



AHPG822

Studies in Ancient Society: Hellenistic Religions

S2 Evening 2014

Ancient History

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Christopher Forbes

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W6A 536

TBD

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MA in (Ancient History or Coptic Studies or ECJS or Egyptology or History or Late Antiquity or Ancient Art and Architecture) or PGDipArts in (Ancient History or ECJS) or PGCertArts in (Ancient History or Coptic Studies)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit examines continuity and change in Greek religion in the period after the conquests of Alexander the Great. Themes to be investigated include: ancient and modern concepts of 'religion', the social shape of religious practice, the social function/s of religion, the 'internationalisation' of religion, and the relationship between cult and personal belief. Topics to be discussed: Oracles; ruler cult; 'Euhemerism'; private cults; official civic cults; Magic and subversive religion; the cult of Tyche; Sarapis, Isis and the new international cults; Hellenistic Mysteries; Forms of Judaism as Hellenistic religions; Pauline Christianity; Plutarch and the alignment of religion and philosophy.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

The student will: learn from a variety of ancient text types, and from archaeological and other forms of evidence, about the varieties of Hellenistic religious practice and belief; relate these text types and other forms of evidence to their contemporary Graeco-Roman

historical and cultural environment, in terms of both form and content;
demonstrate a broad comprehension of a range of ancient world-views and cultural concepts;
show an awareness of both the selectivity and the complexity of ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
conduct independent research on a number of chosen topics at an advanced level;
engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;
formulate an independent view in dialogue with a wide range of both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

General Assessment Information

In order to complete the Unit, you must *both* (a) achieve a grade of 50% overall, *and* (b) submit *each* of the three pieces of assessable work.

All written assessment tasks (Annotated Bibliography and Precis, First Essay and Second Essay) are to be submitted **via Turnitin**, using the links to be found in the appropriate week's panel of the Unit iLearn page (as detailed for each assignment, above).

Late assignments will normally be penalised at the rate of 2% per day, unless prior arrangements have been made with your Tutor. If your assignment is going to be late, please contact your Tutor *in advance!* In case of major disruption to your study schedule, see the **Disruption to Study Policy** in the section of this Unit Guide on **Policies and Procedures**.

Here are some suggested essay topics: variations, or others altogether, can be negotiated.

What kinds of changes, philosophical, religious and social, led to the development of ruler cult in the late Classical and early Hellenistic period? What factors maintained and/or altered it over the next three centuries?

To what extent does the development of the “mystery cults” in the Hellenistic period illustrate the generalisation that this period saw a decline of civic religion in favour of “private cults”?

In what ways did the roles of oracles develop and change from the Classical period into the Hellenistic and Roman period? What kinds of factors drove these changes? What factors remained relatively constant?

What forms did the cult of *Tyche* take in the Hellenistic period? How can we best explain the growth in importance of these forms of cult?

What factors led to the growth of the new “international” cults of the Hellenistic period? Illustrate your case using at least two major cults as examples.

Can we distinguish “religion” from “magic” in the Classical and Hellenistic periods? What concepts and terminology did the ancients use to distinguish what they saw as legitimate and non-legitimate beliefs and practices?

In what ways were the varying forms of Judaism (*or*: In what ways was Pauline Christianity) typical and atypical of Hellenistic religion?

In what differing ways do Platonist, Stoic and Epicurean philosophers respond to traditional religious practice in the Hellenistic and early Imperial Roman period?

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Bibliography and Essay Precis	20%	Week 6
First Essay	35%	Week 9
Second Essay	45%	Week 13

Bibliography and Essay Precis

Due: **Week 6**

Weighting: **20%**

Students are to choose their first essay topic within the first four weeks of term, and then submit their Annotated Bibliography and Essay Precis during Week 6. (Submit the assignment **via Turnitin**, using the link in the Week 6 panel of the Unit iLearn page.) This assignment is a preparatory task building towards the submission of the first essay.

The assignment should be of approximately 1,000 words. The first half should be an annotated bibliography containing between six and twelve items (books, book chapters, journal articles) with full publication details, and a short paragraph of comment (per item) on the relevance of the item in question to the first essay. You should comment briefly on the main thesis of the item, its strengths and/or weaknesses, and its contribution to your understanding of the essay task.

The second half should be a structured outline or precis of your essay so far (it is understood that your essay will not yet be complete). This outline or precis should present the major stages of the argument of your proposed essay, each described in a brief paragraph, with notes on (a) the logical structure of your argument, (b) the kinds of evidence on which that stage of the argument is based, and (c) brief notes on the contribution of particular items from the Bibliography.

