

## **THE SCIENCE AND EMPIRE READING GROUP**

The 'Science and Empire' reading group is affiliated with the Leverhulme 'Science and Empire' project run by the St Andrews School of Classics. It is committed to scheduling regular meetings involving the discussion of texts that fall broadly within the category of 'ancient science.' Our objectives include the exploration of a variety of approaches and methodologies with which we may read ancient (especially Graeco-Roman Imperial) scientific, technical and encyclopaedic texts against their cultural and intellectual context; the discussion of key themes in these texts; and the understanding of the 'mindset' of ancient science. It hopes, ultimately, to show that even the most 'technical' scientific texts engaged in their cultural context as much as other, more 'mainstream' literature.

**Winter Semester 2007-08: Cosmos and Order in Plato's *Timaeus*  
Wednesdays (weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12), 5-6:30 pm  
School of Classics, Swallowgate, Room S11.**

Text: Plato, *Timaeus* (Translations: *Plato, Vol. IX (Timaeus Critias Cleitophon Menexenus Epistles)*, transl. R. G. Bury. Loeb Classical Library, 1929: repr.1999; or *Plato, Timaeus*, transl. D. Zeyl, Hackett 2000)

For the first semester, the reading group will be exploring the connection between science (understood as natural science) and philosophy. More specifically, we hope that our readings from Plato's *Timaeus* (and, alongside it, passages of the *Republic*) will gradually build up an understanding of the seminal role philosophy played in the division of the sciences in Classical antiquity. Further, we would like to trace the development of this influence in later centuries, by exploring aspects of the reception of the *Timaeus* in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. We hope to move on to the study of Hellenistic and Roman material in the second semester.

The sessions are meant to be friendly, informal meetings in which all can participate. They are open to all staff and postgraduate students. Every fortnight we will ask a group member to present to us, by way of a short introduction, a passage from the *Timaeus*. We will then all read it together and discuss points of interest. We are very keen to learn from a diversity of approaches emerging from people's particular research interests, and assume no prior knowledge of either Plato or ancient philosophy – only an interest in (or curiosity about) the topic.

Suggested themes: narrative voice in the text; the structure of *Timaeus*' account; the role of medical knowledge; science and the empire of Atlantis; the parallel conception of cosmic realms and its intellectual backdrop; the *Timaeus* in the context of 4<sup>th</sup>-century Greek intellectual and scientific thought; the text's reception in later times, especially by 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Platonism.

Text Allocation:

Week 2 (10<sup>th</sup> October): 19A-27B (Alex Long)

Week 4 (24<sup>th</sup> October): 27C-37C (Daniel Mintz)

Week 6 (7<sup>th</sup> November): 37C-47E (Sarah Broadie)

Week 8 (21<sup>st</sup> November): 47E-69A (tba)

Week 10 (5<sup>th</sup> December): 69A-92C (Joe Howley)

Week 12 (19<sup>th</sup> December): General themes/reception (Katerina Oikonomopoulou)

For more information, please contact:

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