**Instructor**:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Office Hours**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Office Location**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail**:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Meeting days and times**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Classroom location**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Course number**: Classics 3404

**Course title**: Magic in the Ancient World

**Format of instruction**: Lecture

**Contact Hours per week**: 3 credit hours

**GE Course Information**

**This is a General Education (GE) Cultures and Ideas and GE Diversity: Global Studies course**

**Cultures and Ideas**

**Goals:**

Students evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.
2. Students evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms, which guide human behavior.

**Diversity**

**Goals:** Students understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

**Global Studies**

1. Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S.
2. Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

**The course fulfills the objectives of the GE Cultures and Ideas and GE Diversity ‐ Global Studies categories by addressing the following:**

**Goals/Rationale for GE Requirement**

The practice, the literary representation and the philosophical and theological reflections on magic in the Greek and Roman world offer a stimulating and provocative field for a GE course (in the categories of Cultures & Ideas, and Diversity: Global Studies), not the least because our own ideas on magic have been shaped in acceptance or rejection of ancient magic through the polemics of Christian Church fathers and the theories of XIXth century classicists/ ethnologists. As in other cases of religious and social phenomena of the ancient world, the “close otherness” and “distant similarity” of the ancient world to our own world makes it a great tool for what a GE course in these categories wants to accomplish.

The course introduces students to the practice of magic in ancient Greek and Roman cultures. Students will explore how ancient magic is a major form of human cultural expression in terms of the way the practice of magic is reflected in ritual artifacts (e.g. magical dolls, lead tablets with spells, papyrus books of spells) and in literary, historical and philosophical accounts of such practices. The course makes students perceive the difference between these different and diverse accounts, their reliability and the need for interpretation. The students will read philosophical and theological reflections on magic written by pagan and Christian authors in ancient Greek and Roman cultures, many of them polemical, and will try to understand the theological, philosophical and sometimes economical reasons for these reflections, and the underlying ethical and theological issues. Students will also read modern theoretical assessments of magic, starting with Giordano Bruno in Early Modern Europe, and they will understand the ways in which modern scholarship constructed magic as a contested area of the history of religions and of thought and how these scholarly constructions are conditioned by the religious, ethical, political and even cosmological assumptions of the respective scholars and their epochs.

**Description**

This course will examine the reality and the imagination of magic in Greece and Rome, from the times of Homer to the Christianization of the ancient world. Ancient magic manifested itself in ritual acts that generated a large number of written texts, from the so‐called curse tablets to the magical recipe books of late antiquity; its hold on the imagination of Greeks and Romans is shown in an equally large number literary and philosophical texts that discuss it, mirror it and reflect upon it: these texts (in translation) will be the main tool through which the course tries to understand ancient magic. Since the very term magic originated in Greece, the development and transformation of the terminology and the light it sheds on the contested definitions of magic in modern thought will be the second important topic of the course; the varying definition reflect the varying ways in which magic and religion in ancient society interacted and defined each other.

**Objectives**

The study of ancient magical and religious practices and the native and contemporary reflections on them will make students better-informed observers and participants of their own cultural and religious practices and beliefs; the similarities and the contrasts will stimulate critical reflection. By the end of this course, students will have gained an understanding of how Greeks and Romans conceptualized and practiced magic and how this relates to the realities of Greek and Roman society. They will understand how and why the literary imagination of ancient poets and historians used elements of magic and how reliable or how fantastic these literary representations are. They will understand why pagan and Christian philosophers and theologians rejected it, and how this rejection influenced the conceptualization of magic in the modern world, from early modern Europe to the present day. The modern scholarly discussion on the definitions and functions of magic will give them critical understanding of scholarly practices and conceptualizations in the humanities.

**Course Materials**

The main book is Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* (Philadelphia, 1999).

Textbooks are available at Barnes & Noble at The Ohio State University Official Bookstore.

Selected ancient texts in translation and key scholarly texts will be available as PDFs on Carmen.

**Quizzes**

Biweekly quizzes will be held on the second meeting of every second week and will be on the readings and topics of the past two weeks; a final quiz on the materials covered in the course will be part of the final exam, together with the final essays.

**Essays**

Essay I will be written in class halfway through the semester class from an instructor‐provided set of topics. Essay II will be a take‐home paper written during the second half of the semester on a topic the student selects together with the instructor at the latest during week 10, and due together with the final exam. Essay I (based on the teaching of the first half of the semester) will concern the practice of ancient magic in its historical background and the student’s reactions to the views and values expressed through these practices. Essay II will concern any topic related to the history and development of ancient magic and its relationship to modern thought and practice of magic (essays that address this comparison will be specially encouraged); if necessary, the instructor should provide additional material not studied in class.

