

Fall 8-15-2008

ENG 3009G-004: Myth and Culture

Carol Stevens
Eastern Illinois University

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30096-004

English 3009G.004
Myth and Culture
Fall 2008
6:30-9:00 P.M. ~~Mon.~~ ^{Tues.} Rm 3150 CH
Course Policies

Prof. Carol Stevens

Contact Information:

Office 3861 CH, Hrs. M 1-3, T and Th 2-4 and by appointment

Phone and Voicemail 581-6970

E-mail cdstevens @eiu.edu

Textbooks:

Dundes, *Sacred Narrative* ~~Asse~~, *Siddhartha*

Llallungpa, *The Life of Milarepa*

Leonard and McClure, *Myth and Knowing*

Sandars, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*

Zolbrod, *Diné Bahane*¹

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 this means for us is that we will be reading foundation stories for cultures around the world, and learning as much as we can about how the stories relate to and help us understand the cultures they come from. Some lecture, much small group work, reading, writing, and discussion.

Objectives:

To know:

what myths are and how they function

how to distinguish among kinds of myths, and distinguish myths from legends and folk tales

how to understand the stories of some of the world's great cultures

how these cultures differ from and are similar to each other and our own

how myths affect the beliefs and practices of a culture

With this knowledge you can:

be more conscious of the forces and events that shape societies and cultures

be able to speak and write clearly and well about myths and the cultures they represent

be able to encounter myths from cultures you have not previously studied and come to some understanding of them on your own

have a better understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures

take pleasure and enjoyment from your knowledge

Grades:

Shorter paper analyzing a myth or segment of a myth cycle 20%

Longer research/critical paper 40%

Responses, quizzes, other short written work as assigned 20%

Participation 20%

Responsibilities:

1. Attendance, on time with assigned work completed, is a non-negotiable requirement. So is participation. More than two absences will affect your grade, as you cannot participate unless you are here. Late work will be penalized or refused. This applies to intermediate stages of assignments as well as completed work.) Do not miss class. If you are seriously ill or there is an emergency over which you have no control, notify me before class meets, and keep the lines of communication open.
2. No notebook computers or other electronic gear out or on in the classroom except by arrangement through the Office of Disability Services. They are a distraction, and impede learning for everyone, not merely the person using them.
3. Honor Policy: 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, as is cheating on exams etc. If I catch you doing any of it, you will fail the course and be reported to Judicial Affairs.
4. Paper Format: papers and out-of-class work should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, double-spaces, with your name, class, and section number at the top. Use MLA format.

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. Also, please notify me.

Please Note: Any policy statement or syllabus is by its very nature a tentative document. Changes in any part, including grading, are possible during the semester, and an announcement in class will be considered sufficient notification of such change.

Important Dates:

Final draft of first (shorter) paper due Sept. 30

Mid-term Exam Oct. 7

Final draft of longer paper due Nov. 1¹/₃

Final Exam Tues. Dec. 16, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Responses, quizzes etc. must be turned in on the collection days specified in class. No make-ups for these.

English 3009 Section 004
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Syllabus

Please consult your policy statement and individual assignment sheets as they are handed out for paper due dates and exam information. Responses will most likely be assigned in class, and quizzes will be impromptu.

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

Aug. 26 Introduction to course, each other, materials, policies, dates to remember. In-class essay.

Sept. 2 *Myth and Knowing* Chapter 1 “Purposes and Definitions” (1-28), and N.K. Sandars’ translation of *Enuma Elish*.

Sept. 9 *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.

Sept. 16 *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) “Creation Myth from the Vishnu Purana,” plus handouts in class. Set up appointments for next week to review drafts of papers.

Sept. 23 Have read *Gilgamesh*. In class, Joseph Campbell’s “Journey of the Hero”, Lord Raglan’s characteristics of a hero, and Carol Pearson’s *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By*—while there are no assigned readings for these concepts, there will most likely be handouts in class and you may find it useful to check out books and websites.

Sept. 30 Have read *Myth and Knowing* Chapter 3 “The Female Divine” (102-122), plus “The Fire Goddess,” (122-132) and “White Buffalo Calf Woman” (132-137) and *Myth and Knowing* 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). Brief review for midterm.

Oct. 7 First half of class midterm exam. Second half, 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 all the works you’ve read to date.

Oct. 14 Have read Chapter 5 “Trickster Myths” (247-253) and “Why We Tell Stories About Spider” (253-256), “How Coyote Placed the Stars” (265-268), and “The Seven Great Deeds of Ma-ui” (283-301) Topics for second paper due at the

beginning of class. Small group work for questions on topics and refining ideas. All topics subject to final approval, and no changes of topic once they are approved.

Oct. 21 Have read *Myth and Knowing*, “Sacred Places: (320-330), and both Zuni stories (331-336), both “Medicine Wheel” segments (336-347), both Japanese stories (349-353), and the Australian Aboriginal “Biriiwilg Becomes a Painting” in both the male and female versions (387-392).

Oct. 28 Discussion of Buddhist ideas. Have read *Life of Milarepa*. and determine how the story reflects these, plus its insights into the more meditative traditions in Buddhist societies; *also have read these, Siddhartha*

Nov. 4 Have read the Mayan creation story *Popol Vuh* as translated by Dennis Tedlock—all.

Nov. 11 Mop-up on *Popol Vuh* if necessary. Begin *Diné Bahane*: have read for today Parts One and Two, “The Emergence” and “The Fifth World.” Introduction to traditional Navajo culture. Final draft of long paper due at the beginning of class.

Nov. 18 Diné Bahane Parts Two and Three, “Slaying the Monsters” and “Gathering the Clans;” Continue discussion of traditional Navajo culture.

Nov. 24-28 Thanksgiving Recess.

Dec. 2 Begin mini-symposium on final papers.

Dec. 9 Conclude symposium on final papers. Review briefly for final exam.

Dec. 16 from 7:30-9:30, final exam.