



SAMR NEWSLETTER



Vol. 7.2, December 2014

Nancy Evans, editor

President's Column

Greetings to all SAMR Members!

It was good to see many of you last month at the annual meeting of the AAR/SBL in San Diego! SAMR sponsored two sessions, "*Religious Violence*" in the *Ancient World* and *Rethinking Conversion in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, both of which were well attended. Thank you to the presenters and to those who attended and contributed to the good discussions.

At our SAMR business meeting we focused attention on topics for the 2015 meeting of the SBL and on planning for SAMR's participation at the World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions to be held in Erfurt, Germany, this coming August. Please see the Call for Papers in this newsletter for the SBL session *New Approaches in Social Sciences and the Study of Ancient Religions*. The second SBL session will feature a panel discussion with author's response of Jörg Rüpke's *From Jupiter to Christ: On the History of Religions in the Roman Imperial Period* (Oxford University Press, 2014). Regarding the IAHR World Congress, SAMR has generously been invited to hold our own conference on August 22-23 immediately preceding the World Congress (August 23-29). Details regarding conference theme and Call for Papers will be finalized at SAMR's annual meeting at the SCS/AIA meeting in January and will be announced electronically in mid-January.

Zsuzsa Varhelyi, chair of the Program Committee, is about to complete her three-year term. As noted in this newsletter, SAMR is seeking nominations to become the new member of the Program Committee, to join ongoing members David Eastman and James Rives. We also seek nominations for President, as my three-year term also is coming to an end. Personally I can attest that it is enjoyable and satisfying to work with such able and considerate colleagues as Zsuzsa, David, and James, and Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Evans. Please feel free to contact me if you'd like to discuss what is involved in the role of President.

(continued on page 4)

In this Issue

- **President's Column**
- **SAMR at the 2015 SCS (APA)**
- **SAMR CALLS for PAPERS**
- **SAMR Elections!!!**
- **Other CALLS for PAPERS**
- **Announcements**

SAMR at the SCS (APA)

New Orleans, LA, Jan. 9-11 2015

SAMR is sponsoring one session at this year's annual SCS (formerly APA) meeting in Atlanta.

Session 8: Practice and Personal Experience (8:00 AM to 10:30 AM, 1/9/2015) will feature papers to be given by Kenneth Yu (University of Chicago), Robyn Walsh (University of Miami), Debby Sneed (UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology), Jessica Lamont (The Johns Hopkins University) and Steven Muir (Concordia University).

We hope to see many of you at our session, and at the business meeting later that same day, Friday, January 9, from 5:00-6:00 in the Marriott. If you have an idea for a panel or a topic for the coming year, the business meeting is the place to be.

Check us out on Facebook !

SAMR CALL for PAPERS

SBL Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA, November 21-24, 2015

New Approaches in Social Sciences and the Study of Ancient Religion

Although the application of social science methodologies to the study of ancient Mediterranean religion extends back to the origins of the modern social sciences, many new methodologies and theoretical orientations have appeared in the past few decades that scholars of ancient religion have only recently begun to employ, with very fruitful if sometimes controversial results. Cognitive science has perhaps attracted the most attention, but social psychology, communication studies, performance theory, practice theory, and ritual theory have also figured largely in recent research.

The Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions invites scholars and students of the religions of the ancient Mediterranean world, including Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Near Eastern religions, as well as early Christianity and Judaism, to submit abstracts that address the application of recent social scientific approaches to the study of religion. Potential topics include, but are not limited to: case studies that involve the application of a specific methodology; and general evaluations of particular methodologies and theories with specific reference to the ancient Mediterranean.

Proposals should be submitted electronically through the SBL website. The deadline is **Wednesday, 4 March, 2015**. You must be a member of the SBL or seek a waiver in order to deliver a paper. Papers should last between 15 and 20 minutes. Abstracts should contain a title and a word count, but should not have any information regarding the identity of the submitter. All abstracts will be reviewed anonymously. Please direct all queries to SAMR at socamr@gmail.com.

SAMR CALL for PAPERS

SCS/AIA Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, January 7-10, 2016

“Theism” and Related Categories in the Study of Ancient Religions

Traditional accounts of religion in the ancient Mediterranean for many years emphasized a fundamental distinction between the polytheism of most traditional religions on the one hand and the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity on the other. Recent scholarship has complicated that simple dichotomy, by exploring both aspects of monotheism in “pagan” contexts and the multiplicity of superhuman beings in Jewish and Christian contexts.

The Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions invites scholars and students of the religions of the ancient Mediterranean world, including Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Near Eastern religions, as well as early Christianity and Judaism, to submit abstracts that address one aspect of “theism” or related categories in ancient religion. Such aspects might include (but are not limited to):

- modern analytical categories, e.g., henotheism and “pagan” monotheism
- ancient categories of superhuman beings, e.g. *theoi*, *heroes*, and *daimones* in Greek
- the dividing line between “human” and “divine,” e.g. in the context of ruler worship or the cult of the dead
- the varying treatment of these issues in different contexts, e.g., cult, philosophy, literature, art

Abstracts should be submitted by email attachment as .doc or .pdf files to socamr@gmail.com and should be from 500-600 words in length for a paper to last between 15 to 20 minutes. Abstracts should contain a title and a word count, but should not have any information regarding the identity of the submitter. For further information about abstract format, please see the SCS Program Guide. The deadline for submission of abstracts is **February 15, 2015**, and all abstracts for papers will be reviewed anonymously. For further information, please contact Nancy Evans, Department of Classics, Wheaton College, Norton, MA 02766 (nevans@wheatonma.edu).

