This interdisciplinary course explores various, often conflicting ways of conceiving and shaping reality in the ancient world – religious, scientific, and philosophical. The course is organized around a series of case studies: (1) the formation and makeup of the cosmos; (2) the origin of mankind and its sexual differentiation; (3) the invention of the ‘self’; (4) the origin and nature of dreams; (5) foundations of law, justice, and morality. Short writing assignments, in-class discussions, occasional lectures, oral presentations, a midterm exam, and a term paper will be used to teach students about a complex intellectual network of natural scientists, philosophers, and oral story-tellers throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. Readings include Near Eastern mythical narratives and Homeric poems and hymns; selections from the earliest Greek philosophers through Plato’s dialogues to Hellenistic and Roman philosophical schools; works from the famous Hippocratic corpus and Galen’s medical treatises; and various religious texts from ancient Greece and Rome, early Christianity, and late antiquity.