

Summer School
Gods, rites and objects.
Introduction to Roman religion through the prism of its
materiality
Rome, 8-12 September 2025



The Summer School *Gods, rites and objects. Introduction to Roman religion through the prism of its materiality* will focus on the materiality of Roman religion through cultic practices. Ritual dynamics aim to bring together groups and individuals on the one hand, and divinities on the other, in a wide variety of contexts (civic, urban, associative or domestic).

These rites are characterised by a material dimension. Roman cult practices are rooted in spaces and involve the presence of objects. Ritual places and objects will be studied as mediators and agents of dialogue between people and divinities. To what extent do they interact and contribute, through their form and materiality, to the construction and representation of gods and rites (gestures and movements)?

We want to focus on 'affordances', i.e. the characteristics of each object and place that determine the performance of rituals on it and/or through it. It is in the affordances that the agency of the object and place resides, because it is its mode of being (form and materiality) that directly influences ritual gestures and movements.

We also want to analyse the status of objects. Objects may have been created exclusively for religious purposes, or they may have had a secular (or everyday) use before being received into the religious sphere. So, we need to think about the status of books, statues, stones, plants, etc. in terms of their past (origin) or their future (memory). The agency of these objects is revealed above all in the psychological, affective and ritual reactions they provoke in individuals and communities.

The main aim of this Summer School is to make young researchers aware of the importance of material data (objects and places of worship) in their analyses. We will be organising workshops during which young researchers will present their research, as well as visits to museums to observe the objects themselves and to places of worship to better appreciate the topography of Rome.

Organisers

Giorgio Ferri (Sapienza Università di Roma), Francesca Prescendi Morresi (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris), Jörg Rüpke (Erfurt, Max Weber Kolleg, KFG “Religion and Urbanity”), Alessandro Saggiaro (Sapienza Università di Roma).

Partnerships / Staff members

Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom, École Française de Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Université Franco-Italienne, Paolo Garofalo (Universidade de Lisboa)

Programme (provisional)

Monday 8:

Sapienza Università di Roma, Piazzale Aldo Moro, 5

9.00-12.30: general introduction, presentations by participants on their current research

14.30-18.00: visit (Mausoleum of St. Helena and Catacombs of Saints Marcellino and Pietro)

Dinner

Tuesday 9:

Visits to Rome’s environs: Nemi (Temple of Diana Nemorensis, emissary of the lake, Museo delle Navi), Mithraeum of Marino, Appia Antica.

Wednesday 10:

Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, Largo di Villa Peretti, 2; Alle Terme, Viale Enrico de Nicola, 78

9.00-14.00: presentations by participants on their current research

Visit to Palazzo Massimo (by German Archaeological Institute Rom)

Thursday 11:

École Française de Rome, Piazza Navona

9.00-18.00: presentations by participants on their current research

Friday 12:

German Archaeological Institute (DAI), Via Sardegna 79

9.00-12.30: presentations and closing remarks; guided visit to the Institute

(optional) afternoon: visit to the Museum of the Forma Urbis

Practical information

Duration

The Summer School will take place in September, from Monday 8 to Friday 12 (morning). Arrival is expected during the day or evening of Sunday 7 September.

Eligibility

The Summer School is open to 15 participants: doctoral students, young researchers (postdocs), and to outstanding master's students (if their request is duly justified).

Proposals

Please send to the three emails below:

francesca.prescendi-morresi@ephe.psl.eu

giorgio.ferri@uniroma1.it

Joerg.Ruepke@uni-erfurt.de

- a letter of motivation (max. 500 words)
- a synthetic CV (max. 1000 words), indicating your educational background and the main focus(es) of your research.
- a short description (max. 300 words) of your paper proposal

The deadline for sending your proposals is 31 March 2025

Evaluation and registration:

The results of the evaluation process will be announced on **21 April**. **The registration will be completed at a later stage after the payment of 50 euros by each candidate.**

Fees

Participants will be able to stay at the reduced rate of EUR 70 per room per night (EUR 350 for the week) at the Foresteria Sapienza, Via Volturno 42. Each participant can request a refund from his/her home university. The organizers are applying for scholarships to cover the costs, but the outcome will not be known until the summer. Meals will be paid by the participants, except for communal meals and coffee breaks offered by the organization.

Certificate and ECTS

Organizers may issue a certificate of participation and validation credits (up to 10 ECTS; to be confirmed at a later stage)

Languages accepted for communications: Italian, French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese. In the case of a language other than English, the preparation of bilingual materials (handouts, powerpoint, etc.) is strongly recommended.