Summer 1998

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ENG 3009-003

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Dr. William J. Searle

English 3009C--sec. 003--12:00 to 1:15--MTW--CH226

Office Number: 314B
Office Phone: 581-6375
Office Hours: 1:15 to 1:45 MTWTH and by appointment

The following texts are used for English 3009C:


**Attendance:** Plan to attend every class. You might glance at pages 57 and 56 of the 1996-1997 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 will be accepted only in cases of extreme emergency--severe illness, official university activity, or other urgent reasons.
Departmental statement of 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 immediate assignment of 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, 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 also 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. Of focus will be on the intersection between myth and culture as it is illustrated in some darn good reads. Anthropologists, psychologists, theologians, philosphers, 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 hourlies, and a final.
A Very Tentative Outline for English 3009C

"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 8--assessment/diagnostic survey, introduction of course and assignment of texts; begin video, either The Hero's Journey or an episode from the X-files.


Wed. " 10--video, probably "As It was in the Beginning"

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


"It's curious, and should be humbling, that 'evolution myths' often foreshadow the dry scientific findings of today."

--Alexander Eliot, American Art Historian

Wk#2--Mon.June 15--Epic of Gilgamesh, pp. 61-96

Tues. " 16--Epic of Gilgamesh, pp. 97-117; assignment of group project.

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

Wed. " 17--Judeo-Christian mythology: Creation from Primal Myths, pp. 123-26; Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis; quiz, video

Thurs." 18--excerpts from Genesis on handout; from Sacred Narrative, James G. Frazer's "The Fall of Man," pp. 72-97.
"In its fullest expression, the class 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 22--the Abraham story on Genesis handout;
assignment of paper#1; student confer-
ences on paper--mornings and early after-
noons.

Tues. " 23--group projects are due

Wed. " 24--Graeco-Roman Mythology: read introduction
from Primal Myths on Hesiod's Theogony p.
157; read Hesiod's Theogony on handout; quiz,
group work; Hesiod's "Five Ages of Man" in
Primal Myths.

Thurs. " 25--Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book I

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

Wk#4--Mon. June 29--excerpts from Ovid's Metamorphoses; group
work

Tues. " 30--excerpts from Ovid's Metamorphoses, loose
ends, review

Wed. July 1--Paper#1 due

Thurs. " 2--NO CLASS--INDEPENDENCE DAY OBSERVANCE

Unit#2: Eastern Mythologies--Hinduism, 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. July 6--Introduction to Hinduism: from Primal Myths
pp. 179-92, handouts, video

Tues. " 7--Hourly exam #1 (Mediterranean Mythologies)

Wed. " 8--excerpts from Mahabharata, video

Thurs. " 9--excerpts from Mahabharata, group work.

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

Wk#6--Mon. " 13--excerpts from Mahabharata, video.

Tues. " 14--excerpts from Mahabharata, group work.
Wk#6--Wed. " 15--excerpts from Mahabharata, theme#2 assigned; conferences on paper, early mornings and early afternoons
Thurs. " 16--Hesse's Siddhartha

"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. " 20--Hesse's Siddhartha, group work
Tues. " 21--Hesse's Siddhartha

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. Bierlein, American scholar of myth

Wed. " 22--Mary Shelley's Frankenstein
Thurs." 23--Paper #2 due--Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, video

Wk#8--Mon. " 27--Hourly exam #2 (Eastern Mythologies -- Hinduism and Buddhism)
Tues." 28--Mary Shelley's Frankenstein
Wed. " 29--Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

FINAL EXAMS--JULY 30, 31, AUG 1--emphasis on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein