

# ROMAN MYSTERIES



Bachelor. 2nd year. 6 EC.

**1. Title of Module:** Roman Mysteries: A Study Trip (18-24 January 2013)

**2. Course Description:** This 7-day (6 night) study trip to Rome serves as a complement to the BA module on Western Esotericism and Religious Pluralism. With a history spanning 25 centuries, Rome is the ideal European city for an exploration and investigation of cultural artifacts from European religious and esoteric history. There the student can still see the remains of religious monuments from Rome's origins in pagan antiquity, signs of early Christianity, the site of the oldest Jewish community in Europe, the magnificent survivals of the religious turmoil and impact of the rediscovery of pagan thought and image during the Renaissance and Counter Reformation, and so on and so forth. Within all this abundance of churches and palaces, museums and archives, the attentive visitor can also find esoteric elements hidden in secret places. This study trip will introduce students to some of Rome's religious and esoteric treasures and the students, in their turn, will be encouraged to introduce the study group to the fruits of their independent research.

On this module, before their trip to Rome, students will be presented with a selection of themes related to religious pluralism and Western esotericism in the city of Rome. From this they will select one topic as the focus of their research and will be expected to prepare a presentation in Amsterdam, to be given to the rest of the group on location in Rome. The focus will be some aspect of material culture, for example, an item of art, a particular book or manuscript, or an architectural monument. Part of the trip will be the opportunity to visit archives in one of Rome's most important libraries, the Biblioteca Angelica, where the students will get first-hand experience of primary documents, i.e., manuscripts and early books. There will, of course, be visits to many significant historical and religious locations, such as the Colosseum & Forum Romanum, the Catacombs of San Callisto and the Capuchin Crypt, San Giovanni in Laterano & San Clemente, Piazza Navona and Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Vatican Museum & Archives, Sistine Chapel, Galleria Borghese, the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, and the Jewish Quarter. Esoteric sites of interest include the astrological ceiling of the Villa Farnesina and the enigmatic Porta Alchemica (or Magica) in Piazza Vittorio Emanuele; we can, if we desire, also go pay our respects to the statue of Giordano Bruno in the Campo de' Fiori.

**3. Learning Objectives:** To gain insight into the history of Rome as a centre of religion and esotericism. The students will learn to evaluate and reflect critically on primary historical material sources (art, books, artifacts, museums & monuments). They will explore the possibilities of doing archival research, gain experience of presenting a paper in situ and of preparing a report for publication.

**4. Assessment:** Each student must deliver a presentation based on their research topic. At the conclusion of the course students will also be expected to write a report, between 4-5 pages about their research and experience in Rome. An adequate presentation in Rome and report submitted in Amsterdam will result in the award of an "AVV" (aan verplichtingen voldaan/obligations fulfilled). If the report is judged to be of sufficient quality, it will be recommended for publication in either Ars Notoria's *Notorious* or Hermetica's *De Hermet*, or on the *Amsterdam Hermetica* website.

**5. Teaching Schedule:** There will be a meeting in early January when students will be presented with a list of topics and indicative reading list. From this they will have to decide on who will be presenting which topic and a rota will be drawn up. In the following weeks every student will be expected to carry out independent research in preparation for their presentation. They will, however, each be given the opportunity of a private tutorial to discuss their approach to their research and the availability of sources.

From Friday 18 to Thursday 24 January students will stay at hostel accommodation in Rome. Each day will include opportunities for individual supervision, together with excursions to the chosen locations each afternoon. The course-leader will introduce the students to significant information about each site. Depending on student numbers 1-2 students will present per day. At least one outing will include a guided tour by Dr Marieke van den Doel from the Koninklijk Nederlands Instituut Rome, and students will have the opportunity to visit the Institute and meet the director and staff, who will be able to offer them further advice about their research interests. One evening there will be a guest lecture on an aspect of religion and/or esotericism in Rome. Some time will, of course, be set aside for individual research and exploration by the students.

**6. Lecturer:** Dr Peter J. Forshaw

**7. Calculation of Study Hours:** For a 6 EC course = 168 hours.  
Rome: Supervision and Excursions (8 hours x 7 days) = 56  
Weekly literature study (20hr p/w x 4 weeks) = 80  
Preparation of Presentation = 20  
Writing of Report = 12