Summer 6-15-1998

ENG 3009C-002: Myth and Culture

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1. **Course Objectives**

To learn better the meanings of "myth"; to study and compare mythologies of different cultures; to discover how myth informs cultural values; to explore the differences between myth and science; and, most importantly, to realize more about yourself by better understanding the myths you do and don't live by.

2. **Course Content**

American mythology (e.g. money, sports, the American Dream); Native American myths (Lakota, Navaho); Judeo-Christian stories (Genesis, perhaps Matthew); World-wide creation myths; Asian mythology (Siddhartha, The Tao Te Ching); The Mahabharata; Mythic movies (variable choices); introduction to popular mythologies (Joseph Campbell, Alan Watts); daily conversations about ideas.

3. **Writing Requirements**

Nine quizzes; unannounced; factual and interpretive questions.

A term paper, 2500-3000 words. Topic: Referring (in at least some detail) to most of the texts we have studied, show what "myths" you do/don't live by, and why your life is/isn't purposeful, is/isn't meaningful.

A journal. At least 1000 words weekly for 7 weeks; at least 4 entries a week; clearly dated; typed or written legibly every-other-line (illegible journals will be graded F). Dreams—your own or others' (if you remember your dreams, they can become a major part of your journal). Detailed interpretive responses to texts (readings and films) both before and after class discussions; but focus especially on (parts of) texts not discussed in class. Connections between texts and personal/social/political experience. The journal, of course, will be "rough" writing (spontaneous thoughts, feelings, memories, and associations recorded without worrying too much about organization or the mechanics of writing). Nevertheless, it should be considered a major work, a treasure. Criteria for evaluation: regularity, fullness, variety, thoughtfulness (originality) concreteness (detailed references to texts). The journal will be due the last day of class.

4. **Grading**

The term paper will be graded using a + / - system (e.g. B+, B- etc.). Criteria for evaluation: concreteness (detailed references to texts), clarity of thought and focus, grammar and other formal concerns, proofreading. The grade for the quizzes will be curved at the end of the semester.
5. **Final grade**

The final grade will be determined by weighing the various requirements as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
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6. **Attendance**

For every class missed a 500-word paper will be required (see me, for topics).

7. **Late papers**

Late papers will be accepted if the student has a reasonable excuse. Quizzes, however, cannot be made up, unless the absence is officially excused.

8. **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.

9. **Since mythologies worship the primordial power and wonder of sex/creation, in this class we will discuss sexually explicit matters. To cite just one (surprising?) example, we'll discuss the scholar John Allegro's point that "The name Jesus/Joshua (the Greek and Hebrew forms) means 'the semen that heals' or 'fructifies,' the god-juice that gives life. To be smeared with this powerful liquid, above all to absorb it into his body, was to bring the worshipper of the 'Jesus' into living communion with God, indeed, to make him divine."**

10. **Plagiarism**

If you cheat, please do me the favor of successfully deceiving me and don't treat me as if I were born yesterday (or born when you were born). Any cheating that I detect will lead to an F in the course for the guilty student.