**Dissertation Abstract – Polyzos Sotirios**

**Proposed title:** “Crisis management through rhetoric: the example of selected *Orations* by Libanius.”

**Supervisor:** Ass. Prof. Dr. Karla Grammatiki (University of Athens)

The aim of the proposed doctoral thesis is to study the rhetorical manipulation of the social and political crises that befell the Antiochean society in the second half of the 4th century AD. By examining a series of *Julianic* and *Theodosian* *Orations*, it attempts to investigate how the sophist of the city of Antioch aspires through his rhetoric (and its elaborate strategies) to present himself as a cardinal factor in the stability and prevention of crises, on the basis of two severe misfortunes that his hometown underwent in the agonizing second half of the fourth century AD. In order that a thorough examination and comprehension of the rhetoric of crisis management could be achieved, the thesis will take into consideration (except for the aforementioned selected *Orations* of Libanius) letters and declamations of the orator, as well as additional contemporary literary testimonies that refer to the same events. In this regard, the main research purposes of the dissertation are:

1. to present and comment on common motifs or rhetorical topoi that tend to be used in similar critical circumstances,
2. to probe the different communicative strategies that are summoned by the orator, depending on the peculiar religious identity of the emperor to whom he appeals every time,
3. to analyze the influence of rhetoric and its teaching subjects (for example *meletai* and *progymnasmata*) on the articulation of the political *Orations* of Libanius,
4. to demonstrate to what extent the orator as the self-appointed representative of his city conforms (or not) to the norms of the *Second Sophistic*, when he addresses to sovereigns, demanding thus the immediate fulfillment of his requests,
5. to provide adequate evidence which can advocate for the existence of a stable rhetoric of crisis management,
6. to sketch as much as possible the ambience of that period (beyond the endeavors of its artificial, rhetorical construction),
7. to emphasize the identity crisis and frustration that personalities, such as Libanius, experience in that period due to the political and social transformations in the Later Roman Empire as a result of the continually increasing Christianization of the Late Roman state.