

Call for Papers:

10TH UNISA CLASSICS COLLOQUIUM/FIRST SYMPOSIUM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW
TESTAMENT AND EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES

University of South Africa, Pretoria

Date: October 15 - 17, 2009

THEME:

'Family as Strategy in the Roman Empire and Early Christianity'

Papers are hereby invited on any aspect of the family in Greco-Roman antiquity and early Christianity that may be seen to further illuminate the conference topic. This Conference is a joint project of the Department of Classics and the Department of New Testament and Early Christian Studies. The interdisciplinary link is deliberate and aligns with the historical emergence of early Christianity as part and parcel of the Roman Empire. The approach of this conference seeks to emphasize that family, house and household were contextualised within the social and power relations of the time. Apart from literary investigations, we would like to encourage contributions with an historical or archaeological concern. Enquiries regarding theoretical and methodological issues, such as the interaction between literary and material evidence, the design of interpretive strategies and the fabrication of a socio-historiography are also welcomed.

The last few decades have witnessed an explosion of studies on a multitude of aspects concerning the family in Greco-Roman antiquity. This conference wishes to contribute to the ongoing debate by exploring the specific ways in which the family was [exploited] used as a strategy for a variety of social purposes. On the one hand, the family was generated by political, economic, cultural and moral forces. On the other hand, it functioned reciprocally to cultivate, reinforce and sustain the very practices from which it emerged.

The family may be interrogated in terms of its various dimensions; for instance, as a social site occupying space. It may be asked how the individual's place was determined in interaction with his or her family? How was the family, in terms of cultural discourses, strategically utilised as microcosm within a particular macrocosm? Exactly what was public and what was private in the workings of the Graeco-Roman family and how rigid was this distinction? How was the family determined by and—in its turn—fashioned material sites and cultural products: household architecture, art, decoration, utensils, and the like? The family may also be investigated in terms of its temporal dimension, such as its legacies from pre-colonial times, its role in Romanization and the ideal of *Romanitas*, as a nucleus of identity, cooption, and resistance. [, etc.] Furthermore, Early Christianity emerged as part and parcel of this complex discursive world and structured itself in continuity (e.g. patriarchy), but also deviated from the model in significant ways, for instance in how desire and gender was regulated within the structures of family life, and in its cultivation of movements such as asceticism and monasticism. How was the dominant family discourse appropriated by early Christianity and to what extent did the family as a form of strategy cooperate in the Christianization of the Roman Empire?

Finally, papers more concerned with appeals to either the continuity or discontinuity of the family formed in the Roman Empire into contemporary society will also be considered.

[The Colloquium is a collaborative effort by the Unisa Departments of New Testament & Early Christian Studies and Classics & World Languages.] Papers are limited to 45 minutes. Please submit abstracts of appr. 200 words via e-mail attachment to the organizing committee at either bosmapr@unisa.ac.za or Olympus@yebo.co.za by 30 June 2009. More information will be provided as soon as an indication of willingness to participate has been given.

