

Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions

NEWSLETTER

Volume 14.1, February 2021



SAMR SPRING LECTURE SERIES

“Après le deluge: plagues, propaganda, and the mobility of the divine”

SAMR is very excited to announce our first annual spring lecture series to be held remotely in March and April. Please add these dates and events to your calendar.

Thursday, March 4 at 12 noon EST

“Osor-Hapi: North African Cult Paradigms during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods.”

Dr. Vivian A. Laughlin

Fulbright Postdoctoral Researcher
Hebrew University of Jerusalem-Institute of
Archaeology

Thursday, March 18 at 7pm EST

“Fighting a Postmodern Monster: Plague and the Delphic Oracle”.

Dr. Michiel van Veldhuizen

The University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Thursday, April 8 at 7pm EST

“Pharmapolitics and the early Roman expansion: gender, slavery, and ecology in 331 BCE”

Dr. Dan-el Padilla Peralta

Princeton University

Thursday, April 22 at 7pm EST

“Water, Blood, and Wine: Iconography of the Old Testament on Medieval Portable Altars.”

Sarah C. Luginbill

University of Colorado Boulder
medievalportablealtars.com

Whenever possible, the lectures will be recorded for those who are unable to attend in person.

Many thanks to Eric Orlin for his diligent work in setting up this terrific speaker series.

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SAMR HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Barbette Spaeth, the co-founder (with Eric Orlin) of SAMR is leading an effort to compile a history of the organization, highlighting the many ways in which SAMR has contributed to an on-going dialogue about religion in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Barbette is hoping to make this more than the usual stuffy organizational history, and is soliciting input in the form of reminiscences, photos, emails, Facebook posts, etc. from the membership. These contributions will give a vivid sense of what SAMR has been about, what it has meant to those who have been a part of it, and perhaps what you all hope it to be in the future. Please upload any relevant material to this Google Drive folder:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sm738NGuo5hezWN4paZPcv9WoT_ZgOOI?usp=sharing

If you have any questions, please contact her at bsspae@wm.edu or at the snail mail address below

Barbette Stanley Spaeth
Professor of Classical Studies
William & Mary
Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795

MEET THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

One of the hardest working branches of the SAMR operation is the program committee. These three people are responsible for maintaining the high level of SAMR conference programming and in some cases our publications. We are extremely grateful for their service. Please thank them when you have a chance.

Dina Boero is an Assistant Professor in History at the College of New Jersey. Her research focuses on saints and their cults in the late antique Near East. She integrates the archaeological record with Syriac and Greek textual sources to highlight saints and the institutions that supported them (churches, pilgrimage complexes, monasteries) as sites for negotiating competing meanings and practices. She has conducted research on Syriac manuscripts held in various European and Middle Eastern collections and has participated in archaeological projects in Syria, Turkey, and Greece.

Megan Daniels is Assistant Professor of ancient Greek material culture at the University of British Columbia. Her research interests include the intersections of long distance trade with the growth of religious institutions and economic development across the Mediterranean world in the Iron Age. She has participated in various archaeological projects in Canada, Bermuda, Greece, Italy and Macedonia, and currently works on projects in Turkey and Tunisia.

Kenneth Yu has just joined the committee. He is an Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of Toronto. He is interested in the confluence of Greek literature and Greek religion, especially in the Second Sophistic, and is currently writing a monograph on early theorization of Greek religion in various Hellenistic and Imperial Greek scientific, philosophical, and grammatical texts. He has also published on Greek religion in Plato and Aristophanes, ancient paradoxography, and the modern historiography of Greek religion.

One member rotates off the program committee each year, so if you are interested in serving, drop an email to Dan Schowalter (schowa@carthage.edu).

SAMR LOGO CONTEST

We are soliciting ideas from the group for a new logo for publications and correspondence. Please send your ideas to Dan Schowalter (schowa@carthage.edu) If we choose your submission, you will receive a gift certificate.

TIME TO PAY YOUR DUES

As you are reading through this informative newsletter, you are probably wondering, "how can a small group like SAMR afford to be involved in so many different, interesting, and provocative endeavors?"

One answer is that we are almost completely dependent on the great volunteers who lend their time and talents to make SAMR programming and events outstanding. The other answer is that we do ask members to pay dues to support the organization.

As you can see below, the dues are not onerous, but it is important that members contribute to the organization. You can send a check to the address below, or you can [pay via credit card or paypal at this link](#).

Dues cover the calendar year, and everyone is on schedule to pay for 2021 right now. If, however, you never want to worry about paying dues again, take advantage of the new "lifetime" membership for only \$200. This will entitle you to ignore every future message about paying dues. Think of the time this will free up.

Obviously, we understand that there are many factors affecting peoples' finances these days, and we will not exclude anyone who isn't able to pay dues this year, but if you are able, please attend to this as soon as possible. Many thanks,

Individual dues

1 year \$20.00 (Student/Retired \$10)

2 years \$35.00

Lifetime \$200.00

TREASURER'S HOARD

SAMR finished up 2020 in good financial shape. We can now claim over 250 worldwide members, and we ended 2020 with total assets of \$4119.00.

The Society's operating budget covers annual administrative fees for memberships in international and US scholarly associations, maintains our internet accounts with Paypal and Wordpress, and funds registrations fees and AV equipment rentals at annual conferences. These AV equipment fees have increased quite a bit in recent years. In addition, treasury funds will help to host conferences and special programming.

As always, drop us an email at socamr@gmail.com

NAME THE NEWSLETTER CONTEST

SAMR is soliciting clever ideas for a name for our newsletter. Please send your ideas to Dan Schowalter (schowa@carthage.edu) If we choose your submission, you will receive a gift certificate.

SAMR CONFERENCE UPDATE

The SAMR conference, *Sailing with the Gods: Religion and Maritime Mobility in the Ancient World*, meeting in Floriana, Malta has now been rescheduled to June of 2022. Scholars from India, Israel, Europe, the UK, the US and Australia are scheduled to give papers. Details on the conference program, registration and hotels are forthcoming at the [conference website at this link](#). Please plan to attend, whether you are presenting, listening, visiting or just eager to explore with us the archaeological and cultural heritage of one of the Mediterranean's most distinctive islands.

For 2023, SAMR will be sponsoring a conference in the United Kingdom. The tentative dates are June 28 - July 1, 2023 (International SBL is in Salzburg, July 3-7). More details will be available this spring.

PRESIDENT'S CACHE

Dear SAMR members,

I hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy in this unprecedentedly challenging period. One of our good SAMR colleagues, Michalis Lychonas spent 28 days in the hospital in Greece (most of it in ICU), but has now returned home for rehabilitation. Our thoughts are with Michalis and everyone who has been affected physically, emotionally, or in any way by this pandemic and its impact on society and scholarship.

Since we could not be together for SAMR programming, this year, Eric Orlin has done an amazing job of bringing together our first virtual SAMR lecture series, featuring younger scholars speaking on a variety of topics very relevant to our current times (see p. 1). Please be sure to take in as many of these lectures as possible to support these excellent colleagues and help to maintain the scholarly interactions that make SAMR great.

As I look over the material assembled in this newsletter, I am overwhelmed by the great work that SAMR has sponsored in the past, and continues to support well into the future. Since Robyn and I took over as officers, it has taken a while to gain an overview of all the ways in which Sandy and Nancy, and all of our predecessors have used SAMR to facilitate scholarly conversation about ancient religions in the Mediterranean world. We are proud to serve the organization now, and we look forward to cooperating with all of you to grow this legacy forward.

***Previous Publications available from Lockwood Press**

[Religious Convergence in the Ancient Mediterranean](#)
Edited by Sandra Blakely and Billie Jean Collins

[Gods, Objects, and Ritual Practice](#) Edited by Sandra Blakely

SAMR PUBLICATION NEWS

We have great news on SAMR publication fronts, with papers just now in print or coming out soon from four different panels either sponsored by SAMR or organized by SAMR members at AIA, SCS and SBL.

December saw the publication in *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 21 of four papers first presented at the **Denver meeting of SBL in November 2018, *Ritual Matters: Materiality in Ancient Religion***. The panel focused on the collective essays in *Ritual Matters: Material Remains and Ancient Religion*, edited by Claudia Moser and Jennifer Knust (Michigan 2017). Congratulations to Katie Rask, "Familiarity and Phenomenology in Greece: Accumulated Votives as Group-made Monuments," Dina Boero, "The Cultural Biography of a Pilgrimage Token: From Hagiographical to Archaeological Evidence," Scott Possiel, "More than text: Approaching ritual papyri from Oxyrhynchus as inscribed objects," and Mark McClay, "Rethinking Orphic 'Bookishness': Text and Performance in Classical Mystery Religion."

SAMR's 2019 SCS panel, *Epic Gods, Imperial City*, which took place in San Diego, is nearly upon us. Hunter Gardner, editor of *Vergilius*, has graciously shepherded us through the process, and Vassiliki Panoussi of William and Mary has very kindly provided an introduction. Warm thanks and congratulations to the panel participants Jeffrey Brodd, "Vergil's Dream of the Afterlife," Julia Hejduk "Acrostic Reflections on Divine Violence in the Aeneid," Anke Walter "Festivals in Statius' Thebaid – Uncelebrating Vergil" and Laura Roesch, "Poetry in Motion: Movement, Violence and the Sacred Landscape in Peristephanon 11 and Aeneid 8."

And finally, we look forward in 2022 to the publication of **the next SAMR volume, *Data Science, Human Science, and Ancient Gods: Conversations in Theory and Method***. This will be the third volume in the Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religions from Lockwood Press,* and brings together papers from two different AIA and AIA/SCS conferences sessions organized by Megan Daniels and Sandy Blakely - *God the Anthropologist: text, material and theory in the study of ancient religion* (AIA Toronto, 2017) and *Gods in Our Machines? Critical Approaches to Big Data and Ancient Religion* (AIA Boston, 2018), with additional papers from colleagues around the field: contributors include Jacob Latham, Sarah Murray, Sebastian Heath, Jennifer Larson, Maggie Popkin, Willis Monroe, Dan-el Padila Peralta, Lindsey Mazurek, Kathryn Langenfeld, and R. Benjamin Gorham; Ian Rutherford is very graciously providing a concluding essay reflecting on the remit of the volume. Warm thanks and congratulations to all who have so diligently presented, written, reviewed and responded for all these projects!

SAMR CALL for PAPERS
SBL Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, November 20-23, 2021
PROPOSAL DUE DATE, MARCH 23, 2021

(1) Cultural Production and Social Networks within Greco-Roman Religion: The Religion of Enslaved Peoples and Freedpersons

Joint Session With: Redescribing Christian Origins (RCO) and Greco-Roman Religions

This panel will also continue a set of conversations begun in the 2020 RCO cycle on questions of typology, descriptive categories, practices, and the production of knowledge. Of particular interest for this panel is evidence for the religious discourses and practices of the enslaved and formerly enslaved (freedpersons). Potential foci for this topic include analyses of both literate and illiterate enslaved/freedperson populations throughout the ancient Mediterranean world: their day-to-day lives, literate training, and/or relative cultural capital within households or associated networks. We are open to a variety of forms of evidence in exploration of this subject matter, including so-called material culture, texts and other literary evidence, epigraphic evidence, and archaeological data related to reconstructed ritual practices. This session will be co-sponsored with the Greco-Roman Religions section and the Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions. All regions and time periods are open for consideration; however, we are particularly interested in evidence from the Roman Imperial period.

(2) Homo Necans, Homo Competens: Ritual Killing and Competition in the Ancient Mediterranean

Joint Session With: Religious Competition

Ritual killing positions humans against animals, mythic prototypes and other human groups vying for social capital and supra-regional power. Such killings may be coterminous with feasting, monumentalization, the definition of sacred spaces, and the blending of historical triumph with performances for the gods; they also establish frameworks for the articulation of cultural boundaries of ethnicity (nationality), social status (free or enslaved), age grades and gender. This panel invites papers exploring ritual violence as performance and competition in Greco-Roman religious practice, including Jewish and Christian traditions; authors are encouraged to reflect on the trajectories of the theoretical frameworks established nearly fifty years ago in Burkert's seminal *Homo Necans*, e.g., ethology, functionalism, structuralism, and the long arc of human behavior from the Palaeolithic to Late Antiquity.

(3) Animals in Ancient Mediterranean Religions -- Joint Session With: Greco-Roman Religions

This panel examines human/animal relations in antiquity beyond the topos of animal sacrifice. We invite papers addressing this topic in literary and archaeological sources, and exploring the roles animals played in religious thought and practice. How, e.g., might we understand theriomorphic gods, the ritual use of animal masks and masquerades, or of animal parts in magical potions? Presenters may submit their papers for a planned publication.

