

# ANNOUNCEMENT: Call for Papers

**Empire and the Media of Religion: A Workshop on Comparative Approaches to the Study of**

**Religion in the Greco-Roman Imperial Era and Early China**

Organized by Professors **Carol Bakhos** (Near Eastern Languages and Cultures) and **Robert Gurval** (Classics)

May 21-22

, 2014

University of California, Los Angeles

In the final chapter of his newly revised and expanded work,

*From Jupiter to Christ: On the History of Religion in the*

*Roman Imperial Period*

(Oxford University Press 2014), **Jörg Rüpke** asks a fundamental question confronting

students of Roman imperial religion, “How Does Empire Change Religion, and How does Religion Change an Empire?” Rüpke argues that the change is not so much in the growth or increase in the number of religions as the transformation of religion itself as a cultural and social phenomenon: religion came to embrace the whole texture of human life and served as an agent for legitimating political authority and formulating new types of identity.

An important factor in the processes of this change was the communicative aspect of religion manifested and disseminated beyond the city and local regions and throughout the vast expanses of Empire.

Funded by the **UCLA Asia Institute** and in collaboration with the **Hong Kong University of Science and Technology**, this workshop seeks 25-30-minute presentations from junior scholars (Ph.D.s within the last seven years and advanced graduate students) who wish to share their research and collaborate on comparative approaches to understanding empire and religion in the Greco-Roman imperial era and in Early China. We welcome abstracts that explore the texts, practices, institutions, and laws by which religion was embodied, codified and disseminated throughout the vast expanses of these ancient empires. We are particularly interested in how the communicative aspects of media (literary, documentary, visual and/or architectural) reflected the formulations of religious identity and the legitimation or de-legitimation of political authority. How do religious texts engage, negotiate or subvert political authority? How do they reflect their role in long-distance dissemination or ascertain a locative frame? What role does empire play in religious rhetoric, imagery, and in some instances theology? What are the ways in which religion exerts its influence on imperial discourse? To what extent did rulers embrace religious symbolism, beliefs and practices for political purposes? Where did religion avoid the partly pervasive,

partly superficial impact of empire? How did law mediate between religion and empire?

The workshop will be held at **UCLA on May 21 and 22, 2015**. We will provide accommodations for a maximum of three nights. The deadline for submission of abstracts (300-500 words) will be **February 2**. Send submissions to Professor **Carol Bakhos** at [csr@humnet.ucla.edu](mailto:csr@humnet.ucla.edu) and if you have any questions please contact Professor **Robert Gurval** at [gurval@humnet.ucla.edu](mailto:gurval@humnet.ucla.edu).