



Creating Gods Through Narratives: The Ontology of Greek Mythic Characters

Wednesday, Feb 26th
4:00PM - 6:00 PM
Royce 314

This paper will open with an overview of recent work by narratologists and analytical philosophers on the ontology of fictional characters. From there it proceeds to arguments about the ontological status of characters who appear in fictionalizing narratives such as the *Odyssey* or the *Ramayana* who are simultaneously the objects of religious belief. I suggest that such characters draw certain unique advantages from the ways in which their stories are narrated. Gods are described in different ways on different occasions. The 'human' god is easier to believe in, but the 'theologically correct' god can better be used to explain certain aspects of the way the world works and justify social norms. The Greek gods are portrayed in both ways. Cumulatively, the narratives created gods who were credible enough to believe in but powerful enough to matter.



Sarah Iles Johnston is the College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Religion and Professor of Classics and Comparative Studies at The Ohio State University. She is the author of several books, including *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (1999), *Ancient Greek Divination* (2008) and *The Story of Myth* (2018), and the editor of several others, including *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide* (2004). Her current interests focus on how religious beliefs are created and sustained; her next project is a book on the development of the ghost story in Victorian and Edwardian England.

Note: All public lectures are subject to change. Review our website for updates of all events. **Please RSVP on our website!**