Introduction to Ancient Mediterranean Societies
“SEXUALITY AND THE SACRED”

ANCMED 101-2 (5180); REL 110-2 (5179); JS 180-2 (5181)

Tuesday and Thursday ~ 10:00 – 11:15 AM

Instructor: Professor William K. Gilders

In line with its subtitle, this course provides an introduction to the distinctive and interrelated cultures of the ancient Mediterranean world, from the Bronze Age until the Christianization of the Roman Empire (ca. 3300 BCE – ca. 400 CE), through a special focus on cultural phenomena identified with the categories of “sexuality” and “religion” (“the sacred”).

Emphasizing the complex ways in which “sexuality” and “religion” interacted in the lives of ancient Mediterranean people, the course will investigate (for example) myths about the creating and sustaining of the world through sexual activity, beliefs about sexual unions between human beings and gods and other powerful beings, and ideas about how gods and other powerful beings regulated and judged human sexual desires and behaviors. The course will give special attention to the emergence and development of Judaism and Christianity in the ancient Mediterranean context and to how those internally diverse traditions engaged with questions about sexual desire and behavior.

This is an introductory and survey course!

Aphrodite and Eros, Mother and Son Deities of Love and Desire