

CLAS 109: Lucian on the Syrian Goddess

In this seminar we will read the treatise *On the Syrian Goddess* which was written in Ionic Greek (the same dialect of Herodotus). *On the Syrian Goddess* is often attributed to the Syrian author Lucian of Samosata who lived in the second century AD. The treatise describes the cult of the goddess Atargatis who was the major female divinity of Northern Syria. Besides the description of the cult of the goddess, *On the Syrian Goddess* also retells a series of myths of the area that the Greeks had already encountered in the 8th century BCE when Euboean merchants explored the coast of Syria. *On the Syrian Goddess* is an important text that gives us insight into the Eastern periphery of the Roman empire, where Greek was one of the main languages of local elites and literati. The essay is written in a simple style which is easy to read.

Requirements:

This seminar will be graded based on class participation and an individual presentation in which students will explore a topic of their interest. The presentations can treat either the linguistic, religious, or historical aspects of the text. Students with an intermediate level of Greek can use the annotated edition of Nimis and Hayes, while graduate and advanced students can consult Lightfoot's commentary.

Textbook:

Nimis, S., & Hayes, E. E. (2012). *Lucian's On the Syrian Goddess: An Intermediate Greek Reader: Greek Text with Running Vocabulary and Commentary*, Oxford.

Commentary:

Lightfoot (ed, J. L., & trans.). (2003). *Lucian: On the Syrian Goddess*. Oxford (available in the Geisel Library)