

Religious Studies 170
Women and Religion in Greco-Roman Antiquity
Fall 2012: Take home final exam
Due by 2pm on Thursday, December 21, 2012

You may email your exam to the professor (ajacobs@scrippscollege.edu) or arrange to deliver it in person (please email to set up a day/time) or leave your exam in a sealed envelope in the drop box at the professor's office (Vita Nova 110; please email to indicate you've dropped it off). Graded exams may be picked up at the beginning of Spring semester along with any other remaining assignments.

This exam is **open-book**: you may consult your class notes and readings. This exam is **not**, however, **collaborative**: you may not consult with your classmates (or anyone else) on how to answer your exam questions. You may spend as much time as you wish on the exam.

PART ONE: PASSAGES (40%)

Answer **four of the five** questions using one or both of the passages indicated as a springboard for your responses; answers should be 250-500 words.

Passages are not reprinted on this handout, but you are referred to **either** readings in *Women and Religion in the Greco-Roman World (WRGRW)* by reading number **or** to readings found online by title and date on which they were assigned.

1. What kinds of religious authority did Christian women possess?

- a. *The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas* (WRGRW #114)
- b. *Tertullian, On the Soul* 9 (WRGRW #93)

2. What can we learn about the everyday concerns of women from mythological and theological texts?

- a. *Dialogue hymns of Mary* (from [Sebastian Brock, "Mary and the Angel, and other Syriac Dialogue Poems," *Marianum* 68 \(2006\): 117-51](#) assigned on 12/5/12)
- b. *Hymn to Demeter* (WRGRW #125)

3. How did women function as symbols in ancient religious contexts?

- a. *The Life of Saint Pelagia the Harlot* (WRGRW #120)
- b. *Plutarch, The Institution of the Vestal Virgins* (WRGRW #81)

4. How did Jewish sources both reinforce and revise gender stereotypes?

- a. *Josephus, On Berenice* (WRGRW #61A)
- b. *Mishnah Niddah* (WRGRW #35)

5. How was women's religion portrayed as potentially subversive?

- a. *Heliodorus, An Ethiopian Story* (WRGRW #22)
- b. *Epiphanius, Medecine Box* 79 (WRGRW #39)

PART TWO: ESSAYS (40%)

Answer **two of the three** following essay questions; you may use any materials from the course you like, although you should refer to **at least two primary sources** in your answer. Ideally, your answers will also deal with the range of religious traditions we have studied in this course. Answers should be 750-1500 words.

1. How would you describe and categorize the different types of *sources* we possess concerning ancient women's religions, and what different kinds of information can we glean from these sources?
2. What role do women's *bodies* play in texts on women and religion in the ancient world?
3. What do we learn about *gender* relations in ancient society from our sources on religion?

PART THREE: THEN AND NOW (20%)

Consider the following quote from the fifth-century historian Socrates Scholasticus, *Church History* 7.15:

There was a woman at Alexandria named Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon, who made such attainments in literature and science, as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time. Having succeeded to the school of Plato and Plotinus, she explained the principles of philosophy to her auditors, many of whom came from a distance to receive her instructions. On account of the self-possession and ease of manner which she had acquired in consequence of the cultivation of her mind, she not infrequently appeared in public in presence of the magistrates. Neither did she feel ashamed in coming to an assembly of men. For all men on account of her extraordinary dignity and virtue admired her the more. Yet even she fell a victim to the political jealousy which at that time prevailed. For as she had frequent interviews with Orestes, it was scandalously reported among the Christian populace that it was she who prevented Orestes from being reconciled to the bishop. Some of them therefore, hurried away by a fierce and bigoted zeal, whose ringleader was a reader named Peter, waylaid her returning home, and dragging her from her carriage, they took her to the church called *Caesareum*, where they completely stripped her, and then murdered her with tiles. After tearing her body in pieces, they took her mangled limbs to a place called Cinaron, and there burnt them. This affair brought not the least opprobrium, not only upon Cyril but also upon the whole Alexandrian church. And surely nothing can be farther from the spirit of Christianity than the allowance of massacres, fights, and transactions of that sort. This happened in the month of March during Lent, in the fourth year of Cyril's episcopate, under the tenth consulate of Honorius, and the sixth of Theodosius.

How does this Christian historian represent Hypatia? What insights into the modern appropriation of ancient women's religion do we gain by comparing the ancient Hypatia from her modern representation? What conclusions can you draw about the modern study of ancient women and religion? (Answer should be 500-1000 words.)