



**UNIVERSITÄT
ERFURT**

Max-Weber-Kolleg



MONDAY LECTURES | WISE 2024/25

IN RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

RESEARCH BUILDING "WELTBEZIEHUNGEN" | C19.00.02/03 | 16:15 - 17:45

LECTURE SERIES BY FRANCESCO MASSA

BEYOND LAST PAGANS: ROMAN POLYTHEISM RESHAPING IN LATE ANTIQUITY

18.11.2024 | PART I

THE "LAST PAGANS" AND THE "END OF PAGANISM": ANCIENT AND MODERN DISCOURSES

The first lecture will explore the notions we use today to talk about the late antique Greek and Roman polytheism. Analysis of modern and ancient terms is an important part of our understanding of the historical developments of the late antique Roman Empire. We will show how the representations of the "end of paganism" provided by Christian authors of the fourth-fifth century have largely influenced the modern and contemporary historiographical debate on late polytheism.

The image of the collapse of the ancient religion that is often implied in the category of "last pagans" derives in particular from the triumphalist vision of ecclesiastical historians (e.g., Rufinus of Aquileia, Church History): according to these authors, the time between Constantine, the first Christian emperor, and Theodosius, the emperor of the Nicene faith, represented the last phase of traditional polytheistic religion. Similarly, the "triumph of Christianity" in the empire's cities would have marginalized polytheistic practices, which would have retreated to the countryside after the laws of 391-392 to resist the winning religion (as the verses of Enedelechius' poem De mortibus boum clearly show).

**ALL GUESTS WELCOME.
NO REGISTRATION NECESSARY.**