



Faculty of Arts



DIVINATION AND AUTHORITY IN GRAECO- ROMAN ANTIQUITY

OCTOBER 22 – 24, 2025

WIS

**BILDUNGSFORUM
POTSDAM**

Day I

October 22nd 2025

■ 13:00 – 13:15

Introduction

Kim Beerden, Jens Fischer, Rafał Matuszewski

■ 13:15 – 14:00

**Gods and Goddesses, Sibyls and Seers:
Gendered Authority in Greek Divination?**

Tanja Scheer (Universität Göttingen)

■ 14:00 – 14:45

Children's Authority in Roman Religion

Marie-Laurence Haack

(Université de Picardie Jules Verne)

■ 14:45 – 15:15 **Coffee Break**

■ 15:15 – 16:00

***Pullarii*: Divinatory Experts Lacking Authority?**

Yann Berthelet (Université de Liège)

■ 16:00 – 16:45

Greek Oneiromancy and Authority

Rafał Matuszewski (Universiteit Leiden)

■ 16:45 – 17:15 **Coffee Break**

Keynote lecture

■ 17:15 – 18:30

Does Authority Matter?

The Art of Interpretation in Greek Divination

Kai Trampedach (Universität Heidelberg)

■ 19:00 **Conference Dinner**

Day II

October 23rd 2025

■ 9:15 – 10:00

Seeing Is Believing? Hierarchies of Authority in Ancient Greek Divination

Kim Beerden (Universiteit Leiden)

■ 10:00 – 10:45

Sounds and Divination at Dodona

Jessica Piccinini (Università degli Studi di Macerata)

■ 10:45 – 11:00 Coffee Break

■ 11:00 – 11:45

Belief in Signs in Ancient Rome: Credibility vs. Authority?

Romain Lorient (Université Jean-Moulin-Lyon-III)

■ 11:45 – 13:00 Lunch

■ 13:00 – 13:45

Contesting Authority: the “What if” Factor in Managing Sibylline and other Oracles

David Potter (The University of Michigan)

■ 13:45 – 14:30

Claiming the Words of the Gods: Political Authority and the Appropriation of Oracle Texts in Greece and Rome

Jens Fischer (Universität Potsdam)

■ 14:30 – 15:00 Coffee Break

■ 15:00 – 15:45

‘The Importance of Being Delphic’. Oracle Stories, Social Memory, and Collective Identities in Archaic Greece

Maurizio Giangulio (Università degli Studi di Trento)

■ 15:45 – 16:30

The Authority of the Oracular Voice and the ‘Discovery’ of Truth in Classical Greece

Julia Kindt (University of Sydney)

■ 16:30 – 17:00 Coffee Break

■ 17:00 – 17:45

Authority in a Shaking Hand? Reconsidering the Delphic Pythias’ “Delirium” and Its Role in the Construction of Oracular Authority, Criticism and Studies

Kevin Bouillot (École Pratique des Hautes Études)

Day III

October 24th 2025

■ 09:15 – 10:00

Claims of Authority in Divinatory Recipes from the Graeco-Egyptian Magical Papyri

Sara Chiarini (Universität Hamburg)

■ 10:00 – 10:45

Pagan and Christian Holy Women as Oracles in Late Antiquity

Aude Busine (Université libre de Bruxelles)

■ 10:45 – 11:15 Coffee Break

■ 11:15 – 12:00

Eclipsed Authorities: Pre-Christian and Non-Graeco-Roman Divination in Late Antique Sources

Antti Lampinen (University of Turku)

■ 12:00 – 12:45

Sorcerers, Deceivers, Cheaters – Eusebius and the (Anti-) Authority of Greek Oracles

Bettina Reese (Universität Potsdam)

■ 12:45 Coffee / Closing Remarks



**Universiteit
Leiden**
The Netherlands

The study of ancient divination has increasingly become a focus of research over the past few decades, with both institutionalized and individual ('lived') practices attracting scholarly interest. However, it is only in recent years that one fundamental aspect concerning the significance of divination has begun to receive attention: the nature, meaning, and role of authority.

In the view of contemporaries, ancient divination was a form of communication with the divine sphere. It allowed individuals, regardless of their social status, to ascertain the opinion of the supernatural regarding a given situation and, in turn, to communicate this information. As such, divination played a crucial role in Greek and Roman societies, shaping both private life and political affairs. Despite its centrality, divination was neither a fixed and coherent nor a universally valid or universally accepted system but rather a contested space where various specialists and techniques competed for legitimacy. At the heart of this competition was the issue of authority—how it was constructed, recognized, and maintained. While previous scholarship has explored specific divinatory practices and their political uses, the broader relationship between divination and authority remains insufficiently examined. This conference, therefore, seeks to explore both the authority of divination (how divination as a system gained credibility) and the authority in divination (how individual diviners established and maintained their status).

In what ways was the authority of the supernatural conveyed through divinatory practices used in different contexts of the Greek and Roman world? How did ancient societies negotiate which individuals could claim divinatory authority? How did divination reinforce the authority of the powerful? How did divination empower marginalized individuals? What role did divinatory rituals, objects, and performances play in asserting authority? What theoretical concepts and methodological approaches enable a better understanding of historical developments related to these questions? By addressing these and similar issues, this conference will contribute to broader discussions on religious expertise, materiality, and ancient Mediterranean belief systems, and ultimately place the still-young study of the significance of authority in the field of divination on a new foundation.

Location

WIS Bildungsforum Potsdam

Am Kanal 47 – 4. Etage | 14467 Potsdam



Organizers

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weitere Infos:

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