

Spring 1-15-1999

ENG 3009C-008-013: Myth and Culture

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Stevens, Carol D., "ENG 3009C-008-013: Myth and Culture" (1999). *Spring 1999*. 94.
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English 3009C Myth and Culture Spring 1999

Dr. Carol D. Stevens

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Office Hours: 10:-10:45 and 3:30-4:30 T-Th, 2:00-3:00 W,
5:00-5:45 Th, walk-ins when my door is open and I'm not
pushing a major deadline, and by appointment.

Course Description: Through comparative analysis of myths from selected cultural traditions, we will examine relationships among mythical, historical, anthropological, and scientific ways of understanding. We will be reading primary texts of myths as well as secondary criticism, and the class will consist of lecture and discussion based upon these readings.

Course Objectives:

- to break down cultural misunderstandings and barriers
- to recognize similarities among cultures
- to learn what myths are and how they function
- to learn about cultures that may be unfamiliar
- to learn more about our own cultures and mythologies
- to learn different ways of approaching and interpreting cultures and texts

Course Texts:

Erdoes and Ortiz, eds. *American Indian Myths and Legends*.
Harris and Platzner, eds. *Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed.
Humphries, ed. *Metamorphoses*.
Lhalungpa. *The Life of Milarepa*.
Sandars, ed. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.
Sproul. *Primal Myths*.
Tedlock. *Popol Vuh*.
Zolbrod. *Dine Bahane: The Navajo Creation Story*.

Grading: Unless otherwise specified in class, your grade will be based upon:

- Four papers on assigned topics, approximately 4 pp.
each, worth 25 points apiece
- A mid-term exam worth 25 points
- A final exam worth 50 points
- Attendance with lively and substantive participation 50
points
- Quizzes and shorter written work varying as assigned and group
work 75 points
- Total: 300 points--300-275=A, 274-249=B, 248-215=C, 190-215=D,
below 190=F

Papers: Must be typed, double-spaced, in MLA style, and must be on the assigned topics. (Consult the Writing Center if you are unfamiliar with MLA style.) Late papers will be penalized.

Responsibilities and policies:

You must turn in ALL assigned writing to pass the course, as well as accumulating sufficient point totals.

Your written work for the course needs to be available as specified in the assignment handouts you receive, subject to any modifications mutually agreed upon by the instructor and the entire class.

Class discussion, and quizzes or short discussion-oriented writing cannot be made up, as the sole purpose of these is to assure readiness for the discussion that follows. If you're not here for the class discussion, the quiz is pointless.

Ground rules for discussion:

We offer our experience as our truth, and agree to respect the experiences of the others in our class.

We acknowledge that our experience is limited, and that limited experience may cause us to draw shaky conclusions.

We agree actively to pursue information about the subjects we are studying, to avoid stereotypes, and to encourage thought.

We agree to share what we think and believe *without demeaning or devaluing anyone else's beliefs or experiences*.

We agree to create an atmosphere in which everyone feels safe to discuss the material openly.

Academic honesty, research, written work etc:

I regard any violation of academic honesty including misappropriation of sources, unauthorized help, cheating on exams etc. with the utmost seriousness and will apply penalties severely. Students who transgress will certainly receive an F for the assignment. Cheating, plagiarism, and faulty documentation on papers and exams will most likely result in an F for the assignment, and probably an F for the course. ANY incident of academic dishonesty will be reported to Judicial Board.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, please contact the coordinator of disability services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Course assignments: You will receive an outline of assignments and due dates. Please keep up with it unless otherwise instructed, even if we are discussing something different in class.

PLEASE NOTE: Every effort has been made to spell out policies clearly. Some changes may occur in the normal course of any semester. For any alteration of assignment or policy, an announcement in class will be considered sufficient notice, so take care! Remaining in the course after these policies have been discussed and clarified signals that you have accepted them and agree to abide by them.

Course plan: The course will begin with a general discussion of what the terms "myth" and "culture" mean, and will be divided roughly into three units as follows:

1. Near Eastern and European myths, including Gilgamesh
2. Native American, including Mayan and Navajo
3. Buddhist and other Asian myths and legends.

You will receive due dates for all paper assignments the first week of the semester, and the reading assignments in the two weeks immediately preceding each unit. However, it is possible from the above outline and information in class to prepare the reading well in advance, and it's a good idea to do so. Paper assignments are intended to complement the units and will be given along with them. Figure on about three weeks' lead time for each paper assignment. The fourth paper will be a "capstone" paper asking you to synthesize what you have learned and comment on it. You are encouraged to have me read drafts of your papers well in advance of the due dates.

Due dates for final drafts of this semester's written work:

- Paper #1 Tues. Feb. 2
- Paper #2 Tues. Mar. 9
- Paper #3 Tues. Apr. 6
- Paper #4 Thurs. Apr. 29

Mid-term exam: Thurs. Feb. 25

Final exam: TBA