

Fall 8-15-2011

ENG 3009G-001: Myth And Culture

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Office hours: MWF 10:00–12:00,
MW 3–3:30, and other times by
appointment

581–6983 (during office hours)
581–2428 (English Department)

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The poet Muriel Rukeyser wrote that
“The universe is made of stories, not of
atoms.” Myth and Culture is a course
about such stories, stories so powerful
that they shape the ways in which
people come to understand the world
and its possibilities.

Our work will range from the distant
past to modern times and will focus
on stories of loss and impermanence.

TEXTS

Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her
Children*
Sarah Lawall, ed., *Norton Anthology of
Western Literature*, Volume One
N.K. Sandars, ed., *Epic of Gilgamesh*
William Shakespeare, *King Lear*
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

Also: Michael Harvey's *The Nuts and
Bolts of College Writing*, a great book
for student-writers.

You should have access to a hardcover
collegiate (college-level) dictionary
when reading.

The works we're reading contain
material that some readers may find
offensive or disturbing (language, sex,
violence). In such cases, please
consider taking another course.

REQUIREMENTS

The course will require dedicated daily
work (reading, note-taking, talking),
several pieces of writing, and a final
examination.

ENGLISH 3009

MYTH *and* CULTURE

PROFESSOR M. LEDDY

FALL 2011



ATTENDANCE

Be here, on time, every time. You're
responsible for all assignments,
whether or not you're here when
they're announced.

Frequent absences will affect your
grade, not through a system of points
and deductions but simply because not
being here will make it difficult to do
the work of thinking and learning that
a college course is meant to involve.

If you must miss a class, you should
get in touch with me beforehand to
find out what you will miss.

Photocopied pages to go with our
reading will be available from an
envelope on my office door.

LATE WORK, MAKE-UP WORK

Missed writing cannot be made up.
Late writing is acceptable only if you
have my approval in advance.

DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability
and wish to receive academic
accommodations, contact the
coordinator of the Office of Disability
Services (581–6583) as soon as possible.

OFFICE HOURS

Talking to professors is one of the
smartest things a college student can
do. Please, come in to ask questions
and talk about your work in the class.
If office hours don't work for you,
make an appointment.

If you feel uneasy about talking to
professors, read “How to talk to a
professor” for potentially helpful
advice: <http://goo.gl/VYSkv>.

E-MAIL

Before you e-mail me, please read and
follow the guidelines in “How to e-
mail a professor”: <http://goo.gl/4n6EH>. These guidelines are read all
over the world and will serve you well
in e-mailing any professor (assuming
that your professor answers e-mail).

One guideline that you don't need to
follow: you need not add your class
number and meeting time to your
signature. I'll know who you are. But
do include *English 3009* in your subject
line. That makes it easier for me to
sort mail and respond to it in a timely
way.

DECORUM

The atmosphere in our class should be
serious—not somber or pretentious,
but collegiate and genuinely
intellectual. No eating, sleeping,
talking, texting, or doing work for
other classes. No headphones, hoods,
iPods, or phones. Electronic devices
should be turned off and out of sight.
Please show proper respect for our
small community of learning. Any
student who establishes a pattern of
troublesome behavior will be asked to
leave on a class-by-class basis.

DISCUSSION

Consider what the writer Thomas
Merton says about a teacher he
admired (Mark Van Doren, Columbia
University):

Most of the time he asked
questions. His questions were very
good, and if you tried to answer
them intelligently, you found
yourself saying excellent things
that you did not know you knew,
and that you had not, in fact,
known before.

I like to ask questions that make people think. I also like it when people ask me such questions. Think of an in-class question not as a question whose answer you're already supposed to know but as an invitation to think. I know that this suggestion might go against the grain of much of your experience in school. You should be asking relevant questions too, of me and perhaps of one another. Asking questions is what's involved in critical inquiry.

For more on questions and discussion, read "How to answer a question": <http://goo.gl/D1zaG>. (That's a capital I after the D.)

GRADING

Your grade will be based on your written work (60%), your participation in the work of the class (20%), and a final examination (20%).

Writing assignments receive letter grades. Missing writing receives a zero. Participation receives a numerical grade, an overall evaluation of the extent to which you're prepared and contributing: 100 (always), 85 (frequently), 75 (usually), 50 (sometimes), 0 (rarely or never).

To calculate semester grades, I use numerical equivalents for letter grades:

A	95	A-	92	B+	87	B	85
B-	82	C+	77	C	75	C-	72
D+	67	D	65	D-	62	F	55

Sometimes when I grade writing I'll give a grade that falls between two grades—e.g., B+/A- (89.5).

For semester grades, 90 or above is an A; 80 or above, a B; 70 or above, a C; 60 or above, a D; below 60, an F.

EWP

Please make sure that you understand the requirements for the Electronic Writing Portfolio and that you fulfill

them in a timely way. For more information: <http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The English Department's statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and the representation of them as one's original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course.

And my statement concerning academic integrity:

Any breach of academic integrity—from lifting words or ideas without attribution to submitting a wholly unoriginal essay—is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty. The Student Standards office recommends an F for the course. You will also be required to take a course in ethics administered by Student Standards, whose staff will keep your misconduct on record and notify your other professors that one of their students has violated academic integrity.

You should be familiar with Eastern's statement on academic integrity (posted in classrooms) and should ask if you have any questions about quoting from and/or documenting sources. But because the work of the course is to be an expression of your ideas in your words, aside from words and ideas from properly acknowledged sources, questions of plagiarism and collusion should never arise. Do not "borrow" work or give your work to anyone (allowing someone else to make use of your work is also a breach of academic integrity and will also get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course).

PROVISIONAL OUTLINE (WEEKS)

1: Thinking about myth and culture
1-3: *Gilgamesh*
4-5: Biblical narratives: Genesis and Job
6-7: Dido and Aeneas, Orpheus and Eurydice, Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*
8-11: *King Lear*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*
12-15: *The Grapes of Wrath*

Provisional due dates for writing:

September 12 (in-class writing)
October 3
November 2
December 7

Other modest pieces of writing may be assigned as in-class writing or on a due-next-class basis.

Final examination: December 13, 8:00