**Final Exam**

The final exam will consist of a set of 12 multiple-choice questions that cover the semester and two short final essays written in class from an instructor‐provided set of topics. The two short final essays will focus on interpretive and comparative themes drawn from the ancient and modern sources studied in class; they will demonstrate the student's skill in historical interpretation and in cross‐cultural comparison.

**Grading Information**

Quizzes: 10%

Essay I (in class): 30%

Essay II (take home): 30%

Final exam (in class): 30%

Grading scale

93–100: A

90–92.9: A-

87–89.9: B+

83–86.9: B

80–82.9: B-

77–79.9: C+

73–76.9: C

70 –72.9: C-

67 –69.9: D+

60 –66.9: D

Below 60: E

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is highly recommended and important for completing the course successfully, as being present for lectures and discussions drastically increases the likelihood of performing well in the course. If you know that you will miss a class session for any reason, please alert me as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations.

**Schedule of Weekly Readings and Lectures**

PART I: Definition and “invention” of magic

Week 1: Definitions of magic, from Giordano Bruno back to Pliny the Elder

**Assignments**: Giordano Bruno, *On Magic*, chapter 1; Pliny, *Natural History* bk. 30; Ankarloo and Clark 97‐ 107; 178‐191

Week 2: The ancient Magus and his Art

**Assignments**: Selected texts from Heraclitus, Plato, and Hippocrates on seers, healers and sorcerers in antiquity; Jan N. Bremmer, “The birth of the term „magic‟” (10 pages); Claude Levi‐Strauss, “The sorcerer and his magic” (20 pages)

QUIZ ONE

Week 3: Magic before magic: Circe, Herbs, and Homeric Witchcraft

**Assignments**: Homer, *Odyssey* 10.203‐247; Ankarloo 110‐111, 3‐10, 82‐85

PART II: The Practice of Magic

Week 4: Binding Spells: Introduction, binding in the law court

**Assignments**: A selection of ancient texts in translation, mostly from J. Gager, Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World (1992); Chr. A. Faraone, “The agonistic context of early Greek binding spells” (31 pages)

QUIZ TWO

Week 5: Binding Spells: Erotic binding spells in practice and theory

**Assignments**: Selected erotic spells in translation; recipes from *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*; Ankarloo and Clark 281‐309; Lucian, *The Lover of Lies* 14‐18; Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* chapter 11

Week 6: Erotic binding spells and literary representation

**Assignments**: Sophocles, Women from Trachis; Theocritus, Idyl 2; selections from Latin love elegies in translation

QUIZ THREE

Week 7**:** Binding Spells in sports, entertainment and business

**Assignments**: Selected erotic spells in translation; recipes from *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*; Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* chapter 12; Ankarloo and Clark 31‐51.

Week 8: Lifting Up My Soul: Theurgy

**Assignment**: “Mithras‐Liturgy” (from *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*); Sarah I. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (2008), ch. 5 on theurgy

Midterm: Essay I

Week 9: Ancient Necromancy

**Assignment**: Homer, *Odyssey* bk. 11; Lucan, *Pharsalia* VI (Ericto); selected necromantic rituals from *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*

Week 10: Witches – in antiquity and beyond

**Assignments**: Selections from Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*; Walter Scheidel, *Demon Lovers. Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (selected chapters)

QUIZ FOUR

LATEST POSSIBILITY TO CHOOSE A TAKE‐HOME PAPER TOPIC

**EXCURSUS: Oriental precursors of Graeco‐Roman practices**

Week 11: “Magic” in Bronze Age Mesopotamia and Pharaonic Egypt

**Assignments**: Selections from Assyrian magical treatises and Egyptian spell collections in translation; the respective chapters (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Hittites) in Sarah Iles Johnston, ed., *Religions in the Ancient World. A Guide* (2004) (32 pages)

PART III: Magic, Society and the Law

Week 12: Accusations without trials

**Assignments**: Selected grave epigrams (children and young women) from Greece and Rome; F. Graf, “Victimology” (15 pages); E. E. Evans‐Pritchard, Witchcraft*, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1937) (selected passages) QUIZ FIVE

Week 13: Greek and Roman law, from the 5th cent BCE to the Theodosian Code

**Assignments**: Selected laws (law code of Teos, XII Tablets, Theodosian Code) in translation; Ankarloo and Clark 243‐266.

Week 14: Sorcery trials in antiquity

**Assignments**: Selections from Pliny the Elder, book 24; Tacitus, *Histories* book 2; Apuleius, *Apology* (*On Magic*);

QUIZ FIVE

FINAL EXAM and Deadline for Essay II Take‐Home Paper.

**Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

**Disabilities Accommodations**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](https://slds.osu.edu/); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

**Statement on Mental Health**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu/) or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/).

**Statement on Sexual Misconduct**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu.

**Statement on Diversity**

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.