

MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
Introduction to Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
Week 3: Astrology and Culture
Optional Reading
Nick Campion

Optional Reading: Primary Sources

The emphasis this week is on searching out your own material. There is a huge amount of potential reading by astrologers, and it expands every day. We are making just a couple of recommendations, but search online and you will find a huge amount of material that tells you about the culture of 21st century western astrology, both 'popular' and 'serious'. And that's before we even consider non-western traditions, which are as much a part of this week as western astrology. You may want to search for primary sources (works by astrologers) on Maya astrology, Chinese astrology, Indian astrology, Aboriginal astrology, Native American astrology, or any kind. All may be considered primary source material.

The same advice applies to this week as every other. Select your reading carefully, and **DON'T (!)** try to read too much or you will be overwhelmed. Look at this list as like a shelf of books in a library. Sample the ones which interest you.

To get you thinking, here are three suggestions on western astrology.

Ptolemy, Claudius, *Centoloquium*, transcribed and annotated by Deborah Houlding from Henry Coley, *Clavis Astrologiae Elimata*, London 1669, aphorisms 1-14.

<http://skyscript.co.uk/centiloquium1.html>

This text is almost certainly from the 8th century Islamic world, but achieved immense importance because of its attribution to Ptolemy. The early passages are of great significance for the philosophy of astrology.

Kochunas, Brad, 'Why Astrology Works'.

This is a contemporary view of the problem.

http://www.mountainastrologer.com/standards/editor's%20choice/articles/why_ast.html

We are not recommending this because it is an authoritative statement of 'why astrology works', but because it is an example of an astrologer writing on 'why astrology works' for a modern audience. Also, The Mountain Astrologer, the magazine which published this article, is a major on-line source, highly respected amongst astrologers.

Rudhyar, Dane, *The Astrology of Personality*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Chap 1, originally published in 1936.

Dane Rudhyar's original manifesto of astrology's nature and function

http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=dApyUYhq4-4C&pg=PA37&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false

You do not need to purchase additional books but there are a few we could recommend. Jones, Marc Edmund, *Astrology: How and Why it Works*, London: RKP 1977, Chap 1, (pp. 3-35). We are not recommending this because it is an authoritative statement of 'why astrology works', but because it is an example of an astrologer writing on 'why astrology works' for a modern audience. We do not have Jones' work on PDF and it is not available on-line, but Jones, an American theosophist, was very highly regarded in his lifetime, and his books are available second-hand.

Other books by modern western astrologers on how astrology works include *Hymns to the Ancient Gods* by Michael Harding and *The Cosmic Loom* by Dennis Elwell.

The web and social media

The quantity of work by astrologers on the web and social media increases every day, in common with every other area of activity. Take a coupe of key words such as 'astrology' and 'divination', or 'science', or 'psychology' or another word of your choice, and find what you can on the web, or you tube, or twitter or any other medium.

Try applying the guidelines from the Critical Review or Compare and Contrast essay guidelines to examine who such astrologers are and what they are saying.

Optional Reading: Secondary Sources

Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, 2007, Vol. 1 no 2
Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, 2019, Vol. 13 no 1
Online access through the University library

Both these editions of the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* are dedicated to studies of astrology, some historical, some modern. The first was edited by Michael York, first director of the Sophia Centre, the second by Darrelyn Gunzburg.

JSTOR and the University library: we suggest a continuing search for 'astrology' on JSTOR, to see what kinds of material are found. In your search try combining 'astrology; with 'philosophy'', or 'China', 'Mesoamerica' or 'India'

Campion, Nicholas, *A History of Western Astrology*, Vol. 1. The Ancient World, London: Continuum, 2009, Introduction.
Hard copy only, if you have a copy.

Curry, Patrick, 'An Aporia for Astrology', *Radical Astrology, A Set of Discussion Papers: Astrology and Theory*, London, privately published 1983, pp. 5.1-5.15.
http://www.cosmocritic.com/pdfs/Curry_Patrick_Aporia.pdf

The Radical Astrology papers were the first attempt by 'insiders' (all the authors were astrologers (a term we have to define!)) to take a critical, academically-inspired, examination of astrology. Curry's paper is the first attempt to create a typology of astrology, using modern concepts. That several of Curry's pieces are recommended in this module, reflects his role as a pioneering academic in this area.

Curry, Patrick and Roy Willis, *Astrology, Science and Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

Any section of this book can be relevant to this week. Curry and Willis argue that astrology is a form of divination. It is not available online, but buy a second-hand copy if you can.

Curry, Patrick, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 1-15.

CLA PDF ON MOODLE

Curry establishes his social-class based typology of high, middling and low astrology.

Greene, Liz, *Jung's Studies in Astrology* (London: Routledge, 2018).

Online access through the University library.

C.G.Jung's psychological theories have had a powerful impact on modern astrological thought. Liz Greene's book is the most important study of Jung's influence on astrology. We suggest just read chapter 1 this week.

