

Carleton University

2025-2026

CLCV 2104A/RELI2737B; Fall Term
The College of the Humanities**CLCV2104A / RELI2737B
ROMAN RELIGION(S)****Dr. Timothy Pettipiece**Course Email: TimothyPettipiece@cunet.carleton.ca**Time:** Mon and Wed (11:35-12:55)**Office hours:** Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 PM (PA 2A51)**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course will introduce students to aspects of ancient Roman religion by tracing the diverse cultures of piety and ritual practice that proliferated throughout the history of Rome, including both Republican and Imperial periods. Material will be presented through a historical-critical lens that seeks to understand the role and function of religion in ancient society and culture. In addition to lectures, students will be required to engage with course content through in-class Knowledge Application Exercises.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- students will acquire basic disciplinary vocabulary from both Classics and Religious Studies
- students will discover the diversity of religious cultures of the Roman world
- students will approach material from both thematic and chronological perspectives
- students will apply course concepts to analyses of primary source material

COMMUNICATION

Email is the best way to contact me about course-related issues (see above), and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours during weekdays, 48 hours during weekends. I am also available in-person during regular office hours, or by appointment.

ATTENDANCE AND SCHEDULING

This is an in-person course, not an independent study, and contains a number of assignments and activities that must be completed in-class. Dates for all assignments and activities are indicated below, therefore you should arrange your non-academic schedule accordingly.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Valerie M. Warrior, *Roman Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) (approx. \$35)

EVALUATION

Midterm	25%	(in-class Oct 15)
Knowledge Application Exercise (x 5)	25%	
Research Paper or OPP	25%	(due Dec 3)
Final Exam	25%	(in-person during exam period)

LECTURE TOPICS AND READINGS

Sept 3 Course Introduction

Sept 8 "Religion" in the Graeco-Roman World

Sept 10 Historical Overview I: Early and Republican Rome

Sept 15 Gods and Goddesses

Sept 17 **Knowledge Application Exercise 1: Adopting a New Cult?**

Sept 22 Priests and Priestesses Secondary Source: Beard, "Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins"

Sept 24 Sacred Time and Space

Sept 29 Ritual and Sacrifice Secondary Source: Aldrete, "Hammers, Axes, Bulls, and Blood"

Oct 1 **Knowledge Application Exercise 2: Create a votive offering**

Oct 6 Magic and Divination

Oct 8 Death and the Afterlife Primary Source: Cicero, *Dream of Scipio*

Oct 13 **Knowledge Application Exercise 3: Decoding the Mysteries**

Oct 15 **Midterm (in-class, covering material from Sept 8- Oct 13)**

Oct 27 Historical Overview II: Rome and Its Empire

Oct 29 God-Emperors of Rome Primary Source: Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis of Divine Claudius*

Nov 3 Religion and Empire

Nov 5 **Knowledge Application Exercise 4: Is the emperor a god?**

Nov 10 The Universal Goddess Primary Source: Lucian, *On the Syrian Goddess*

Nov 12 "Barbarian" Wisdom

Nov 17 God(s) of the Philosophers Primary Source: Plotinus, *Life of Porphyry*

Nov 19 **Knowledge Application Exercise 5: Reconstructing an Ancient Text**

Nov 24 *no class

Nov 26 Twilight of the Idols Sallustius, *On the Gods and the World*

Dec 1 Sailing to Byzantium

Dec 3 **Knowledge Application Exercise 6: The Altar of Victory?**

Final Exam (in-person during exam period)

IN-CLASS KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION EXERCISES (25%)

Students are expected to participate in and complete five of six Knowledge Application Exercises. These are in-class activities designed to encourage in-person engagement with course material and real-time reflection on concepts and themes from readings and lectures.

No special preparation is necessary, other than doing the assigned course work, as instructions and any necessary materials will be provided in class. Credit for exercises will be based on participation and submission of completed materials.

Completed Exercise materials must be handed in at the end of the class in which the activity is conducted and cannot be done at a later or alternate date. Since five out of the six exercises will count towards the final grade, one of them can be missed with no penalty. However, there will be no opportunity to make up additional missed exercises.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In order to encourage focus and engagement by participants, use of laptops and cellphones are not permitted during the Knowledge Application Exercises (except for those with clear PMC accommodation requirements). Students who are unwilling to comply with this policy, which is limited to these specific classes only, will be required to exit the classroom and will forfeit that portion of their activity grade.

RESEACH PAPER or OPEN POSSIBILITIES PROJECT (25%)

Students may choose between producing a short research paper or an alternate project, both of which involve a deeper dive into an aspect of Roman religion. Both options must make use of primary sources and academic research. AI tools may be used for brainstorming, planning, and development, as long as you disclose which tools were used and how (see below).

