

Dear PhD candidates,

OIKOS is pleased to announce its 2027 Ancient World Spring School, which will take place from 16-23 June. It will be organised at, and in cooperation with, the Royal Dutch Institute in Rome (KNIR). The expert will be Alex Purves from UCLA, and the theme will be 'The Sea and the Ancient World'. Bettina Reitz-Joosse and Felix Budelmann will be present as co-leaders on behalf of OIKOS. Upon successful completion, participants will be awarded 6 ECTS.

The Sea and the Ancient World

The spring school will focus on various interdisciplinary ways of understanding the sea in the Greco-Roman world. Given that our chosen entity is wide-ranging, fluid, and dynamic, students can approach it from a variety of angles. We might consider Aristotle's interest in marine life, the deep purple color that is extracted from the murex shell and dyed into fabric, the ancient practices of sounding, diving, and fishing in the sea, or how the sea can be understood as a site for various permutations of imaginative and geographical thought. How do we interpret and contextualize a storm at sea in an epic simile, a sponge in Pliny, an eel on a mosaic, or the experience of an underwater archaeologist today? Rather than taking the sea for granted as a stable or invisible background in ancient Mediterranean studies, we will seek to come to grips with it in all its facets and practices as topography, environment, object, idea, and agent.

The workshop will move in scope from the elemental to the broadly geographical and global. We will start with saltwater and its properties, including the sea's waves, marine life, and sediments, moving out from there toward a broader perspective that considers the sea (and River Ocean) as a region of substantial cosmological, scientific, and religious significance. The Mediterranean and the seas beyond it provide the context for a vast history of maritime trade, shipwreck and expansion which can be explored from a number of perspectives (e.g., Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* [2000], Paul Kosmin's *The Ancient Shore* [2024]). Traveling further afield, we will address some of the ways in which the Mediterranean has been mapped onto other seas in the field of classical reception, drawing on the work of e.g., Emily Greenwood on the Black Atlantic (*Afro-Greeks*, 2010) or Carolyn Fowler on the role of seascapes in Dutch slavery (*Slavery and the Invention of Dutch Art*, 2025).

The sea is a site of cultural and economic history but it is also an important medium for poetics. Brooke Holmes' *Liquid Antiquity* posits that antiquity might be best conceived through the model of flow and liquidity, and that the form of water has been undervalued in our understanding of the ancient world. Other scholars have argued that the sea plays a special role in media studies (Melody Jue, *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Seawater* [2020]; Bernhard Siegert's *Final Frontiers: Eine Medienarchäologie des Meeres* [2024]). We will think capaciously to account for all of these approaches as well as others that participants wish to explore.

The expert will be Professor [Alex Purves](#) (UCLA) who is completing a book entitled *Blue Homer: Reading the Sea in and Beyond the Odyssey*. This book considers the sea from a number of different angles, encompassing the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, Greek lyric poetry, James Joyce,

and Derek Walcott. Alex has published widely on ancient literature and its reception, especially on space and time in narratives, on the poetics of gesture, and on the senses in antiquity. She has held a Spinoza Visiting Research Fellowship at Leiden University and received fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies, and the Loeb Classical Library and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation.

Preparation and set-up

Participants will receive a reading list which they will study ahead of the spring school. In April or May there will be an online meeting of all participants and Alex Purves, Bettina Reitz-Joosse and Felix Budelmann to make plans and address questions.

The details of the programme at the spring school itself will be finalised in accordance with student interests and the profile of group. It will in any event include three types of sessions/events:

- Each participant will prepare ahead of the summer school an aspect of the sea that is relevant to their own work and interests. At the spring school they will lead a session on this theme, starting with an informal presentation of perhaps 15 or 20 minutes.
- We will as a group have a number of sessions focused on a particular text, object or piece of secondary literature.
- There will be excursions to museums and sites in Rome and the vicinity. Each student will also prepare a short on-site presentation, to be delivered during one of these excursions.

Participation

The spring school is primarily intended for OIKOS PhD students who did not participate in a previous spring school organised by OIKOS. There will be a maximum of circa 12 participants. If not all places are filled with full members of OIKOS, associated PhD students and those who have participated in a previous spring school or master class will be considered.

To express your interest in participating, please send an email to oikos@rug.nl by 4 January 2027 at the latest, attaching a CV (max. two A4 in total) and a statement of why you would like to participate (max. 250 words). Please also indicate in which year of your PhD-trajectory you are and whether you have previously participated in an OIKOS masterclass or spring school. If there are more expressions of interest than places, a selection will be made on the basis of this information. Decisions will be communicated no later than 15 January.

Costs

There is no fee for participation. OIKOS will cover accommodation at the KNIR, entrance fees at museums/sites and excursions. Participants cover their own travel costs to and from Rome from their bench fee. If you envisage problems with covering travel costs in this way, please contact the OIKOS office. OIKOS gratefully acknowledges the generous financial support by Anchoring Innovation for the spring school 2027.