Dawkins, Richard, 'The Real Romance in the Stars', *Independent on Sunday*, 31 December 1995.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/the-real-romance-in-the-stars-1527970.html>

This attack on astrology by the now famous geneticist and leading atheist caused much controversy when it was published in 1995

Greene, Liz, 'Signs, Signatures and Symbols: the languages of Heaven', in *Astrologies*, Nicholas Campion and Liz Greene (eds.), Sophia Centre Press, 2011, pp pp. 17-45.

Gunzburg, Darrelyn, 'How do Astrologers Read Charts?', in Nicholas Campion and Liz Greene (eds.), *Astrologies: Plurality and Diversity*, Lampeter: Sophia Centre Press, 2010. pp. 181-200.

Kelly, Ivan W., 'The Concepts of Modern Astrology: a Critique', *Psychological Reports*, 1997, Vol. 81, pp. 1035-1066, expanded and revised, [www.astrosurf.com](http://www.astrosurf.com/nitschelm/Modern_criticism.pdf), http://www.astrosurf.com/nitschelm/Modern_criticism.pdf

Kelly is a sceptic and hostile to the notion of astrology, but draws for his evidence on statements by astrologers.

Kemper, Steven, 'Sinhalese Astrology, South Asian Caste Systems, and the Notion of Individuality', *Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, (May 1979), pp. 477-97.

JSTOR

Kemper, Steven, 'Time, Person, and Gender in Sinhalese Astrology', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 7, no. 4, (Nov. 1980), pp. 744-58.

JSTOR

North, John, 'Celestial Influence – the major premises of astrology', North, John, *Stars, Minds and Fate: Essays in Ancient and Medieval Cosmology*, London, The Hambledon Press 1989, pp. 243-298.

John North was one of the foremost historians of medieval astrology. In this chapter he sets out the theory of celestial influence from medieval sources.

All but pp 252-3 is on Google Books

http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=PHdKtsVb_X4C&pg=PA243&source=gbs_to_c_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false

Phillipson, Garry, *Astrology in the Year Zero*, London: Flare Publications 2000, chap XII (pp. 182-197).

CLA PDF ON MOODLE

Phillipson, Garry, 'Modern Science, Epistemology and Astrology', Originally published in *Correlation* Vol.23(2) 2006

http://www.astrozero.co.uk/articles/modern_science.pdf

Schoener*, Gustav-Adolf, 'Astrology: Between Religion and the Empirical', trans. Shane Denson, *Esoterica* Vol. 4.

<http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIV/astrology.htm>.

*Institut für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft, Leibniz Universität, Hannover.

Tylor, Edward Burnett, *Primitive Culture*, 3 Vols., (London: John Murray 1920 [1871]), Vol. I, pp. 112-137.

PDF ON MOODLE

This is the classic statement of astrology as a hang-over from a previous, lower, level of evolutionary development. In a sense this material is both 'secondary' and 'primary'. It is secondary because it is academic and scholarly, but primary because it is now raw evidence for our understanding of the formulation of the theory that astrology represents a primitive level of intellectual evolution.

Web sites.

This is one class when you can make free use of the web: any web site may indicate contemporary attitudes to astrology. Your critical eye, though, should be attuned to the sense that the mass of astrology you find on the web is *indicative*, not *authoritative*. That is, such sites are evidence which may *indicate* something

about the nature, function, role or appeal of astrology, but nothing they contain can be regarded as authoritative. They are representative of opinions, rather than facts.

<http://www.astrozero.co.uk/articles/articles.htm>

This is Garry Phillipson's web site, an evolution from his book, *Astrology in the Year Zero*. Scroll down this page and you will find a series of interviews. If you are to prioritise your reading, Dennis Elwell, Mike Harding, Rob Hand and Bernard Eccles may be most immediately relevant.

<http://www.skyscript.co.uk/books.html>

<http://www.skyscript.co.uk/texts.html>

These two URLs are pages within Deborah Houlding's Skyscript site. The emphasis is on technical astrology, but there is much information of relevance to discussions on the nature of astrology. Most of the older texts listed are not directly relevant to this module, but low down the 'books' page is a list of interviews, some of which are duplicated on the Astrozero page.

<http://rudolphsmit.nl/index.html>

Astrology-and-science.com is a comprehensive reference area for links and information related to the scientific investigation of astrology in the late twentieth century. You should NOT become sidetracked into questions of whether astrology is true or false. We are concerned about the phenomenon and, in this sense, for the purposes of the MA, scientific investigations of astrology exist within a cultural framework.

<http://www.planetos.info/>

Contains material on Michel Gauquelin

<http://www.mountainastrologer.com>

The Mountain Astrologer is unusual in that it is a commercially successful magazine which carries material aimed at educated astrologers. The website carries a range of articles which are primary source material for any analysis of how astrological reasoning works. If we want to examine the nature of astrological narratives, such modern material is vital.