Option 1: Short Research Paper

Write a (2500 word) research essay on one of the following themes (or another topic of your choice approved by me verbally or over email)

Possible topics

- major and minor deities (in-depth profile of a particular deity or group of deities)
- temples and sacred spaces (study of a particular site or group of sites)
- priests and priestesses (examination of specific religious specialists)
- magic and mystery (exploration of ancient magical practices or mystery religions)
- religion and empire (analysis of imperial cult, Roman religious policy, relations with religious minorities)

Requirements

- 1) The paper must have a title page with your name and student number clearly indicated
- 2) The main text of the paper must be at least 2500 words. This word count does not include Title Page, Works Cited, and AI Use Disclosure
- 3) The paper must be based on a clearly defined theme or research topic
- 4) The paper must incorporate at least three primary sources (ancient texts or artifacts) and five secondary sources (scholarly books, chapters, or articles). These should be indicated on the Works Cited page

- 5) Use of Chicago style citation for in-text references and Works Cited
- 6) Text must be double-spaced, standard 12-point font, and standard margins
- 7) Add to the end of your essay a brief description of what AI tools were used and how, or a statement that you chose not to use AI tools for any stage of research and writing.

Option 2: Open-Possibilities Project

Instead of a paper, students may choose to produce a (small scale) creative or technical project that examines an aspect of Roman religion. This is also a research-based project, since it must make use of both primary and secondary sources, but it allows for the incorporation of alternate media, genres, technologies, and techniques. For this option whatever you create must be accompanied by a 1000-word critical commentary that explains your selection of sources, choices of media, and interpretation of the topic. Note: All option 2 projects must be approved by me (verbally or by email).

***Option 2 may involve costs for project materials**

Possible Projects

- a short story or historical fiction (set during a ritual or religious festival, making use of historical details)
- a museum exhibit (including panel designs, artifact descriptions, and curatorial commentary)
- scripted dialogue (between historical / mythological figures on religious themes)
- visual art project (graphic novel, zine, painting, sculpture, mosaic, or 3D printed model)

Requirements

- 1) Size of creative / technical component will vary, but should be completable within the term
- 2) the OPP concept must be based on at least 3 primary and 5 secondary sources
- 3) Project must be accompanied by a 1000-word critical commentary
- 4) Use of Chicago style citation for references and Works Cited
- 5) Text must be double-spaced, standard 12-point font, and standard margins
- 6) Add to the end of your critical commentary a brief description of what AI tools were used and how, or a statement that you chose not to use AI tools for any stage of research, production, and writing.

Responsible AI Use (for both options)

There is no question that AI provides powerful tools to assist with research, writing, and design, but the full extent of their impact on academia remains to be seen. Both students and faculty are trying to figure out what the limits and boundaries are. As your professor, my aim is to minimize the anxiety and confusion around the AI issue. Therefore, for this assignment students will not be penalized for using AI tools or rewarded for not using them. It is entirely up to each person to decide for themselves. It is perfectly fine if you choose not to use them. However, if they are used, how they are used matters. As such, here are limits and expectations in the context of this course.

You may use AI tools to:

- find a research topic, brainstorm ideas, explore design possibilities
- initial surveys of sources or scholarship
- proofread, edit, and revise

You may not use AI tools to:

- generate an entire essay or project
- produce fake primary or secondary sources
- avoid critical thinking and engagement with research materials

Disclosure Required

For the sake of transparency and fairness students are required to add an AI Use Disclosure at the end of their research paper or critical commentary describing in a short paragraph how AI tools were used (if at all). Failure to disclose any and all use of AI tools will result in an automatic grade of F.

IMPORTANT NOTE: I also reserve the right to require an in-person meeting with students to discuss their paper or project prior to assigning a final grade.

Evaluation Criteria

Research Paper	100%	Open Possibilities Project	100%
Well defined topic or theme	10%	Well defined topic or theme	10%
Use of primary sources	25%	Use of primary sources	20%
Engagement with secondary scholarship	25%	Engagement with secondary scholarship	20%
Style, structure, and presentation	10%	Design, execution, and presentation	20%
Critical analysis	20%	Originality	20%
Citations and AI Use Disclosure	10%	Citations and AI Use Disclosure	10%

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EXPRESSION

While a university is a place where the free exchange of ideas ought to be welcomed and encouraged, that can only be done within well-defined and mutually understood pedagogical parameters. As a professor, it is my job to maintain a learning environment focused on the academic goals described in this syllabus. My knowledge and expertise are limited to a certain set of subject areas, and I do not intend to use the course as a platform for advocacy on issues outside of that scope, nor is it designed as an open arena for debating any and all issues of the day. What you are learning may help you understand or contextualize those larger issues, but we will be focusing our efforts on the assigned course material.