

## PAGANS, CHRISTIANS AND JEWS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

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This course examines the development and interaction between Jewish, Christian, and Pagan cultures from the dawn of the Hellenistic period to the rise of Islam. The chronological horizons of this class are roughly 400 BCE – 700 CE. The late antique world of the Greek East produced three monotheistic traditions. They are each in their own ways products of Hellenistic and Roman traditions and cultures. The backdrop and broader context for the rise of these great traditions is the pervasive pagan milieu of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. Paganism revealed a vitality and resilience that is difficult to overstate. The late antique world was pagan, the new religions of our period needed to find a way to meld with, get along, and construct a *modus Vivendi* with the dominant spirit of the age.

The rise of these traditions and their interaction with the prevalent pagan political and cultural world is a story that is both fascinating and in certain large respects still unfinished. We will begin with the rise of the Hellenistic world. We will move through the Hellenistic and Roman worlds focusing largely on the Greek-speaking east, concluding with the new Christian-Roman world, that empire's conflict with the pre-Islamic Sassanid world, and finally the emergence of a nomadic tradition out of the desert led by a prophet of the 7<sup>th</sup> c.

Along with the required texts books you will need a Bible with an Apocrypha. We will read a range of secondary sources and scholars on our period as well as primary documents. You are encouraged to read widely beyond these texts. The voices and sources for our period are many and varied. You will have two in-class quizzes in this course. The first quiz is Oct. 26 with a review on 10/21. The second quiz is 12/2. Your first paper is due Oct. 19 and your final paper is due 12/9. Your participation and engagement in class and in the readings is expected and impacts your grade for the course.

9/7 Introduction and overview of the course and issues; the gestation of hellenization in classical Greece; Alexander and the rise of the diadochi; Seleucid dominance in the Middle East. I Maccabees; Judith

9/9 The Maccabean Revolt; Resistance and Assimilation; the social construction of a Hellenized world; priest, kings, scribes and rebels. The Arrival of Rome; *From the Maccabees to the Mishna*, 11-30; 60-103.

9/14 Fragmentation in Jewish Society; Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls; Popular leaders; Absorbed into Roman's eastern agenda; Gospel of Mark; Gospel of Matthew; Cohen 124-173.

9/16 The Jesus Movements; *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*

9/21 Discussion of Crossan; Apocalypticism; the fate of Jewish Christianity; Hellenized and Romanized Christianity; The First Jewish revolt; Acts of the Apostles; Cohen 29-59; the Archaeology of Palestine/Omrit.

9/23 Going north and turning left; the embrace of Rome; What was paganism?

MacMullen 1-130.

9/28 Appreciating the pagan world; politics, order and hierarchy; a sociology of paganism.

9/30 Roman Philosophy and Politics; The Augustan Age; family values; the Emperor and the gods; the codification of empire; *Roman Stoics*, 1-175.

10/5 Roman stoicism; philosophy in the Greco-Roman world; the Philosopher-Emperors; // with emerging Christian philosophy

10/7 Diaspora Judaism and Roman Christianity in the Imperial court/world; the archaeology Of early Christianity and Judaism; Letter to the Romans; I Timothy; Philo; Handout.

10/12 The Parthian empire; West-East relations; trade, commerce, globalization; Handouts

10/14 Meanwhile back in Palestine; the failure of Christianity; the rise of a rabbinic class; The Mishna; Neusner

10/19 The definition of Rabbinic Judaism; Talmudim; rabbinic society; Neusner.

First paper is due.

10/21 Review of material

10/26 In-Class Quiz

FALL BREAK

11/2 The rise of a Christian empire; Constantine and the struggle for unity; Brown 1-114

11/4 A "Christian society;" Monks, governors, structure; Brown, ibid

11/9 Bishops, creeds, councils, controversy; The Nicean Creed – handout.

11/11 Paganism and Christianity – a marriage made in heaven? MacMullen - handout

11/16 The "triumph" of Christianity? The Byzantine world; Julian and the resurgence of paganism; Justinian and the east; Fowden – Handout.

11/18 Christian centers of the orthodox east; Asian Christianity; the Bavli; the two eyes of the world – Christian and Sassanid superpowers; Brown 115-188

11/23 Discussion of Brown

THANKSGIVING

11/30 Review of Material

12/2 In-Class Quiz

12/7 Out of the east; the dissolution of the Sassanid empire; the isolation of Byzantium;

Popular movements in the pre-Islamic world; Brown 189-209

12/9 Concluding remarks; retrospection and propection; final papers due