

CS 3210G

Ancient Greek Religion



Syllabus
Winter 2027

Instructor: Dr. Gino Canlas
Department of Classical Studies
University of Western Ontario

Instructor

My name is Dr. Gino Canlas and I started at Western in 2024. Please call me Gino. I have been a field archaeologist in Greece since 2009 and I specialize in the archaeology of Greek sanctuaries from the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods. I work predominantly in the region of Thessaly. Please feel free to email me or come to my office with any questions about the course or the Classical World in general.

Email: gcanlas@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Lawson 3211, MW 14:00-15:00 or by appointment

Course Description

Technically speaking, there was not one single, unified system called “Greek religion,” but a spectrum of diverse but related belief systems and practices, without a core doctrine, a canon of sacred texts, a professional clergy, or a central authority. The Greeks did not even have an all-encompassing equivalent for our modern word “religion”. In this class, we will study what we know about what we call “Greek religion” and how we know it, focusing on the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods (750 – 30 BC). In this class, we will study the Greek relationships with the divine, their rituals, practices, festivals, sacred sites, and the roles played by all of these in ancient Greek society.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, successful students will:

- 1) Defamiliarize themselves with modern conceptions of Greek religion.
- 2) Have acquired a strong foundational knowledge of the diversity of Greek religious practices.
- 3) Be familiar with the roles of “religion” in ancient Greek society.
- 4) Acquire a comprehensive understanding of the textual and material evidence for Greek religion and be able to analyze these materials.
- 5) Be conversant in the theoretical discourse in religious studies as applies to ancient Greece.

Assessment Details

Midterm	20%	(March 19)
Final Exam	25%	(To be scheduled by the university)
Assignment 1	15%	(Feb 24)
Assignment 2	15%	(March 29)
Term Paper	25%	(April 9)

Course Materials

Kearns, Emily. 2009. *Ancient Greek Religion: A Sourcebook*. Wiley-Blackwell Publishing (around \$75)

Ogden, Daniel (ed.). 2007. *A Companion to Greek Religion*. Blackwell Publishing. (Available online through Weldon Library)

Various chapters, articles, and primary sources not in the textbooks will also be posted on OWL Brightspace.

Technical Requirements

This course will be conducted entirely in person. However, you will need access to a computer and the internet to access the course website on OWL for course materials and notices. All midterms and exams will be handwritten.

Term Paper (25%)

You will write a 2000-2500 word argumentative essay (8-10 pages). You will come up with a research question and I do not want these to answer a yes-or-no question, especially a question to which you already know the answer; rather, your questions should answer “how?” or “why?”. **DO NOT choose a mythological topic.** I want you to pick a topic that is related to the performative aspects of religion (e.g. ritual, sacrifice, offerings, prayer, sanctuaries, cult, etc.) or the history of religion (e.g. challenging certain approaches in the discipline, the development of trends, etc.). Students will be expected to come up with and propose a topic by February at the latest and work on the paper gradually until the end of term. The professor will offer guidance on the paper throughout the term. More information on the paper is posted will be posted on OWL. Please come to one of my office hours to discuss a potential topic.

Assignment 1: Annotated Bibliography (15%)

You will create an annotated bibliography consisting of five bibliographical entries. The purpose of the Annotated Bibliography is to get you started on your research. I will provide feedback on the feasibility of your topic and suggest other works you can use in your paper.

Of the five works in this bibliography, **TWO** must be **physical books** from Weldon. None of the five works can be either of your textbooks. These bibliographical entries must be secondary sources, i.e. they cannot be, for example, Homer’s *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, any of Plato’s works, etc. You can use these in the paper but not in your annotated bibliography. The beginning of your annotated bibliography should have a brief description of your research topic in a couple of sentences. The question does not yet need to be fully fleshed out. For each bibliographical entry, I want you to write up to three sentences on how each source contributes to the research question you want to answer.

You must use the citation style I provided on OWL because I want you to learn how the different parts of a bibliographic entry work. You must use footnotes, not in-text citations, using the Footnote function on a word-processing program. You will use the same citation style in your term paper. More specific instructions will be posted on OWL Brightspace.

Assignment 2: Creative Assignment (15%)

Create your own cult for a Greek deity that you invented. To get started, I want you to consider what rituals would be performed for this deity. What offerings or sacrifices does one give this deity? What festivals are held for them? Where in the world is this deity worshipped? What sacred spaces are appropriate for this deity?

Keeping those questions in mind, you will create some sort of representation of that cult in any creative form you wish. This can be, for example, a physical artwork, an ArcGIS StoryMap, an Instagram account, etc. You will submit a 300- to 500-word explanation of what you submitted. You will be marked on how well you incorporated the concepts you learned in class into your creation. It should not be heavily focused on mythology.

Midterm (20%)

There will be one 45-minute in-class exam for this course on March 19 worth 20%. It will mostly be definition and identification questions to test your understanding of the terminology and main themes of what we have covered in the course up to that point. There will not be any essay questions and there will be no surprises in terms of questions.

Final (25%)

There will be a final exam to be scheduled by the university in April. It is worth 25%. It will contain a section of definition and identification questions, similar to the midterm; this section will not be cumulative. There will also be an essay question, for which you will have a choice between several topics. The essay section will be cumulative and is meant to test you on the broader themes of the course.

