Summer 6-15-2003

ENG 3009G-001

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Dr. William J. Searle

English 3009G—sec. 001—10:30 to 11:45—MTWTH—CH 3170 (311)

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The following texts are used for English 3009G:


Attendance: Plan to attend every class. You might glance at page 52 of the 2002-2003 catalog concerning this matter. Obviously, a student seldom does well in a course when he or she cuts class frequently. For that reason, I have established the following attendance policy. For every five unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered one letter grade. If you have ten unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered two letter grades, etc. Late papers (exams, quizzes, etc.) will be accepted only in cases of extreme emergency—severe illness, official university activity, or other urgent reasons.

Departmental 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 the immediate assignment of a a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

Grading: Approximately 20 percent of your grade will consist of class participation (class discussion, group work, and perhaps a group project or two) and writing exercises (exclusive of out of class papers—as frequent reading check quizzes, constructing exam questions, etc.). More important, the classroom exercises, discussions, etc. will help you with exams and papers, the other eighty percent of your grade. There will be two one-hour exams, each worth 10 percent, and two short essays of a minimum of 1,000 words (approximately 4 typewritten pages) each worth 20 percent, and a final worth 20 percent. Of course, you are responsible for keeping up with reading and writing assignments, even if you are unable to attend class. In other words, a missed class is not an excuse for not being prepared on your return. Learn the assignment from a classmate or from your instructor. 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.
Course Description: “Myth is a past with a future, exercising itself in the present,” writes contemporary Mexican author Carlos Fuentes. A constant among all peoples, a shared legacy of ancestral memories, perhaps a part of our very fiber, myth is, in part, the thread that binds a society (and societies) together, that which informs national identities and codes of moral conduct. So crucial are they, in fact, that people, even today, are willing to die for their myths.

Of course, we won’t go to that extent in our class. Our focus will be on the intersection between myth and culture as it is illustrated in some darn good reads. Anthropologists, psychologists, theologians, philosophers, literary theorists, etc. have all grappled with the term myth. So expect some treatment of theory and where appropriate (and accessible) application to Mediterranean, Eastern, and American mythologies. Our quest (just couldn’t resist that word) should reveal the essential beliefs of other cultures and at times their similarities with our own.

Class procedure will consist of very informal lecture and discussion periods, group work, and, when relevant, video. Grades will be based on class participation, occasional surprise reading check quizzes, two short papers, two one-hour exams, and a final.

A Very Tentative Outline for English 3009G

“The way to become truly human is to learn to recognize the lineaments of God in all the wonderful modulations in the face of man”
--Joseph Campbell, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#1—Mon. June 16—Introduction of course and assignment of texts; video, either an episode of the X-Files, or Buffy, The Vampire Slayer


Unit #1: Mediterranean Mythologies

“A myth contains the story that is preserved in popular memory and that helps to bring to life some deep stratum buried in the depths of the human spirit.” –Nikolai Berdyayev, Russian Philosopher


Thurs. “ 19—Epic of Gilgamesh, pp. 61-96, graded group work

Wk#2—Mon. “ 23—Epic of Gilgamesh, pp. 97-117; assignment of group project; Genesis handouts Distributed.

“Myth, especially as codified in religion, has been the basis for the morality of society.”
--J. F. Bierlein, American Scholar of Myth


"In its fullest expression, the case for myth is universal; myth has a life of its own, and with its own spiritual resources, keeps finding clever ways of using every kind of human making to spread its potency."
--Sean Kane, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#3—Mon. June 30—Assignment of paper #1; student conferences on papers: early afternoons from 12 or 12:30 until 3:00 or 4:00.
Tues. July 1—Group projects are due.
Wed. " 2—Graeco-Roman mythology: Read the introduction from Primal Myths on Hesiod’s Theogony on handout; read Hesiod’s “Five Ages of Man”: group work (GW)
Thurs. " 3—Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Book I; graded GW; perhaps video on Greek/Roman Myth

"...we need myths to determine and to evaluate the various facts presented to us. We need myths to answer the questions, “Who am I? How do I fit into the world of society and nature? How should I live?"
--Barbara C. Sproul, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#4—Mon. July 7—excerpts from Ovid’s Metamorphoses, GW or perhaps video
Tues. “ 8—excerpts from Ovid’s Metamorphoses
Wed. “ 9—excerpts from Ovid’s Metamorphoses
Thurs. “ 10—Paper #1 due—loose ends from Ovid; sample exam questions discussed

Unit#2: Eastern Mythologies—Hinduism and Buddhism

"And the pervading purposes of our mythmaking ancestors, all down the centuries, has been to awaken us."
--Alexander Eliot, American Art Historian

Wk#5—Mon. “ 14—Introduction to Hinduism, from Primal Myths, pp. 171-192, handouts, video
Tues. “ 15—Hourly Exam #1 (Mediterranean mythologies)
Wed. “ 16—excerpts from the Mahabharata (MBH) video, exams returned
Thurs. “ 17—excerpts from MBH, group work

"Myth embodies the nearest approach to truth that can be stated in words."
--A.K. Coomarswamy, Indian Philosopher

Wk#6—Mon. “ 21—Assignment of paper #2: conferences during the afternoons MTWTH; excerpts from MBH, group work, if time permits
Tues. “ 22—excerpts from MBH, group work
Wed. “ 23—loose ends from MBH, group work or quiz.
Thurs. 24—Hesse’s Siddhartha, video, handouts; Study Guide for exam #2 distributed.

“A myth is a symbolic story which demonstrates in Alan Watts’ words, ‘The inner meaning of the universe and of human life.’"
--Andrew Greeley, Priest and Novelist

Wk#7—Mon. “28—Hesse’s Siddhartha, group work
Tues. 29—Exam #2
Unit #3: Modern Mythologies

"Certainly science, like so many of the earlier myths, appears to explain the natural world around us. But science can only answer how things happen; it is unable to tell us why."  J. F. Bierlien, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#7—Wed. July 30—Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, video documentary
Thurs. " 31—Paper #2 due; Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, GW

"'You are my creator, but I am your master; obey.'”
--from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Wk#8—Mon. Aug. 4—Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*
Tues. " 5—Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*; Study Guide for the final distributed

FINAL EXAMS: AUG. 6, 7, 8 (EMPHASIS ON SHELLEY’S *FRANKENSTEIN*)