CALL for SAMR NOMINATIONS

We are seeking nominations to serve as the Society's **President**, as Jeffrey Brodd's 3-year term expires at the SCS meetings in January. The primary tasks are general administrative oversight of the Society's activities, promoting the Society through establishing and maintaining connections with related organizations, and keeping members informed through the newsletters and at the business meetings held at the SBL and the SCS. One of the fringe benefits is that you get to know so many of the wonderful people in our field. Please email Jeff if you would like to discuss what is involved in this role.

We also seek a person to serve on the **Program Committee** for a three-year term, beginning at the SCS/AIA Meetings in January, 2015. Zsuzsa Varhelyi (Boston University, Roman religion) will be rotating off the committee, and we thank her for her service. David Eastman (Ohio Wesleyan, Christianity) will become chair and James Rives (University of North Carolina, Roman Empire) will continue on the Program Committee. Since we aim to maintain a balance of interests on the Program Committee, please consider how to complement their fields of expertise in making nominations.

Self nominations are most assuredly welcomed; simply have two other SAMR members from separate institutions support your nomination. If you choose to nominate someone other than yourself, you should check with the nominee first to assess their willingness to serve. Nominations should be sent to Nancy Evans (nevans@wheatonma.edu).

ANNOUNCEMENT: Call for Papers

Empire and the Media of Religion: A Workshop on Comparative Approaches to the Study of Religion in the Greco-Roman Imperial Era and Early China

Organized by Professors Carol Bakhos (Near Eastern Languages and Cultures) and Robert Gurval (Classics)

May 21-22, 2014

University of California, Los Angeles

In the final chapter of his newly revised and expanded work, *From Jupiter to Christ: On the History of Religion in the Roman Imperial Period* (Oxford University Press 2014), Jörg Rüpke asks a fundamental question confronting students of Roman imperial religion, "How Does Empire Change Religion, and How does Religion Change an Empire?" Rüpke argues that the change is not so much in the growth or increase in the number of religions as the transformation of religion itself as a cultural and social phenomenon: religion came to embrace the whole texture of human life and served as an agent for legitimatizing political authority and formulating new types of identity. An important factor in the processes of this change was the communicative aspect of religion manifested and disseminated beyond the city and local regions and throughout the vast expanses of Empire.

Funded by the UCLA Asia Institute and in collaboration with the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, this workshop seeks 25-30-minute presentations from junior scholars (Ph.D.s within the last seven years and advanced graduate students) who wish to share their research and collaborate on comparative approaches to understanding empire and religion in the Greco-Roman imperial era and in Early China. We welcome abstracts that explore the texts, practices, institutions, and laws by which religion was embodied, codified and disseminated throughout the vast expanses of these ancient empires. We are particularly interested in how the communicative aspects of media (literary, documentary, visual and/or architectural) reflected the formulations of religious identity and the legitimation or de-legitimation of political authority. How do religious texts engage, negotiate or subvert political authority? How do they reflect their role in long-distance dissemination or ascertain a locative frame? What role does empire play in religious rhetoric, imagery, and in some instances theology? What are the ways in which religion exerts its influence on imperial discourse? To what extent did rulers embrace religious symbolism, beliefs and practices for political purposes? Where did religion avoid the partly pervasive, partly superficial impact of empire? How did law mediate between religion and empire?

The workshop will be held at UCLA on May 21 and 22, 2015. We will provide accommodations for a maximum of three nights. The deadline for submission of abstracts (300-500 words) will be February 2. Send submissions to Professor Carol Bakhos at csr@humnet.ucla.edu and if you have any questions please contact Professor Robert Gurval at gurval@humnet.ucla.edu.

President's Message (continued from page 1)

Along with holding its annual meeting, SAMR will sponsor a paper session at the SCS/AIA meeting in New Orleans. We shall attend to a number of important items at the annual meeting, including: election of President and new member of the Program Committee; approval process of the contract with Lockwood Press for our Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religions volume series; planning for our SAMR conference in Erfurt and participation in the World Congress of the IAHR; planning for a summer 2016 SAMR conference in Palermo. The SAMR session at the SCS meeting will be *Practice and Personal Experience in Ancient Religion*, which promises to feature a slate of very fine papers. We hope to see many members in New Orleans!

Best wishes for joyful and peaceful holidays,



Jeffrey Brodd, President
Society of Ancient Mediterranean Religions

SAMR Contact Information

(<http://samreligions.org/>)

Jeffrey Brodd, President
California State University, Sacramento
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819-6083
jbrodd@saclink.csus.edu

Nancy Evans, Secretary-Treasurer
Department of Classics
Box 189 Wheaton College
Norton, MA, 02766
nevans@wheatoncollege.edu

Come check us out on Facebook as well!