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ENG 3009-003: Myth and Culture

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English 3009G Section 003  
Myth and Culture  
Dr. Carol Stevens  
Spring 2002  
11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. in Coleman Hall 3150

Contact Information  
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Office Hours 1:30-3:00 MW, 3:30-4:30 TTh, and by appointment

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 that means for us is that we will be reading stories including Near Eastern, Greek and Roman, Asian, and North American myths, and learning as much as we can about how the stories relate to and help us understand the cultures they come from. The class will involve much small group work in a variety of activities related to the material and the understanding of cultures, some lectures, and lots of general discussion. There will be a great deal of reading and writing. English 3009G is a writing-intensive course.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester I expect you to know:
- What myths are and how they function  
- How to distinguish among myths, legends, and folk tales  
- How to understand the stories of some of the world's great cultures (including but not limited to Assyrian-Sumerian-Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Hindu, Tibetan Buddhist, and Native American, especially Mayan and Navajo  
- How these cultures differ from and are similar to each other and our own  
- How myths affect the practices and beliefs in a culture

With this knowledge, I hope you will
- Be more conscious of the forces and events that shape cultures and societies  
- Be able to speak and write clearly and well about myths and the cultures they represent  
- Be able to encounter myths and cultures you have not previously studied and be able to reason to some understanding of them on your own.  
- Have a better understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures  
- Recognize references and allusions to these myths when you encounter them in literature and art  
- Take pleasure and enjoyment from your knowledge

Course Prerequisites

English 1001G and English 1002G or their equivalents, and at least sophomore standing.
Texts

There is a great deal of reading in this course. Some of it will be easier, and some will be more difficult. Keeping up with all of the reading provides the surest means of doing well, and procrastinating is sure to get you into trouble. Some of the stories will seem strange to you, but I think you will enjoy them.

Dundes. Sacred Narrative.
Erdoes and Ortiz. American Indian Myths and Legends.
Harris and Platzner. Classical Mythology: Images and Insights, 2nd ed.
Homphries. Ovid, the Metamorphoses.
Lhalungpa. The Life of Milarepa.
Sandars. The Epic of Gilgamesh.
Sproul. Primal Myths.
Tedlock. Popol Vuh.
Zolbrod. Diné Bahane'.

Grade Breakdown

Two exams 300 points (Please note: the exam schedule is not flexible. Travel plans and work schedules do not constitute legitimate reasons for changing exam times. Please keep this in mind when you make your travel plans.)

Two papers 400 points
Participation, group work, classwork, shorter writings 300 points.
901-1000 points = A, 801-900 = B, 701-800 = C, 601-700 = D, Below 600 = F.

About Grades

Adequate work, that is, doing all the assignments and going through the motions with some degree of skill will earn you a C. If you go through the motions without skill, miss deadlines consistently, or miss class you may also earn a D. Extra effort and work of good quality will get you a B. Excellent work, going above and beyond the requirements for assignments with skill, insight, and creativity should earn you an A. Doing an assignment is no guarantee of an A or a B. You must do it well.

Attendance and Participation

At the beginning of each class session, I will take attendance. Students who are absent are still responsible for material covered in class as well as assignments due that day. Participation is required. You can’t participate if you’re not here. In terms of what you miss, there is no difference between an excused and an unexcused absence. If you are not in class, you are not learning the lesson for that day, whether you have a good excuse or not, and your absence disrupts the flow of class. Accommodation will be made only according to university policy.

If you miss 1-2 classes, 20 points for each missed class will be deducted from classwork.
If you miss 3 or more classes, the total goes up to 40 points. If you miss four classes, you have given up 120 points, not including points lost for work due that day. That is over a full letter off your final grade.

Tardiness

If you are more than five minutes late, you will lose 10 points for the session in which you are late. If you are late more than twice, it goes up to 20 points. Coming without your book or without the reading assignment done will also result in a 20-point deduction, as you will not be participating fully.

However, if you miss or are tardy no more than twice in the term, I will refund attendance points.
Late Assignment Policy

A paper handed in one day (NOT one class period) late will receive a 25-point deduction. If the paper is two days late, the deduction will be 50 points, and so on. If you do not come to class on a day when a paper is due but do not come to class, the paper will be treated as a late paper. The same is true for arriving in class with your paper more than five minutes late on the day when a paper is due.

Syllabus/Schedule

You will receive a schedule of readings and due dates for the semester. This, as well as any other procedural or assignment material distributed to the class becomes part of the syllabus for the course.

Paper Format

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and stapled, with no binders, folders, or covers of any kind. Use a font No larger than this (12 points). Shorter assignments should have your name, the date, and the course number and section in the upper right corner. Papers should have a title page. Use MLA style and documentation format for all work.

Academic Honesty

The English Department’s statement on plagiarism is as follows: 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 a grade of F for the assigned work and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. I expect you to do your own work, to use only authorized help such as the Writing Center, conferences with me, and discussion groups in class. I expect you to use sources properly, to imbed them appropriately into your work, to use quotation, paraphrase, or summary as needed, with careful and painstaking documentation. This applies not only to books and articles, but to media and electronic sources, including all web and online sources.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability, and wish to receive academic accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583.

Courtesies in the Classroom As Workplace

It is important to recognize that the literature classroom is in most respects a workplace like any other. We have a limited period of time in which to complete a great deal of work. We need complete attention for the entire class period each time we meet. As a teacher I prefer a relatively relaxed atmosphere, especially because I lecture only part of the time. Whether we are working together, in small groups, or quietly on our own, I expect us to be completely focused on the work at hand, and have adopted these policies as the best way of guaranteeing each student the conditions needed to accomplish that work. Remaining in this section constitutes an agreement to abide by these policies. I promise to treat each of you with respect, and I expect the same of you. This means being on time, ready to work. It means listening courteously and attentively to each other, and disagreeing, when we disagree, reasonably and without disparaging remarks. It means taking care of personal needs before or after class. no food or drink except water when permitted, cell phones and beepers turned off for the duration of class. As discussion moderator, I have a responsibility to see that everyone gets a chance to participate. so I may ask you to yield the floor to someone else.
Please note: While I have made every effort to be as thorough in planning as possible, and intend to follow this syllabus carefully, changes will inevitably occur which may alter any of the policies or scheduling given here. While I will make every effort to confirm changes in writing, an announcement in class will be considered sufficient notification.