

MODULE CODE: CLAH7017
TITLE: Religious Life in the Roman Empire
DATED: 27/03/2014

LEVEL: 7
CREDITS: 20

JACS CODE: Q800

AIM(S)

- To introduce students to the religious practices and understandings of the Roman empire, to explore their diversity in both the eastern and western provinces of the empire.
- To explore and assess the impact of societal change in the Roman empire on the religious understandings of the conquered, provincial populations. How did these cults change between the 2nd century B.C. and the 4th century A.D.?
- To analyse controversial, methodological and theoretical issues regarding the study of ancient religion, such as issues of polis religion, the spread of Roman cult understandings, the persistence of native cults, post-colonial concepts of 'religious resistance', the creation of new cults, the popularity and diffusion of Greco-Oriental cult, the spread of Christianity.
- To analyse concepts of personal religion and the role of the individual in making religious choices and introducing new cults in the Roman empire.
- To explore the use of cognitive anthropology and psychology to enhance our understanding of religious practices across the Roman empire.
- To develop students' ability to critically engage with a variety of ancient sources: literary, epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to demonstrate:

- an ability to engage with theoretical approaches regarding the religions of Rome and her provinces;
- a knowledge of the diversities and similarities of religious practices and understandings across the various provinces of the Roman empire, in Europe, Asia and North Africa;
- an expertise of the key processes and discourses that were instrumental in shaping the nature of religions in the Roman period.
- an understanding of the available literary, documentary, archaeological, numismatic and epigraphic evidence and how they can be critically employed to understand the religions, cults and sanctuaries of the Roman world;
- an expertise of selected sanctuaries of the Roman empire;
- a familiarity with, and ability to evaluate, the major debates and scholarship relevant to the module topics;
- an ability to discuss the above, both orally and in writing, in a clear, effective and scholarly manner, showing an ability to think critically and challenge assumptions.

INDICATIVE CONTENT

This module provides an in-depth insight into the religious developments that can be found across the diverse regions of the Roman empire between the 2nd century B.C. and the 4th century A.D. It is the aim to analyse how Roman imperialism and the intensifying contacts across the empire affected people's religious understandings, making people re-think their own, 'native' cult, reinvigorating existing cults, introducing and adapting new, alien cults. Instead of the 'Romanisation' or 'homogenisation' of cult activities among the conquered populations, we will see very dynamic processes, leading to the increasing diversity of cults, the constant re-interpretation of existing cults as well as the development of new rituals, deities, sanctuaries, visual languages. Furthermore, we need to discuss how henotheistic and monotheistic religions came to dominate the primarily polytheist Roman empire. In addition, we need to take into account insights drawn from cognitive studies and they may make us re-think our understanding of the cults and religious practices of the Roman period. In addition to a vast array of literary and epigraphic sources, this module also makes use of the numerous archaeological and iconographic testimonies to enhance our understanding of religions and religious changes across the Roman empire.

Topic include *inter alia*:

- Conceptualising cults and religions in Antiquity
- Cognitive science and ancient religion
- Forms of worship and sacrifice, and their meaning
- Communicating with the gods
- The cults of Roman communities (Rome, colonies, *municipia*)
- Roman policies towards 'native' cults
- The emergence of 'provincial' cults: persistence or innovation?
- The transformation and monumentalisation of sacred sites of pre-Roman origin
- The socio-political role of the imperial cult
- The spread and popularity of Greco-Oriental cults
- Henotheism and monotheism in Rome and the provinces.
- Public cult and religious individualisation
- Changing afterlife beliefs in the Roman empire

LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

Lectures and workshops

Tutorials and **seminars** are used to support the discussion and critical evaluation of what has been learned.

Guided independent study allows students to further their independent learning skills with appropriate support provided by the module tutor(s) (e.g. preparation for seminars, follow-up work, background reading, revision, completion of assessment tasks).

The allocation of teaching to deliver the module is:

Activity type	Hours	Percentage
Scheduled learning	20	10%
Independent learning	180	90%
Placement learning		
TOTAL	200	100%

ASSESSMENT

Assessment Component 1 – 50%

2,500-word portfolio

For example, writing a book review, a survey article on a sanctuary, or an encyclopedia article

Assessment Component 2 – 50%

3,500-word essay

For example: Using two case studies from the western and eastern empire, discuss the chronology and the reasons leading to the abandonment of supra-regional sanctuaries.

Assessment Summary

Activity type	Percentage
Written exam	
Coursework	100%
Practical	
TOTAL	100%

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD)

Does the module contribute to ESD?	Yes
If yes please provide brief details (no more than 100 words):	
<p>This module is designed in line with 2 of the 5 pedagogic approaches to sustainable development identified by UNESCO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical and Creative thinking Critical and creative thinking enables people to explore new ways of thinking and acting, make informed decisions, and create alternatives to present choices. It involves reflecting on how people interrelate with one other, understanding cultural differences and creating alternative ways to live together.• Systemic thinking Thinking systemically is essential to sustainable development, as piecemeal approaches have proved not to work - instead resolving one issue while creating other problems. Sustainable development requires approaches which go beyond analysis in terms of 'problem-solving' and/or 'cause-effect'.	