

Meghan DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar: Priestesses in Republican Rome*

Her book project, *A Place at the Altar: Priestesses in Republican Rome*, propose a new interpretation of Roman religion that emphasizes its reliance on cooperation between various priestly figures, both male and female, to preserve Rome's relationship with her gods. Previous accounts of Roman priesthood have not adequately accounted for the role of women in public cult, leading many to overlook how and to what extent ritual practice interacted with gender and gender ideology. Since women did not vote or hold political office in Rome, there has been a tendency to assume their exclusion from public cult as well. The ancient evidence, however, demonstrates that Roman priestesses had a vibrant a presence in the life of their community. They performed nearly every type of ritual attested for male priests and did so in an official capacity. In cults operating within the public sphere, women were not marginal or incidental. Rather, they were indispensable participants in a fundamentally cooperative endeavor. The project is organized as a series of three related investigations, each focusing on a different type of religious office. Chapters one through four consider the Vestal order, the only priestly college at Rome composed entirely of women. The fifth and sixth chapters examine joint offices filled by married couples, while the seventh chapter focuses on religious offices occupied by individual women. The approach is interdisciplinary and draws upon a variety of literary, visual and material evidence to restore priestesses to their proper place in the religious landscape of ancient Rome.