



**POLEMOS/PULMUS: WAYS OF CONFRONTATION IN JUDAISM, PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY
IN LATE ANTIQUITY**

JULY 9 - 20, 2012 BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

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BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Struggle is the father of all things”, as the popular Greek saying has it, and religious or philosophical debates in Late Antiquity provide ample proof of this. The aspirations of religion to dominate space and time in our period invited various forms of rivalry, mostly precluding peace or even a dialogue for peace. The religious conflicts between, and within Christianity, Judaism and Paganism often involved political action and overt struggles – legislations, excommunications, persecutions, pogroms, revolts, or wars. People in the Roman Empire, even in the period of Pax Romana, knew all too well that the Gates of Janus can be opened any time, peace proving itself to be the continuation, with different means, of war - *polemos* in Greek, and *pulmus* as a loanword in Rabbinic literature.

The course aims at exploring the nature and various ways of confrontation between and within Early and Rabbinic Judaism, the Early Church, and Pagan religious movements and schools of thought. **Judaism** was rarely an explicit third party to the religious polemic that was to shape the political and intellectual landscape of the Mediterranean for centuries to come. It was a silent and yet senior partner in this polemic. Its religiously motivated resistance to the idea of the empire called for contempt or awe; and yet it also offered a different paradigm by the attractive force of its history, law and Scripture. **Pagan** Hellenism had a special role in this polemic: as a conglomerate of philosophical schools and religious movements it did not only provide a cultural background and a conceptual framework, but also posed immense challenges for Judaism and emerging Christianity from a variety of directions – while it also had to defend itself against the emerging new religion. **Christianity** itself had to navigate the straits between its Biblical heritage and its Hellenistic context; at the same time, its novelty and success provoked various reactions from Jews and Pagans alike.

All the involved religious platforms agonized over their core messages and antagonized others in formulating and ‘marketing’ their religious ideas within their own constituencies and outside them. As identity is clearly shaped by difference or conflict no less than by accommodation, and it is often hostility which creates cohesion, **the course focuses** on the relation between various forms of Late Antique Judaism, Christianity and Paganism from a ‘polemological’ point of view. The sessions discuss how they managed and coped with conflicts within and without; what their strategies were in confronting and accommodating foreign ideas, competing religions, worldly powers or internal subversion; and what role these external and internal confrontations played in shaping them.

Participants are assumed to hold a PhD or to be enrolled in a doctoral program in one of the following fields: Jewish, Biblical, Early Christian, Patristic, Late Antique or Religious Studies, Theology or Intellectual History.



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Application deadline: February 15, 2012

Online application: <https://apply.embark.com/NonDegree/CEU/>

For further academic information on the course and on eligibility criteria and funding options please visit the web site at <http://www.summer.ceu.hu/polemos-2012>

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