

Spring 1-15-2007

ENG 3099-099: Myth and Culture, Honors

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3099-099

English 3099G Section 099
Myth and Culture, Honors
Spring 2007
11:00-12:15 T, Th, 3609 Coleman Hall

Prof. Carol Stevens
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Office Hours: 9-9:50, 10:10-50, 3:30-4:00 TTh, 9:30-11:30 W and by appointment

Course Description:

The catalog describes this course as follows: "Through comparative analysis of myths from selected cultural traditions, the course will examine relationships among mythic, historical, anthropological, and scientific ways of understanding." What that means for us is that we will be reading (among others) Near Eastern, Greek, Roman, Asian, and North American myths, and learning as much as we can about how the stories relate to and help us understand the cultures they come from. The class will involve a great deal of small-group and individual work in a variety of activities related to the material and the understanding of cultures, some lectures, and lots of discussion. There will be much reading and writing. *English 3099 is a writing-intensive course.*

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester I expect you to know:

1. What myths are and how they function
2. How to distinguish among myths, legends, and folk tales
3. How to understand stories of some of the world's great cultures, including but not limited to Assyrian-Sumerian-Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Tibetan Buddhist, and Native American, especially Mayan and Navajo (and maybe a few others along the way.)
4. How these cultures differ from and are similar to each other and our own
5. How myths affect the practices and beliefs in a culture

With this knowledge I hope you will

1. Be more conscious of the forces and events that shape cultures and societies
2. Be able to speak and write clearly and well about myths and the cultures they represent
3. Be able to encounter myths and cultures you have not previously studied, and be able to reason to some understanding of them on your own.
4. Have a better understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures
5. Recognize references and allusions to these myths when you encounter them in art and literature
6. Take pleasure and enjoyment from your knowledge

Texts:

Dundes, *Sacred Narrative*
Hesse, *Siddhartha*
Leonard and McClure, *Myth and Knowing*
Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa*
Menchu, *I, Rigoberta Menchu*
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Tr. Innes
Sandars, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
Tapahonso, *Saani Dahataal, The Women are Singing*
Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*
Zolbrod, *Dine Bahane, The Navajo Creation Story*

Grading:

Unless otherwise specified in class, your grade will be based upon 100 points assigned as follows:

Mid-term exam 15 points

Final exam 15 points

Paper and/or creative assignments involving some research and revision—two, worth 25 and 30 points, for a total of 55

Participation and shorter work 15 points

I will use numbers rather than letters. These will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 61-70=D. All assigned writings and exams must be done for you to pass the course. We may add, cancel, or revise some assignments. In that case, point totals may be adjusted also. You may revise a paper from this course for your Electronic Writing Portfolio.

Responsibilities and Policies:

1. Come to every class meeting, and keep the lines of communication open. Late work gets lowered grades unless we've come to a clear understanding BEFORE the due date.
2. Attendance is important, as is participating in the discussions and bringing your contributions to the class. More than two absences will result in your getting many fewer participation points and may affect your grades on other assignments, as you may quickly get "out of the loop" on class discussion.
3. The ethics of academic honesty dictate that students do their own work—always. Taking someone else's words or thoughts and using them in your own writing without giving credit is plagiarism. It can result in a failing grade for the paper and the course, must be reported to Judicial Affairs, and can receive other penalties as well. Students who have difficulty with the mechanics of documentation but make a good-faith effort to cite their sources will be required to rewrite their papers until satisfactory. The Writing Center has excellent tutors who can answer questions about documentation (and most other issues in writing).
Here is the English Department 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 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 assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs office. Please cite all sources, including Internet sources, and be sure the text of your papers makes it clear whether you are summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting directly.
4. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the office of disability services (581-6583) as soon as possible. They will determine the accommodation you receive.
5. Online discussion information—I will set up a WebCT discussion list for this class. Each student will be required to write and post five thoughtful responses to our reading assignments on this list. These responses must be done before we discuss the readings in class, and should be 1-2 paragraphs long. Responses must be posted at least 24 hours before the class for which the reading assignment is due, so that they can be read by instructor and students before the class discussion. Unless you are the first person to post on a topic, you must in your post respond to what at least one other person has said as well as making your own point, and you must quote from a passage in the assigned reading in making your point. I'll record the postings week to week, and assign points at the end of the semester based on clarity, thoughtfulness, and completeness.
6. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, with your name, the class and section number, and due date of the assignment typed at the top, should have one-inch margins, and should use MLA style for documentation.

