

Duke University
Center for Late Ancient Studies
Report on the activities in the academic year 2003-2004

I. Lecture Series

As in the preceding years, the core activity of the Center consisted in the organization of the monthly lecture series. The speakers and topics of the lectures reflect the diversity of the Center's fields of interest. An important consideration always is the potential benefit for graduate students working in Late Ancient Studies. Surrounding each of the lectures, there is ample opportunity for the graduate students to meet and discuss with the speaker.

The list of this year's lectures is as follows:

- 1) September 10, 2003: Guy G. Stroumsa (Hebrew University, Jerusalem) – From the Master of Wisdom to the Spiritual Master in Late Antiquity.
- 2) October 17, 2003: David Brakke (Indiana University) – Shenoute's "In the Night": A late Ancient Wrestling Match between a Monk and a Demon. With a response by Caroline T. Schroeder (Ithaca College & Cornell University).
- 3) November 11, 2003: Shimon Gibson (W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem) – Recent Archaeological Discoveries in and around Jerusalem.
- 4) February 6, 2004: Diskin Clay (Duke University) – The Art of Hell from Late Antiquity to Dante.
- 5) February 27, 2004: Kathryn Ringrose (University of California, San Diego) – Mistaken identities: Eunuchs and Angels in Byzantium.
- 6) March 17, 2004: Daniel Boyarin (University of California, Berkeley) – Why is Rabbi Yohanan a Woman? Platonic Love in the Talmud.
- 7) April 21, 2004: Jaś Elsner (University of Oxford & University of Chicago) – Late Antique Art: The Problem of the Concept and the Cumulative Aesthetic.

Lecture no. 1 was co-sponsored by the Duke Center for Judaic Studies; lecture no. 3 was co-organized and co-sponsored by the same Center. Lecture no. 6 was organized in close cooperation with the "Theory and the Study of Premodernity Group" (funded by a grant from the Mellon program in "Making the Humanities Central," the Franklin Center, and the Vice-Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies, with assistance from several departments). This group had selected professor Boyarin as one of its invited speakers, which made the organization of an additional CLAS lecture by the same speaker convenient and less expensive. For the organization of the other lectures there was close cooperation with departments participating in the Center, viz. Art and Art History, Classical Studies, Religion.

All the lectures were well attended, mainly by graduate students and staff from Duke and UNC Chapel Hill. While there was an average of 25 à 30 attendees, for some lectures (especially nos. 3, 4, and 7) the audience mounted to 45 or 50 persons.

Besides the main program of monthly lectures, the Center organized one lecture on a more informal and ad-hoc basis:

- 8) January 22, 2004: Gertrud van Loon (University of Leiden) – The Cave Church of Abu Hinnis (Middle Egypt). Christian Wall Paintings from the 6th-8th centuries.

The Center further participated in the organization and planning of the visit of Polymnia Athanassiadi (University of Athens), sponsored by the Onassis Foundation. Professor Athanassiadi gave lectures at the Classics departments of Duke University and UNC Chapel Hill. She also participated in the discussion of some of her work at a meeting of the CLAS Reading Group (see under II).

II. Reading Group

Under the auspices of the Center, the Reading Group “Late Ancient Studies” meets on a monthly basis in an evening session to discuss recent publications (one or more articles or a section of a monograph) in one of the subfields of Late Ancient Studies. Here again the focus is on the graduate students, who make suggestions for the selection of the readings and appoint one among them (alternatingly) to lead and structure the discussion. Participants in the Reading Group are graduate students and faculty members from Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill. Faculty from other universities occasionally attend the meetings, as do scholars working at the National Humanities Center and other visitors.

The Reading Group has met eight times in the course of the academic year 2003-2004. The convener of the group, who also took care of the distribution of the texts, was Ariel Bybee (Graduate Program in Religion). The attendance is between 12 and 25 persons (3 – 6 of whom are faculty).

One of our meetings (April 6) was devoted to the discussion of two recent articles by Polymnia Athanassiadi (on “The Chaldean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy” and “The Creation of Orthodoxy in Neoplatonism”), in the presence of the author herself. With a lively audience of avid readers of her work, we had a most interesting discussion and exchange of ideas.

III. Next Year’s Program

Preparations for next year’s program are well under way. Contacts with a number of prospective speakers have been made.

For the funding of next year’s activities, we hope in the first place to rely on the Funds of the Provost and Arts & Sciences (prospective amount of \$ 5,000). With the Center for Judaic Studies we have an outstanding relationship of cooperation which, we are confident, will again result in co-organizing and co-sponsoring one or two activities. In addition, we will ask the participating departments to assist us in organizing lectures or activities in their field of expertise.

IV. Financial Situation

Expenses	<u>5360.63</u>
Income	
A. Funds from Provost and Arts & Sciences	5,000.00
B. Balance forward	452.18
Total income A + B:	<u>5.452.18</u>
Balance to carry forward to next year:	91.55

V. Organization and administration of the Center

During the academic year 2003-2004 the Executive Committee of the Center was composed as follows:

- Lucas Van Rompay (Director)
- Mary T. Boatwright
- Peter Burian
- Elizabeth Clark
- Bart Ehrman (UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of Religious Studies)
- Michael Ferejohn
- Zlatko Plese (UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of Religious Studies)
- Kent Rigsby
- Annabel Wharton
- Clare Woods (on leave).

Administrative work for the Center for Late Ancient Studies is carried out, efficiently and with much dedication, by the staff of the Department of Religion: Nancy Hurtgen, Kathy Duke, and Sandra Woods.

In its meeting of May 3, 2004, the Executive Committee decided to invite the graduate students to take one seat in the Executive Committee. This formal adjustment is meant to give the graduate students an even more direct role in all the Center's activities. One student will be elected by September 2004. Following the meeting, Michael Ferejohn withdrew as a member of the Committee.

VI. Approval of the Report

A draft version of the report was approved at the Executive Committee's meeting of May 3, 2004. The final version circulated among committee members by e-mail and received its final approval mid August 2004.

For the Executive Committee,

Lucas Van Rompay, director.