Spring 1-15-2000

ENG 3009C-002-009: Myth and Culture

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“Life is not possible without an opening toward the transcendent; in other words, human beings cannot live in chaos.” From: The Sacred And The Profane, Mircea Eliade.

In this course we will develop the thesis that all human conceptualization comes in and through the symbolic forms that we construct; that among these symbolic forms, myth holds an important place; and that, therefore, the terms “myth” and “untruth” are not synonymous. In fact, this semester we will ask the questions: “To what extent does our grasp of reality come to us in the form of our myths?”

Reading List

The speed with which we cover these materials will depend upon both the needs and the interests of the students in the class. The due dates of all the assignments will be announced at least one week before any class discussion or any quizzes over the material. In the case of longer works, more preparation time will be allowed. From time to time, additional texts will be made available in the form either of handouts, materials on reserve at the library, or in the lectures.

1. Gilgamesh, pp. 11-44, Jan.10-14
5. Wald and Eiseley essays, reserve desk, Booth Library. Jan. 28-31
6. The Odyssey, pp.93-540. Feb. 2-9
8. Machiavelli, pp.1702-1717. Feb. 16
9. In-Class essay. Feb.18
11. Singer, Reserve Desk Booth Library, Feb. 25
12. Swift, pp. 231-294, Feb.28-Mar.1
17. In-Class essay. Apr. 3
18. The poetry of Eliot and Stevens, in Vol. II. Apr.5-10 (You will be reading Flaubert during this period.)
20. Moliere, pp.9-71, Apr.19-21

We will write in class two expository papers on the material covered to that date, and a final examination. The papers will each count as 20% of your course grade. In addition, we will have quizzes covering the material due on that day. The quizzes will count as 20% of your course grade. The final examination will count as 40% of your course grade.

The essays will be graded on the basis of two considerations only: the degree to which they display a close familiarity with the reading, and the degree to which they approximate standard English.

No work missed during an unexcused absence may be made up.