration of the empire in late antiquity; the fall of Rome; the weakening of new Rome; a threatened Constantinople; iconoclasm; "Revolt in the Desert," and the rise of Islam.

Dec. 4 – In-class Quiz

Second paper due Dec. 11