The aim of this assignment is to provide early feedback on the development of your understanding of your first essay.

The criteria against which the assignment will be assessed will be available on the Week 4 panel of the Unit iLearn page.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- The student will: learn from a variety of ancient text types, and from archaeological and

- other forms of evidence, about the varieties of Hellenistic religious practice and belief;
- relate these text types and other forms of evidence to their contemporary Graeco-Roman historical and cultural environment, in terms of both form and content;
- conduct independent research on a number of chosen topics at an advanced level;
- engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;

First Essay

Due: **Week 9**

Weighting: **35%**

The first Essay, of approx. 2,000 words, is normally to be written on the Essay topic chosen by Week 4, on which the Annotated Bibliography and Essay Precis has been submitted in Week 6. Essays will *not* be penalised for changes of direction resulting from further reading and research.

(Submit the assignment **via Turnitin**, using the link in the Week 9 panel of the Unit iLearn page.)

The criteria against which the assignment will be assessed will be available on the Week 6 panel of the Unit iLearn page.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- The student will: learn from a variety of ancient text types, and from archaeological and other forms of evidence, about the varieties of Hellenistic religious practice and belief;
- relate these text types and other forms of evidence to their contemporary Graeco-Roman historical and cultural environment, in terms of both form and content;
- demonstrate a broad comprehension of a range of ancient world-views and cultural concepts;
- show an awareness of both the selectivity and the complexity of ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- conduct independent research on a number of chosen topics at an advanced level;
- engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;
- formulate an independent view in dialogue with a wide range of both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Second Essay

Due: **Week 13**

Weighting: **45%**

The Second Essay, normally on a different topic to the first, should build on the skills developed in the first two Assessment Tasks. It can be written on one of the suggested essay topics below, or on another topic devised in consultation with Dr. Forbes.

(Submit the assignment **via Turnitin**, using the link in the Week 13 panel of the Unit iLearn

page.)

The criteria against which the assignment will be assessed will be available on the Week 6 panel of the Unit iLearn page.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- The student will: learn from a variety of ancient text types, and from archaeological and other forms of evidence, about the varieties of Hellenistic religious practice and belief;
- relate these text types and other forms of evidence to their contemporary Graeco-Roman historical and cultural environment, in terms of both form and content;
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- conduct independent research on a number of chosen topics at an advanced level;
- engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;
- formulate an independent view in dialogue with a wide range of both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Delivery and Resources

For lecture times and classrooms please consult the MQ Timetable website:

<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au>. This website will display up-to-date information on your classes and classroom locations.

The Unit will take the form of one two-hour seminar per week. This will normally be made up of two parts. The first hour will normally be a lecture from Dr. Forbes on the topic detailed in the Unit Schedule (below). The second hour will vary.

Both hours of the two-hour seminar will be recorded and made available via Echo360. Weekly study guides and bibliographies will be made available on the Unit iLearn page as PDF files. Any visual aids used during the lectures will also be made available in PDF format on the Unit iLearn page.

Access to a computer and the Internet are required. Basic computer skills (e.g., internet browsing, use of the Library's online resources and skills in word processing) are also a requirement. You will need a copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader, since (as noted above) most Unit documents are provided in PDF format. This software is freely available on the Internet. Please consult the Course Convenor for any further, more specific requirements.

Face-to-face classes will be held for Internal students; for External students there will be recordings (as above) and regular postings on iLearn. External students who can come to Internal classes are welcome to do so; just let me know you're coming!

For introductory reading see the top of the next section.

Unit Schedule

Preliminaries:

There is no one text-book for the Unit, because I have never found one which really covers the ground we set out to cover. Perhaps the best thing I can do is give you some starting-points which go in opposite directions, to show you the range of views we are dealing with, and then give you a list of particular topics you might like to follow up on.

First you may need a basic narrative to set you up in the Hellenistic period generally. Either Graham Shipley's *The Greek World after Alexander, 323-30 BC*, London, 2000, chapter 2, pp. 33-58, or David Braund, "After Alexander: the Emergence of the Hellenistic World", in A. Erskine, ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Malden, 2003, pp. 19-34, will get you going.

Next I should explain my "starting points which go in opposite directions" comment. There are widely differing approaches to the Hellenistic period in general. Rather than tell you who is right and who wrong (which would simply be telling you *my* biases) I would like you to read some of two very different approaches. The first I would recommend comes from Peter Green's major work, *Alexander to Actium: the historical evolution of the Hellenistic Age*. I suggest you read chapter 23, "Ruler Cults, Traditional Religion and the Ambivalence of Tyche", and chapter 33, "Foreign and Mystery Cults, Oracles, Astrology, Magic". The second view can be found in Shipley's *The Greek World after Alexander, 323-30 BC*. Here you should read Chapter 5, "Religion and Philosophy".

