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ENG 3009-002-004: 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**

   Greek, Native American, and Asian mythologies, especially, along with mythic films or parts of films. Particular emphasis on the myth of the quest (the journey toward harmony and enlightenment, or, unexpectedly, dissolution). Theoretical readings and considerations focusing especially on the question of how myth is relevant in an age of scientific enlightenment and relevant “to my major and my future.” Tapes of popular mythologists (Joseph Campbell and Alan Watts). Connections between myth and everyday activities both mundane and miraculous (such as sports, eating, and loving).

   Content will remain flexible, with a variety of texts available for study, depending on the needs/desires of the class. The course itself is intended to be a genuine intellectual and emotional quest, with the direction of the journey, therefore, only vaguely mapped out in advance.

3. **Writing Requirements**

   Seven quizzes; unannounced; factual and interpretive questions.

   A term paper, 2500-3000 words. Topic: Referring (in at least some detail) to most of the assigned texts, show what “myths” you do/don’t live by, and why your life is/isn’t purposeful, is/isn’t meaningful. Due ________.

   A journal. At least 1000 words weekly for 13 weeks; at least 3 entries a week; clearly dated; typed of 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). Due ________.
4. Grading

The exam/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:

- Quizzes 30%
- Term paper 30%
- Journal 30%
- Class participation 10%

6. Attendance

Attendance is not required, but quizzes cannot be made up, without an officially excused absence.

7. Late papers

Late papers cannot be accepted.

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 (and you must realize that downloading an essay off the Internet is not only cheating but fascistic and a threat to Democracy and Human Freedom).