**Greek Religion CX262/362**

**Seminar 4 (Thursday 9th February 2016): Oracles and Seers**

By week 5 of the Spring term you should aim to have read the texts and commentary in Kearns *Ancient Greek Religion* pp. 152-74 and 183-244 (see the Reading Schedule in the Module Booklet available on the web page under Handouts).

In addition, please read the texts below and prepare answers to the following questions. Make sure that you have access to a text in the seminar (either bring a paper or printed copy or an electronic device on which you can access it).

1. Herodotus *Histories*

Please read Herodotus *Histories* I.46-55, 86-92, VII. 4-18, 53-7, IX.33-7.

The recommended translation (**available online through the library catalogue**) is the following:

Waterfield, R. (2008) *Herodotus: Histories* (Oxford) [Oxford Classical Texts]

1. What can you find out about Herodotus, his life and works? (Consult Waterfield’s introduction and other scholarly reference works such as Brill’s New Pauly, available at <http://0-referenceworks.brillonline.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/browse/brill-s-new-pauly>)
2. How and why do mortal characters attempt to influence the gods in Herodotus’ narrative? Why are they not always successful? [Give examples and references]
3. How do the gods reveal their intentions in Herodotus’ narrative? [Give examples and references]
4. Which individuals or institutions are believed to have the ability to understand or communicate the will of the gods? ? [Give examples and references] Why are they believed to be important?
5. What is Herodotus’ attitude to oracles and seers and what role do they play in his narrative?
6. Inscriptions concerning festivals

Read the tablets from the oracle at Dodona: Kearns 6.2.5 (pp. 294-6) and those listed below

1. What can these texts tell us about the reasons why Greeks consulted oracles?
2. What kinds of people consulted the oracle in these texts?
3. How do these texts compare to the description of oracular consultation in Herodotus?

*SEG* 43.323: “Whether it would be better for me if I go to Sybaris and if I do these things?”

*SEG* 15.396: “Would I do better if I took a wife?”

*SGDI* 1561a: “Herakleides asks Zeus and Dione for good fortune and asks the god about offspring. Will there be any from Aigle the wife he has now?

*SGDI* 1559: “Kleouts asks Zeus and Dione if it will be better and more profitable for him if he keeps cattle?”

*SGDI* 1583: “God. To good fortune. Hippostratos asks Zeus Naios and Dione whether he would not do better if he became a shipowner?”

*SEG* 15.389: “What will happen to me if I leave? Shall I make it happen?” REVERSE SIDE (the response): “The woman remains!”

*SGDI* 1589: “Shall I request citizenship this year or not”?

Ep. Chron. 1935.259, 32: “Did Thorpion steal the silver?”