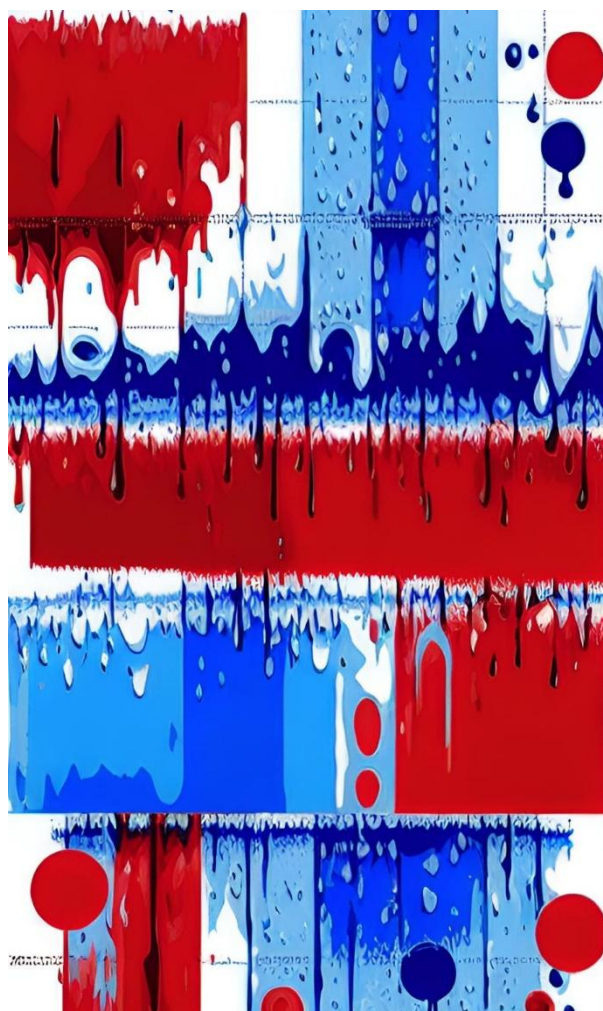
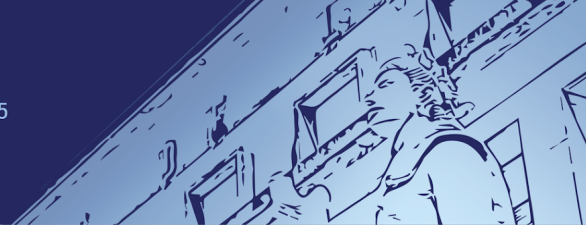


CALL FOR PAPERS

Purity and Pollution: Constructing Moral Order in Ancient Greece and Rome



PANEL ORGANIZATION:
Johanna Kaiser & Bernadette Descharmes

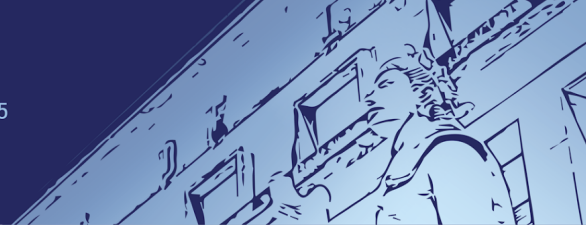


ORGANIZER 1:

name	Johanna Kaiser
e-mail	kaiserjo@sas.upenn.edu
affiliation	University of Pennsylvania
country	USA
biography	Dr. Johanna Kaiser currently works as Lecturer in Classical Studies both at the University of Pennsylvania and at Howard University. Her research focuses on sense perception, ancient emotions, and material studies in imperial Latin poetry. Her current projects investigate the social, moral, and aesthetic dimensions of ancient disgust as perceived through the sense of smell. Johanna Kaiser has studied at the University of Pennsylvania (2016-2022) and at the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg (2011-2016).

ORGANIZER 2:

name	Bernadette Descharmes
e-mail	b.descharmes@tu-braunschweig.de
affiliation	Technische Universität Braunschweig
country	Germany
biography	Dr. Bernadette Descharmes is Assistant Professor in Ancient History at the Technische Universität Braunschweig since 2009. Currently her research focuses on purity and impurity in Roman culture. Her “Habilitationsschrift”, submitted this September, deals with pollution in Roman moral discourse. Further studies explore the history of gender, body and emotions. Her dissertation on revenge in Greek tragedy was published in 2011. From 2006 until 2009, Bernadette Descharmes held a PhD scholarship at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg. She studied at the Humboldt-Universität Berlin (2001-2006), at Royal Holloway College/University of London (2000-2001), and at the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg (1998-2000).



PANEL SYNOPSIS:

Purity and pollution have broadly been recognized as religious concepts in ancient Mediterranean cultures, deeply intertwined with ritual practices. This panel broadens the scope by examining purity and pollution as moral categories within the social and political ideologies of Greece and Rome. Across various genres, ancient authors used the language of purity and impurity to express more than just religious or aesthetic ideas; it was used as a tool for shaping societal ideals, enforcing hierarchies, and reinforcing political power.

Our panel invites papers on the literary representations of purity and pollution, focusing on their political and social contexts, their sensory and aesthetic qualities, and the emotions they evoke—particularly pleasure and disgust. Our panel seeks to examine the boundaries between purity and impurity, and how these concepts celebrate moral integrity or flag moral deviance. We are interested in exploring how societies used the categories pure/impure to construct and reinforce social hierarchies across gender, class, age, and ethnic identity. Additionally, we invite questions on how purity and pollution were mobilized in political discourse to legitimize or undermine power and aggression.

Observations:

Proposals may address the following aspects:

- **Aesthetic and Sensory Depictions:** How cleanliness and dirt are sensorially represented to evoke emotional responses and shape moral ideals.
- **Emotions:** (pleasure and disgust) expressed and aroused by the literary representations of cleanliness and dirt.
- **Social Hierarchies and Identities:** The construction of social categories—such as gender, class, age, and ethnicity—through the categories of “pure” and “impure”.
- **Moral and Ethical Impurity:** The association of impurity with moral failings, societal taboos, and ethical dilemmas, and how these are represented across literary genres.
- **Political Programs, Superiority, Power, and Aggression** legitimized by the categories of “pure” and “impure.”
- **Ritual and Religious Purity:** The portrayal of purification rituals and their role in maintaining cosmic and societal order.
- **Purity in Language and Rhetoric:** How notions of purity and impurity were reflected in literary style, and how “impure” forms of expression subverted rhetorical and cultural norms.

Applications should include an abstract (max. 500 words) and a short bio (also stating your affiliation). We plan to have 30-minute presentations followed by questions and discussion for each presenter.