

Fall 8-15-2005

ENG 3009-002-007: Myth and Culture

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3009-002
-007

EWP English 3009 is considered a “writing-intensive” General Education course, so you may include work from the course in your Electronic Writing Portfolio. Your portfolio is your responsibility; please make sure that you understand the requirements and fulfill them in a timely way. You can find more information about the EWP at <http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/>.

PLAGIARISM The English Department’s statement on plagiarism says that “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.”

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY Any breach of academic integrity—from cheating on a quiz to “getting ideas” from Spark Notes to submitting a wholly unoriginal essay—is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty. The Judicial Affairs office recommends an F for the course. You will also be required to take a course in ethics administered by Judicial Affairs, whose staff will keep your misconduct on record and notify your other profs 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 own ideas in your own words (aside from words and ideas derived from the works we’re reading), 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 (numbers = weeks)

Intro to the course (1)
Augustine, *Confessions* (2-3)
The Life of Milarepa (4-5)
The Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge (6-7)
Midterm exam: October 11
Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (8-10)
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (11-14)
Wayne Wang and Paul Auster, *Smoke* (14-15)

English 3009
Myth and Culture, Fall 2005

Professor Michael Leddy

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 (“on the upper west side”)
MWF 10-11
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We often use the word myth casually to denigrate an assertion or story as false (“That’s just a myth”). But in another sense, myth is a matter of fundamental and powerful (though not objective) truth, a story that one believes, a story of the world and one’s place in it. In this course, we’ll study autobiographical and fictional narratives about the ways in which beliefs shape human lives. We’ll examine narratives whose protagonists seek answers to fundamental human questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Along the way, we’ll learn about early Christianity and Gnosticism, Buddhism, Quaker life, monks, boomerangs, Schimmelpennincks, and our own early-21st-century selves.

TEXTS Texts for the course are available from Textbook Rental: Augustine’s *Confessions* (trans. F. Sheed), *The Life of Milarepa* (trans. Lobsang Lhalungpa), Thomas Merton’s *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, and as a supplement to the work of the course, Michael Harvey’s *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*. *The Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge* will be available to download as an .rtf file, which can be read with any word-processing program. Wayne Wang and Paul Auster’s film *Smoke* will be on reserve at the Media Desk in Booth (fourth floor).

The works we’re reading contain material that some students 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 and talking), quizzes (meant to be easy if you do the reading), several short pieces of writing, and midterm and final examinations.

ATTENDANCE It’s essential. In the words of the poet and teacher Ted Berrigan, you should attend class as often as I do. You’re responsible for all assignments, whether or not you’re here when they’re announced. If you must miss a class, you should get in touch with me beforehand to find out what you will miss.

LATE, MAKE-UP WORK Missed writing cannot be made up. Late writing is acceptable only if you have my approval in advance. If you have a properly verified absence for illness, emergency, or participation in an official University activity, I'll record a blank for a missed quiz, not a zero.

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 Coming in to talk can be a great way to engage in genuine intellectual dialogue. It can also be a great way to clear up questions and dissolve anxieties and get expert help with writing problems. Feel free to come in to talk—about a question that you didn't get to ask in class, an idea that you want to discuss, a writing problem, an assignment, a grade, etc. You don't need to apologize for taking up my time; office hours are part of a college professor's work.

E-MAIL Before you e-mail me, please read "How to e-mail a professor" (available from a link on the sidebar of my blog, under the heading "greatest hits"). I will read and respond to your e-mail only if it's from an eiu.edu address. If you don't write from your eiu.edu account, your e-mail will likely be marked as spam and deleted (not by me, by a spam-catching program).

BLOG My blog is devoted to matters of cultural interest—language, art, music, poetry, academic life. As an extension of my interests, it's both personal and professional, but it's not an account of "me." Like most bloggers, I'm writing for a variety of readers—students, former students, friends and family, and people I've never met.

I will often add items relevant to our reading and to college life, so you should feel free to look in frequently and comment if you like. Once in a while, I may ask you to go to my blog for a necessary link or to comment on a question about our reading.

DECORUM The atmosphere in our class should be serious—not grim or somber, but genuinely intellectual. No eating, talking, sleeping, doing work for other classes, or other private business. Please turn off cell phones before class begins.

DISCUSSION I like to ask questions that make people think. I also like it when people ask me such questions. So I think of discussion as a matter of asking questions to get at the substance of what we're reading. Consider what Thomas Merton says about a teacher he admired:

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. He had "educated" them from you by his question. His classes were literally "education"—they brought things out of you, they made your mind produce its own explicit ideas (*The Seven Storey Mountain*).

When I was a student I always felt patronized when someone replied to my contributions by saying something like "Very good" or "That's interesting," so when we talk as a class, I try not to give those rote non-responses. So if you say something and I then ask you a question, I'm doing so in the spirit of dialogue. You should be asking questions too, of me and of one another.

If everyone comes in prepared to make significant contributions to each discussion, we will have wonderful discussions. If you have qualms about participating in class discussion, please talk to me as soon as possible. If at any point you have qualms about how things are going in class, please talk to me.

GRADING Your grade will be based on your written work (30%), quizzes (30%), midterm and final exams (15% each), and participation (10%).

Writing assignments receive letter grades. Missing writing receives a zero. Quizzes receive numerical grades. A quiz average of, say, 103% counts as 103 and not as an A (95); a quiz average of, say, 40% counts as 40 and not as an F (55). Participation in the course receives one of five grades: 100 (consistent, relevant, informed participation), 85 (frequent, relevant, informed participation), 75 (less frequent participation or less informed participation), 50 (only occasional participation), 0 (little or no participation). "Informed" participation is simply participation that comes from having done the reading. You may check on quizzes and participation at any time.

To calculate semester grades, I use the following 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 an essay I'll make a compromise—e.g., B+/A-, which falls between the two grades (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.