POLICIES

Email Policy

I aim to respond to student emails within two business days. That means an email sent to me on Friday afternoon may not receive a reply until Tuesday afternoon. If you have received no reply after two working days, please send me an email or find me in my office. **I will, furthermore, not respond to emails concerning assignments in the 24 hours before an assignment is due.** Exceptions will only be made in case of a personal emergency (a plane crashed on your house and destroyed your assignment, a drug dealer stole your kidneys, etc.). Please include "CS 3210G" in the subject headings of your email so that it is easier for me to find in the event your email gets lost in my inbox.

Recording Policy

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with prior written consent of the professor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content creator.

Statement on the Use of Generative AI

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools and LLM exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to

synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration; however, students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. Assignments should reflect the students' own thoughts and independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and allows them to produce original written contributions.

Electronic Devices

No aids are permitted for the exams. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.

Absences

Please see the Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs: https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf.

The midterm is designated as an assessment that requires formal supporting documentation in requests for Academic Consideration. Please use the Student Absence Portal to request a make-up midterm.

Missed Coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage: https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline. All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make **one** Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the final exam and midterm are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm. Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”

https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services>.

A Guide to Your Readings

In the course schedule below, you will find the readings for each week listed. They are marked M, W, or F for Monday, Wednesday, or Friday.

If a reading is marked “Kearns”, it refers to *Ancient Greek Religion: A Sourcebook*, which you should have purchased at the university bookstore. The numbers for each of the Kearns readings are not page numbers but section numbers. This book is a compilation of various ancient Greek primary sources (historical, epigraphic, philosophical, literary, etc.) and Kearns provides some commentary for each ancient passage she cites. I want you to read both the ancient passages and the commentary.

If a reading is marked “Ogden”, it refers to *A Companion to Greek Religion*, which is an edited volume available as an eBook through the Weldon Library website. Purchasing it is not needed. I will post these readings as PDFs on OWL as well, but in case any of these readings are missing from OWL due to my own negligence, you can find these readings via Weldon. This book is an edited volume, meaning that each chapter is written by a different author, but edited by Daniel Ogden.

Every once in a while, I will also post readings not in your textbook. Those will all be uploaded to OWL. Our classes will sometimes fall behind in our readings, and sometimes we will be slightly ahead of the readings. Adjust what you need to read accordingly.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings
Week 1 (Jan 4, 6, 8)	Introduction to Ancient Greek Religion	W: Osborne, "Unity vs. Diversity" (on OWL) F: Ogden: "Greek Religion and the Ancient Near East" (Noegel).
Week 2 (Jan 11, 13, 15)	The Gods I	M: Ogden, "Olympian Gods, Olympian Pantheon" (Dowden) W: Ogden, "Heroes and Hero-Cults" (Ekroth) F: Parker, "The Early History of Hero-Cult" (OWL)
Week 3 (Jan 18, 20, 22)	The Gods II	M: Kearns: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.5 W: Parker, "Analysing Greek Gods" (OWL) F:
Week 4 (Jan 25, 27, 29)	Rituals I	M: Ogden: "Greek Normative Animal Sacrifice" (Bremmer) W: Parker, "Killing, Dining, Communicating" (OWL) F: Ogden: "Prayers and Hymns" (Furley)
Week 5 (Feb 1, 3, 5)	Rituals II	M: Kearns 3.1 W: Kearns: 5.2, 5.5, 5.6 F: Bremmer, <i>Greek Religion</i> , pp. 38-51 (OWL)
Week 6 (Feb 8, 10, 12)	Priests, Priestesses, and Ritual Personnel/Experts	M: Kearns: 4.2, 5.4 W: LSAM 73; Pl. <i>Leg.</i> 759 (OWL) F: Parker, "Religion without a Church" (OWL)
(Feb 15, 17, 19)	READING WEEK	
Week 7 (Feb 22, 24, 26)	Sanctuaries I Assignment 1 due Feb 24	M: Ogden: "A Day in the Life of a Greek Sanctuary" (Dignas) W: Pedley, Chapter 1 (OWL) F: Kearns: 5.1
Week 8 (Mar 1, 3, 5)	Sanctuaries II	M: Burkert, <i>Greek Religion</i> , pp. 84-95 (OWL) W: Kearns: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 F: Kearns: 6.4, 6.5
Week 9 (Mar 8, 10, 12)	Festivals and Calendars	M: Ogden: "Festivals" (Scullion) W: Kearns: 5.1 F: Parker, "The Experience of Festivals"
Week 10 (Mar 15, 17, 19)	Rites of Passage Midterm Mar 19	M: Ogden: "Women, Religion, and the Home" (Morgan) W: Kearns: 5.6.2
Week 11 (Mar 22, 24)	Death and Burial No class Mar 26	M: Ogden: "The Dead" (Felton) W: Kearns: 3.3

Week 12 (Mar 29, 31, Apr 2)	Magical Practices Assignment 2 due Mar 29	W: Ogden: "Magic in Classical and Hellenistic Greece" (Dickie)
Week 13 (Apr 5, 7, 9)	Mystery Cults Term Paper due Apr 9	M: Ogden: "The Mysteries of Demeter and Kore" (Clinton)