Proposals should be submitted electronically through the SBL website. The deadline is 11:59 pm (Eastern Standard Time, UTC-5) **Tuesday, March 23, 2021**. 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 in San Francisco -- January 5-8, 2022

Joint AIA/SCS Panel: *Homo Necans* Revisited: Diachrony and the Long-Term in the Study of Ancient Religions

The Program Committee from the *Society for Ancient Mediterranean Religions* invites abstracts of 300 words maximum for 15-20-minute papers on the topic of time, evolution, and diachrony in the study of ancient religions.

In the Introduction to his monograph, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, Walter Burkert boldly states that “just as biology acquired an historical dimension with the concept of evolution, so sociology, like psychology before it, should accept the notion that human society is shaped by the past and can be understood only by examining its development over long periods of time (1972: xix-xx).” Despite Burkert’s general influence on scholars of ancient religions, his exhortation to account for the evolutionary and diachronic dimensions of religious phenomena has gone largely unheeded. Synchronic perspectives continue to dominate scholarship on ancient religions, and it remains a challenge to combine synchronic and diachronic approaches.

The aim of this panel will be to take up Burkert’s challenge to reconsider how *longue durée* perspectives on religion help us understand specific ritual behaviours in particular times and places. What do we lose and gain with long-term approaches? How can evolutionary models be properly employed in long-term analyses to explain religious thought and behaviour? How can we track continuity and change in developing religious systems?

As this panel will be proposed as a joint AIA/SCS panel, we welcome papers that deal with temporality and the potentials of the long-term in relation to the textual traditions and material cultures of ancient religions, as well as papers that integrate these sources.

We hope to include these papers in a larger edited collection of essays to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Walter Burkert’s seminal book, *Homo Necans*. Anticipated submission date of all papers following the conference is July 30th, 2022. We are grateful to Jeffery Brodd (jbrodd@csus.edu) who has agreed to be the lead editor on this volume.

Suggested sub-topics may include (but are not limited to):

- Mystery cults and sacrifice
- Anthropological approaches to religion
- Madness and the reversal of the social order in religion
- Funerary cults
- Guilt, punishment, expiation
- Scapegoat rituals
- Mythmaking
- Cosmologies

Submission deadline: **March 1st, 2021**. Please send submissions to socamr@gmail.com.

NEWS AND NOTES

Edinburgh Studies in Religion in Antiquity

James Rives has recently signed on as co-editor, along with Paula Fredriksen (Hebrew University) and Matt Novenson (Edinburgh University), of a new book series with Edinburgh University Press – Edinburgh Studies in Religion in Antiquity (ESRA) – and I want to spread the word. [Full details at this link.](#)

Edinburgh Studies in Religion in Antiquity publishes cutting-edge research in religion in the ancient world. It provides a platform for creative studies spanning time periods (classical antiquity and late antiquity), geographical regions (the Mediterranean and West Asia), religious traditions (Greek, Roman, Jewish, Christian and more), disciplines (comparative literature, archaeology, anthropology, and more) and theoretical questions (historical, philological, comparative, redescriptive, and more). Deconstructing literary canons and confessional boundaries, the series considers and questions what we moderns call "religion" as a prominent feature of the human past and a worthy object of historical enquiry. Our editorial board comprises Helen Bond, Kimberley Czajkowski, Benedikt Eckhardt, Martin Goodman, Oded Irshai, Timothy Lim, Yii-Jan Lin, Candida Moss, Paul Parvis, Matthew Thiessen, Philippa Townsend, and Greg Woolf.

We have no interest in competing with the traditional book series in, e.g., ANE, Hebrew Bible, early Christian studies, rabbinics, Greek religion, or Roman religion. Projects that fit neatly into one of those categories should go to one of the traditional series. But projects that transgress these traditional disciplinary boundaries we hope you will consider sending our way. Ideal for members of SAMR! We welcome relevant proposals from everyone from new PhDs to senior scholars.

To authors, we can offer a prestigious university press venue, a dedicated in-house editorial team, global distribution and sales, footnotes (not endnotes!), standard Chicago/SBL style, any foreign scripts you require, any maps or illustrations you require, print and ebook editions, and a guaranteed paperback edition for every monograph.

If you are working on a suitable project, please consider sending us a proposal. And please spread the word to any colleagues, grad students, postdocs, or others who might be interested. I'll be glad to answer any questions.

James Rives
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