For more detail you could also read D. Potter, "Hellenistic Religion", in A. Erskine, ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Malden, 2003, pp. 407-430, or J.D. Mikalson, "Greek Religion: Continuity and Change in the Hellenistic Period", in G.R. Bugh, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 208-222.

Finally, you will need to look at the Unit Schedule below for the range of topics we plan to cover, and the section on assessment, above, for some of the suggested essay topics. You might like to begin thinking about what interests you. Then, before semester, I will make available a starting Bibliography organised by topics which will give you more detailed places to go for your research. In the first lecture session of Semester I will explain our approach in more detail.

Weekly Schedule (as at June 30th, 2014)

Week 1: Tuesday August 5th	Unit Introduction. Oracles: Continuity and Change.
Week 2: Tuesday August 12th	Ruler Cult: What kind of development? (a) Alexander (b) The Successor Kings
Week 3: August 19th	"Euhemerism": scepticism or rationalisation of cult?

Week 4: August 26th	Hellenistic private cults: the growth of “personal religion”?
Week 5: September 2nd	The Official Cults of the Hellenistic cities.
Week 6: September 9th	Magic and Subversive religion.
Week 7: September 15th	<i>Tyche</i> .
Mid-Semester Break	
Week 8: October 7th	Sarapis, Isis and the new international cults.
Week 9: October 14th	The Hellenistic Mysteries.
Week 10: October 21st	Forms of Judaism as Hellenistic religions.
Week 11: October 28th	Plutarch and the realignment of religion and philosophy.
Week 12: November 4th	Early Pauline Christianity.
Week 13: November 11th	Unit Summary and Conclusions.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- The student will: learn from a variety of ancient text types, and from archaeological and other forms of evidence, about the varieties of Hellenistic religious practice and belief;
- relate these text types and other forms of evidence to their contemporary Graeco-Roman historical and cultural environment, in terms of both form and content;
- demonstrate a broad comprehension of a range of ancient world-views and cultural concepts;
- show an awareness of both the selectivity and the complexity of ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;
- formulate an independent view in dialogue with a wide range of both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Bibliography and Essay Precis
- First Essay
- Second Essay

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- The student will: learn from a variety of ancient text types, and from archaeological and other forms of evidence, about the varieties of Hellenistic religious practice and belief;
- relate these text types and other forms of evidence to their contemporary Graeco-Roman

- historical and cultural environment, in terms of both form and content;
- demonstrate a broad comprehension of a range of ancient world-views and cultural concepts;
- show an awareness of both the selectivity and the complexity of ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- conduct independent research on a number of chosen topics at an advanced level;
- engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;
- formulate an independent view in dialogue with a wide range of both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Bibliography and Essay Precis
- First Essay
- Second Essay

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- The student will: learn from a variety of ancient text types, and from archaeological and other forms of evidence, about the varieties of Hellenistic religious practice and belief;
- relate these text types and other forms of evidence to their contemporary Graeco-Roman historical and cultural environment, in terms of both form and content;
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- show an awareness of both the selectivity and the complexity of ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- conduct independent research on a number of chosen topics at an advanced level;
- engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;
- formulate an independent view in dialogue with a wide range of both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Bibliography and Essay Precis

- First Essay
- Second Essay

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- demonstrate a broad comprehension of a range of ancient world-views and cultural concepts;
- show an awareness of both the selectivity and the complexity of ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;
- formulate an independent view in dialogue with a wide range of both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Bibliography and Essay Precs
- First Essay
- Second Essay

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- show an awareness of both the selectivity and the complexity of ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- engage with and responding critically to a variety of scholarly opinions;
- formulate an independent view in dialogue with a wide range of both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Bibliography and Essay Precis
- First Essay
- Second Essay

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- The student will: learn from a variety of ancient text types, and from archaeological and other forms of evidence, about the varieties of Hellenistic religious practice and belief;
- relate these text types and other forms of evidence to their contemporary Graeco-Roman historical and cultural environment, in terms of both form and content;
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Assessment tasks

- Bibliography and Essay Precis
- First Essay
- Second Essay

Changes from Previous Offering

Since the Unit was last offered University policy on Assessment has changed, and as a result the Assessment for the Unit has been completely re-worked. See "Assessment Tasks" above. The total assessment load (c. 5,000 words) remains the same, but it has been structured rather differently.

Changes since First Published

Date	Description
28/02/2014	The Description was updated.