

“CREATING GODS THROUGH NARRATIVES: THE ONTOLOGY OF GREEK MYTHIC CHARACTERS.”



Sarah Iles Johnston
The Ohio State University
February 28, 2018, 5:30-7:00
Building 50, Room 51A

This paper will open with an overview of recent work by narratologists and analytical philosophers on the ontology of fictional characters. From there it proceeds to arguments about the ontological status of characters who appear in fictionalizing narratives such as the *Odyssey* or the *Ramayana* who are simultaneously the objects of religious belief. I suggest that such characters draw certain unique advantages from the ways in which their stories are narrated. Gods are described in different ways on different occasions. The ‘human’ god is easier to believe in, but the ‘theologically correct’ god can better be used to explain certain aspects of the way the world works and justify social norms. The Greek gods are portrayed in both ways. Cumulatively, the narratives created gods who were credible enough to believe in but powerful enough to matter.

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Cultures, Minds and Medicines

The Cultures, Minds and Medicines workshop series meets four to five times each term on Wednesdays from 5:30-7 for dinner and talks about culture and healing. We hear from artists, scientists, ethnographers, literature scholars and more, with the goal of understanding not only what they say, but also what counts as data for them and how they understand their task in communicating to their primary audience. Talks take place in Anthropology, Building 50, room 51A (the conference room).

The workshop is associated with a certificate program for graduate students. Students must attend the biweekly workshops in Cultures, Minds and Medicines over the course of a year, and take at least one relevant course outside of their degree-granting program, as approved by the faculty certificate committee. In most cases, non-anthropologists should enroll in a graduate level anthropology course, and anthropologists should enroll in a course in medicine, psychology or some other discipline.

For students enrolled in the class each quarter, the requirement is to attend the workshops.