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Syllabus

Please note: Any syllabus is, by its nature, a tentative document. If changes, including due dates, are made to any part of the syllabus, an announcement in class will be sufficient notification, so stay tuned!

Dates to remember:

Tuesday Feb. 20 First paper/project due
Thursday Mar. 1 Mid-term exam in class
Tuesday Apr. 24 Second paper/project due
Tues. May 1, Final exam 10:15-12:15 Coleman 3609

The date on the syllabus is the date the readings are DUE to be discussed in class.

Week 1

Tues. Jan. 9 Introduction to course, each other, materials, policies, dates to remember. Brief in-class essay.

Thurs. Jan. 11 *Myth and Knowing* Chapter 1 “Purposes and Definitions” (1-28), and online N.K. Sandars’ translation of *Enuma Elish*

Week 2

Tues. Jan. 16 *Myth and Knowing* Chapter 2 “Creation Myths” (32-46) plus “Amma and Nummo prepare the world” (46-57) and “From Chaos to King Zeus, from Hesiod’s *Theogony*” (63-68) and introduction of first paper topic.

Thurs. Jan. 18 assemble in South Lobby of Booth Library to meet Ms. Karen Whisler for an introduction to sources of information on Myth and Culture. Please note: This will NOT be a standard library tour, and it will be very, very useful.

Week 3

Tues. Jan. 23 in *Sacred Narrative*, Bascom, “The Forms of Folklore” (5-29) (I’ll give you some guidelines on what to concentrate on in class); in *Myth and Knowing*, “Out of the Blue” (68-75) and “Creation Myth from the Vishnu Purana.”

Thurs. Jan. 25 Begin discussion of *Gilgamesh*, Joseph Campbell’s “Journey of the Hero” and Lord Raglan’s characteristics of a hero—while there are no assigned readings for these concepts, you may find it useful to check out books and websites

Tues. Jan. 30 Have read *Gilgamesh* through death of Humbaba. We'll talk about ideas in the epic and about ideas of a hero, particularly Lord Raglan, in class.

Thurs. Feb. 1 Finish *Gilgamesh* for this class, and discuss Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey. If time permits, see and analyze "Darmok" episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

Tues. Feb. 6 Have read Chapter 4, "The Male Divine," (185-208) plus "Baghavat Gita" (208-220) and "Orunmila Gives the *Orishas* Their Power and His Friendship with Eshu" (227-232)

Thurs. Feb. 8 Meet inside 9th Street Main Entrance of Tarble Arts Center for a tour of the "Saints in Sequin" Exhibit with discussion by Exhibit Curator Kit Morice. We'll be connecting these Vodou ceremonial and art flags, and samples of African textiles with the Yoruba myth you read for last time, and seeing how the figures in that myth influenced the development of Haitian Vodou. Ms. Morice knows a LOT about this topic, and her tour is sure to be informative and enjoyable.

Tues. Feb. 13 Have read Chapter 3 "The Female Divine" (102-122), especially information on Termini plus "The Fire Goddess," (122-132) and "White Buffalo Calf Woman" (132-137).

Thurs. Feb. 15 Have read "The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi" (137-144) and be prepared to discuss threads of similarity between the goddesses you've read about in the *Enuma Elish* and *Gilgamesh* and the ones you've read about this week. Rough draft of first paper is due today for Workshop.

Tues. Feb. 20 Final draft of first paper is due in class today. Also, have read Chapter 5 "Trickster Myths" (247-253) and "Why We Tell Stories About Spider," (253-256).

Thurs. Feb. 22 "Ajapa, Aja the Dog, and the Yams," (257-263), "How Coyote Placed the Stars," (265-268) and "Coyote Man and Saucy Duckfeather" (268-271).

Tues. Feb. 27 Review for Mid-term exam, including going over possible questions.

Thurs. Mar. 1 Mid-term exam.