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ENG 3009G-004: Myth and Culture

David Radavich
Eastern Illinois University

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English 3009G: Myth and Culture

Instructor: Dr. David Radavich
Office: 3785 Coleman Hall
Telephone: 581-6971 (Office) or 345-9280 (Home)
Office Hours: 14:00-15:00 MWF; 11:00-12:00 F

Required Texts:

Buck, William, trans., *Mahabharata*
Eliot, Alexander, *The Universal Myths*
Neihardt, John, *Black Elk Speaks*
Sandars, N. K., trans., *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

PURPOSE. This course provides an introduction to myths from around the world, supplementing other courses on the Bible as Literature and Backgrounds of Western Literature. We will study the common foundations that define and link legends from different cultures, and then examine non-Western literary masterpieces that incorporate mythic characters, techniques, and sensibility. Our goal will be two-fold: 1) to deepen our understanding of how mythology encodes, defines, and shapes our most fundamental beliefs about the world and the meaning of human life; and 2) to broaden our awareness of how mythic stories unfamiliar to us nonetheless embody similar concepts and values. By studying such great works as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Mahabharata*, and *Black Elk Speaks*, we will not only become engrossed in fascinating, gripping stories, but also confront our own mythic attitudes and pre-conceptions. Think of the course as an exotic journey to places where magical transformations can, and do, happen.

ASSIGNMENTS. Three papers will be required: one shorter essay (ca. 3-4 pages), a prospectus, and one longer essay (ca. 8-10 pages) using outside sources. There will be a midterm and a final exam. In-class quizzes and exercises will be given periodically over the readings to generate topics for class discussion. Everyone will be required to keep a reading journal, which may be used for writing papers and for the essay portion of each exam.

GRADING. Evaluation of your work will be demanding and fair and will include an assessment of your class preparedness and participation. The first paper will make up 10%, the prospectus 5%, and the third paper 20% of the course grade. The midterm exam will count 15% and the final exam 25%. Active participation in discussion and performance on in-class exercises will constitute the remaining 25% of the overall grade.

LATE WORK. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one-third grade PER CALENDAR DAY late. Missed in-class quizzes cannot be made up; that is the reward for coming to class regularly.

ATTENDANCE POLICY. You are assumed to be professionals-in-training and are expected to attend class regularly as you would show up for work on the job. The attendance policy for the course will operate as follows: you may miss up to one week of class without penalty; this allows you flexibility in case of illness or unexpected emergency. Thereafter, the course grade will be lowered proportionately for each week missed. If you are absent more than four weeks of class, you will automatically receive an F in the course.

PLAGIARISM. According to University policy,

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

CONFERENCES. Please feel free to consult me regarding ideas, planning, problems, revision, etc. I would be happy to meet with you at any mutually convenient time.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

English 3009G Assignments

- Jan. 8 - Introduction
10 - Myth and Ritual I (lecture/discussion)
12 - Myth and Ritual II (lecture discussion)
- Jan. 15 - Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday; No Class
17 - "Creators of Nature and Mankind," Beginning through "The Killing of Emir"
19 - "Creators of Nature and Mankind," "Uranus, Cronus, and Zeus" to the end
- Jan. 22 - "Distant Quests and Mortal Tests," Beginning through "Shen I, The Cosmic Archer"
24 - "Distant Quests and Mortal Tests," "The Way and Its Mystery" to the end
26 - *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, pp. 7-8, Prologue, ch. 1
- Jan. 29 - *Gilgamesh*, chs. 2-3
31 - *Gilgamesh*, chs. 4-5
- Feb. 2 - *Gilgamesh*, chs. 6-7 and overview
- Feb. 5 - PAPER #1 DUE
7 - "Lovers and Bearers of Divine Seed," Beginning through "Father of Gods and Men"
9 - "Lovers and Bearers of Divine Seed," "Parvati's Children" to the end
- Feb. 12 - "Combat in Heaven and on Earth," Beginning through "No-cha"
14 - "Combat in Heaven and on Earth," "Parsifal Jousting" to the end
16 - Lincoln's Birthday; No Class
- Feb. 19 - MIDTERM EXAM
21 - *Mahabharata*, ch. 1
23 - Discussion
- Feb. 26 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 2-3
28 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 4-5
- Mar. 2 - Discussion
- Mar. 5 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 6-7
7 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 8-9
9 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 10-11

Mar. 12-16 - Spring Break

Mar. 19 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 12-13

21 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 14-15

23 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 16-17

Mar. 26 - *Mahabharata*, chs. 18-19

28 - *Mahabharata*, ch. 20 and Review

30 - PROSPECTUS DUE

April 2 - "Bringers of Magic and the Arts," Beginning through "The Birth of Sculpture"

4 - Myths of Death and Rebirth

6 - Overview and trouble-shooting

April 9 - PAPER #2 DUE

11 - *Black Elk Speaks*, Preface, chs. 1-2

13 - *Black Elk*, ch. 3

April 16 - *Black Elk*, chs. 4-6

18 - *Black Elk*, chs. 14-16 (omit chs. 7-13)

20 - *Black Elk*, chs. 17-20

April 23 - *Black Elk*, chs. 21-24

25 - *Black Elk*, ch. 25 and Postscript

27 - Review and Discussion

FINAL EXAM