

MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology

History of Astrology, 2011-12

A note on assessment

Assessment methods are designed to test the extent to which you have satisfied the learning outcomes listed on the official module description. Masters level degrees are designed to teach certain qualities and skills. The core skills required by the MA in Cultural Astronomy are taught in the compulsory modules and the success with which you achieve them, as expressed by this module's learning outcomes, is assessed by the assessment tasks. Part of the assessment depends on the demonstration of knowledge and understanding. Most of the assessment criteria, though, evaluate your critical thinking, communication and analytical skills. The evidence is important but success at Masters' level depends on your ability to evaluate the evidence in order to advance a clear argument, using a critical appraisal of the evidence and scholarly material.

You should by now have read the guidelines under 'Writing and Reading Guidelines' on the General Information page and the guidelines on Writing a Critical Review.

1. ASSIGNMENT 1

1000 word essay: Write a Critical Review of

Patrick Curry, 'The Historiography of Astrology: A Diagnosis and a Prescription', in K.von Stuckrad, G. Oestmann and D. Rutkin (eds.), *Horoscopes and History* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 261-74 (PDF from patrickcurry.co.uk)

Download PDF here:

<http://www.patrickcurry.co.uk/papers.htm#1>

NB: as this is Curry's own PDF, use the page numbers on his version. If you have the book you may use the published page numbers.

Guidelines:

Read the PDF on Writing Academic Reviews on the General Information Page on Moodle

You should stay within 5% of the required word length.

For this assignment you will also find these papers useful:

'The Thomas-Geertz Debate'

In 1975 a debate occurred in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* concerning certain assumptions that Geertz felt had distorted the discussion in Thomas' book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Peregrine Books, 1971). Both essays are on JSTOR. The details are:

Geertz, Hildred, 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 6 no 1 (Summer 1975) pp. 71-89.

Thomas, Keith, 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, II', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Vol. 6 no 1 (Summer 1975) pp. 91-109.

In addition, these may be useful

Taub, Liba, 'Review: The Rehabilitation of Wretched Subjects', Reviewed work(s): Ancient Astrology by Tamsyn Barton; Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine in the Roman Empire by Tamsyn Barton, Early Science and Medicine, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1997), pp. 74-87

JSTOR

Neugebauer, Otto, 'The History of Wretched Subjects', Isis, vol. 42, June 1951, reprinted in Neugebauer, Otto, Astronomy and History: Selected Essays, New York, Berlin, Heidelberg, Tokyo, 1983, p. 3, and Culture and Cosmos, Autumn/Winter 1997, Vol. 1 no 2, pp. 3-4.

Documents as PDF, MA CAA ONLINE LIBRARY, CULTURE AND COSMOS

<http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/TEXTS/thomasreligion.pdf>

Alan MacFarlane, review of Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971. Reviewed in History Today, 1981. Original text.

Hammond, Dorothy, Magic : A Problem in Semantics, American Anthropologist, New Series, V.72, No.6 (Dec.,1970), pp.1349-1356 (JSTOR)

2. ASSIGNMENT 2

4000 word essay written on a topic within the subject area (80% of total marks).

Note: Unless the question states otherwise, you may base your essay on any time period covered in the module. Also, you may make use of any course material you have covered in other modules. You are also expected to make use of JSTOR and may, if appropriate, draw in material on the history of astrology in different cultures.

You may choose your own essay title. This must be decided together with the course tutor after completing an essay proposal form (found on the Online Library in Moodle). An essay submitted with a title which has not been agreed will not be marked.

1. Are scientific or religious priorities most significant in attempts to reform astrology?
2. Did Babylonian astrology die out in the classical world?
3. Using the work of at least two writers, consider how literature is used to express the cosmology of the writers' times.
4. Did belief in astrology decline in the 17th century?
5. To what extent are narratives of predestination a feature of western astrology?
6. Did the Greeks invent astrology?
7. Does astrology offer a credible theory of history?

Your essay must:

- be clearly structured
- be fluently written, avoiding grammatical and punctuation errors
- make use of appropriate primary sources
- include a clear introduction setting out the question and your approach
- make reference to major protagonists and scholarly work in the field
- evaluate competing arguments
- recognise the problem of contested or incomplete evidence
- include clear and thorough referencing and bibliography according to the required format
- contain a clear conclusion

Lastly - Remember

- The word count includes direct quotations, which should not comprise more than 10% of the total.
- You may also use course material from modules you have studied previously.
- You should stay within 5% of the required word length.
- Please review the essay writing guidelines