

CLAS 486 – Astrology & Magic in Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Fall 2004)

This seminar will examine aspects of astrology and magic, such as divination, necromancy, curse tablets, alchemy and the casting of horoscopes. Lectures will focus on the origins and development of the various occult sciences. In addition, the transmission of these ideas and practices to the Arab world and from there to the Latin Middle Ages will be examined. Social attitudes toward the occult sciences and their varying levels of acceptance will also be taken into account.

Instructor: David Porreca

Texts: Luck, G., *Arcana mundi* (1985), ISBN 0801825482
Betz, H.D., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (2nd ed., 1996), ISBN 0226044475
Kieckhefer, R., *Magic in the Middle Ages* (2000), ISBN 0521875766

Evaluation: Participation: 10%
(details below) Term paper: 25%
Presentations (5): 15%
Literature review: 15%
Final Examination: 35%

Participation: Includes meaningful participation in class discussion and the peer grading of presentations (see below under “Presentations”).

Term paper: DUE 18 November!! Topic open, to be discussed with & approved by the instructor **at the latest by 1 November** (note: I can suggest some useful bibliography for you...)

Presentations: The class will be divided into 2 groups (ideally of equal size). Individuals in each group will alternate giving presentations every week (see schedule below). Each presentation should last about 8-10 minutes (NOT MORE!), which should allow for about 5 minutes of questions/discussion per presentation. Grading of the presentations will be a combination of peer grading and instructor’s grading (a 50-50 split).

Each of you will be supplied with grading sheets for the entire term. Each individual will end up giving 5 presentations in the term; each of these will be worth 3%. Topics & basic bibliographies for presentations will be provided at the beginning of the term. The schedule of presentations is tentative and will vary according to the number of students enrolled in the class.

Literature Review: Due 14 October!! Each student will be assigned one sub-topic relating to the course material and provide a literature review on it. A literature review is a critical bibliography of material relating to a topic. For maximum usefulness, it should be divided into 2 or 3 sections: primary sources (in the original language and/or in translation), English-language secondary sources, foreign-language sources (optional). The literature review should list as comprehensively as possible articles and books relating to the topic, identify which of these are important/seminal works on the topic and provide a critical assessment of at least 5 of the listed books/articles. The literature reviews should help all of you in the writing of the term paper, since each of your reviews will be distributed to the rest of the class...

Final Examination: A number of exam questions will be distributed on the last day of class; 2 of these will be chosen at random for the 2-hour written exam itself. Course textbooks (but no other aids) will be allowed for the exam.

Class Structure: Each week beginning with the third (see the schedule of lectures below), we will begin with a 50 minute lecture on a general topic by the instructor, followed by student presentations on specific subtopics relating to the lecture.

Late Submissions Policy: Late submissions of the literature review or the term paper will be subject to grade penalties (5%/day) unless supported by a medical note.

“Note on avoidance of academic offences: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/info/ucal/UW/policy_71.html). If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA or course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic

advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean. Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.html>.”

“How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors: (<http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html>).”

“Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.”

Schedule of Lectures (tentative):

- 16/09: Lecture I: Introduction to class; explanation of plan for term;
general intro of topics & basic definitions
- 23/09: Lecture II & discussion: The Ancient and Medieval Cosmos,
the Hierarchy of Being and the Theoretical
Foundations of Magical Practice
Reading: Kieckhefer, ch. 1-2
Luck, pp. 3-60
- 30/09: Lecture III: Magic Texts & Their Transmission
Presentations I: Group I
Reading: Kieckhefer, ch. 3-4
Luck, pp. 61-131
- 7/10: Lecture IV: Astrological Texts & Tables (incl. Horoscopes) &
Their Transmission
Presentations II: Group II
Reading: Luck, pp. 307-358
Kieckhefer, ch. 5-6
- 14/10: **Literature Review due!!**
Lecture V: Magic and Religion
Presentations III: Group I
Reading: Luck, pp. 133-159
Kieckhefer, ch. 7
PGM, pp. xxxi-xxxiii, xli-lviii, 331-339; I. 262-
347; V. 96-172
Sagan, C., “The Fine Art of Baloney Detection”,

in *The Demon-Haunted World*, ch.12 (on Reserve at the library, call no. UWP 1212; my personal copy is also available)

21/10: Lecture VI: Magic and the Law

Presentations IV: Group II

Reading: Kieckhefer, ch. 8

PGM VII.423-28; *PDM* xiv.451-58

28/10: Lecture VII: Necromancy, “Black” Magic and Curse Tablets

Presentations V: Group I

Reading: Luck, pp. 161-225

PGM IV.94-153, 296-466, 1390-1595, 2140-44, 3255-74; V.304-69; VII.374-89, 394-406; *PDM* xiv.711-49

4/11: Lecture VIII: Medical & Protective Magic

Presentations VI: Group II

Reading: *PGM* IV.1227-64; VII.149-54, 193-214, 218-21, 370-73, 490-504, 540-78; CXII-CXV; *PDM* xiv.554-626, 953-1025

11/11: Lecture IX: Methods of Divination

Presentations VII: Group I

Reading: Luck, pp. 227-305

PGM IV, 154-285, 3086-3124, 3209-54; VII.155-67; *PDM* xiv.459-553

18/11: **Term paper due!!**

Lecture X: Alchemy

Presentations VIII: Group II

Reading: Luck, pp. 359-378

PGM VII.167-86; XII.193-201

25/11: Lecture XI: Material Components: Herbs, Stones and Animals

Presentations IX: Group I

Reading: *PGM* IV, 286-95, 1275-1389, 2967-3006; XCV.7-13; CXXII.1-25; *PDM* xiv.376-94, 886-910, 920-29, 933-34, 940-52

2/12: Lecture XII: Magic and the Hermetic Tradition

Presentations X: Group II presentations

Reading: *PGM* V.213-303; VII.919-39; XIII.1-1077 + TBA