Spring 1-15-2001

ENG 3009-010: Myth and Culture

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Course requirements:
I. Class attendance:
I have a strict attendance policy. If you have more than two unexcused absences during the semester, your grade for the semester will lose one-half point for each unexcused absence. If you are ill or have to leave campus because of a family emergency, please call my office or home and let me know.

II. Papers:
You will write two papers, the first 3-4 pages long (it can be longer); the second 5-6 pages long (typed, double-spaced). The first paper can be revised for a better grade. There is no due date for the revised essay, but I'd like to have it as soon as possible.

III. Journals:
I want you to write 2 typed pages every week, summarizing the material you've read that week for the course. Please date the entries for each week. Include your thoughts and questions about and responses to the readings.

IV. Exams:
The midterm exam will be held on March 6; the final on May 3rd. The midterm will cover material studied up to March 6; the final will cover material studied since March 6.

Grading Policy: 1st paper: 15%; 2nd paper: 20%; Journal: 15%; Midterm: 20%; Final: 20%; Class participation: 10%

Conferences:
Please stop by my office to discuss the revision of your paper, or any problem or question related to the course. You can also make an appointment if my regular office hours are inconvenient for you.

Other policies:
1. The English Department's policy on plagiarism states that "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 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."
2. 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.

Required Texts:
Coomaraswamy, Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists
Erdoes and Ortiz, American Indian Myths and Legends
Harris and Platzner, Classical Mythology
Kovacs, The Epic of Gilgamesh
Rinpoche, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying
Rosenberg, World Mythology, 3rd ed.
Scheub, The African Storyteller
Willis, World Mythology

You also need to purchase a packet of material from Copy X-Press located in the Union Building. The cost of the packet does not exceed $3.50.

Class Meetings:

I. Myth and Culture: Some Definitions

January 9: Introduction to the course. Definitions of Myth and Culture

1/11: Willis, pp. 10-16; Rosenberg, xi-xxi

II: Africa:

1/16: (Begin writing in Journals.) Willis, "Egypt" pp. 36-39; "Osiris, Isis, and Horus" in Rosenberg (pp. 12-21);
Video on Egyptian pyramids

1/18 Willis, "Africa": pp. 264-265; 274-277; Scheub: "Notes on Myth" (pp. 50-52); "The Creation", "God Creates Man and Woman", "Ikaggen creates an Eland"

1/23: All in Scheub: "Notes on the Trickster" (pp. 116-119); "Abunawas and the Goat's Horns"; "Beiho Tricks his Uncles"; "The Magic Drum"

1/25: All in Scheub: "Notes on the Hero" (pp. 198-201); "Sikhuluma, The Boy Who Did Not Speak"; "Liongo"; "Notes on the Rites of Passage" (pp. 266-269); "The Girl with One Hand"

III: The Middle East

1/30: Willis, "The Middle East" pp. 56-57, 60-61; 62-63. Rosenberg, "The Enuma Elish" pp. 3-11; Kovacs, The Epic of Gilgamesh (Read the Introductory material)
and Rosenberg, "The Epic of Gilgamesh" pp. 26-56
February 1: Rosenberg, "Gilgamesh" (continued); "Telepinu" (video on Mesopotamia)

IV: Greece and Rome

2/6: All pages are from Harris and Platzner: 3-46; 49-65

2/8: Turn in Journals. Harris and Platzner: "The Great Goddess and Goddesses" pp. 84-104

2/13: Rosenberg, "Demeter and Persephone" (93-99) and "The Iliad" pp. 106-155.

2/15: First Essay is Due. "The Iliad" (continued); Video on "The Greek Heroes and Men"

2/20: Rosenberg, "Medea" 204-241. Video on "Medea"

V: India

2/22: Willis: "India" pp. 68-69; 72-81; Rosenberg, "The Ramayana" pp. 296-321


March 1: Rinpoche, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying (Chapters One, Two, Four, Five)

3/6: Midterm Exam

VI: North America

3/8: Video: "The Spirit of Crazy Horse" Turn in Journals

Spring Break


3/22: Erdoes and Ortiz: pp. 75-76; "The Good Twin and the Evil Twin"; "Old Man Coyote Makes the World"; pp. 179-180; "Hiawatha the Unifier"; "The Life and Death of Sweet Medicine"

3/27: Rosenberg, "The Emergence" "The Woman Who Fell From the Sky" "Raven and the Sources of Light"
3/29: Erdoes and Ortiz: "How Beaver Stole Fire From the Pines" (33); "Adventures of Great Rabbit" (347); "Two Ghostly Lovers" (432) "The Spirit Wife" (447)

VII: Myth and Culture in the Modern World
April 3: Worley and Perry, *African-American Literature*: Historical Overview (xv-xxii); "Sonny's Blues" (in packet)

4/5: Worley and Perry, "Nat Turner's Confession"; "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" "To Mississippi Youth"

4/10: Worley and Perry, "Sweat" "1927, from Sula" "Thank you, M'am"

4/12: **Turn in Journals.** Worley and Perry, "Hidden Name and Complex Fate" "My Search for Roots" "The Man Who Was Almost a Man"

4/17: Cortina, *Hispanic American Literature*: Introduction (xiii-xix); "Our America" "The Prize of Freedom"; "The Moths"

4/19: "From Bless Me Ultima" "Tales Told Under a Mango Tree" "My Name" **Second paper is due.**

4/24: "First Love" "Bitter Sugar: Why Puerto Ricans Leave Home" "Thoughts on a Sunday Afternoon"

4/26: Summary and Evaluation

**Final Exam: Thursday, May 3, 12:30-2:30**
Choose one of the following topics:

1. The study of myth allows us to see human imagination in action in a variety of cultural contexts. Consider two creation myths. Focus on and compare/contrast a few selected images and symbols used in these two stories. What conclusions does your study yield in terms of differences and similarities in the ways in which human beings from different cultures organize and give shape to what is often beyond human comprehension?

2. We have been studying myths focusing on the hero. Choose a story we have not discussed in class and analyze the ways in which the concept of the hero or heroine and the idea of heroism are played out by the characters, the plot, the symbols, and so on. What does the story reveal about the culture's standards for heroic behavior?

3. The trickster is another figure we talked about. Using Scheub's notes on the trickster and the hero as a beginning point, write an essay in which you study the fine line separating the two figures as revealed in a specific myth. You can use a story we have discussed or choose your own.

4. Focus on what you consider to be the most interesting aspect of either the epic of *Gilgamesh* or the *Iliad*. In your essay carefully analyze and discuss this special dimension of the epic.
English 3009C Myth and Culture
Dr. Susan Bazargan
Topics for Essay # 2 (5-6 pages long; it can be longer)
Due 4/19

1. During the last three weeks of the semester, we've studied selections of stories from Hispanic American, African-American, and Native American literature. Concentrate on 2-3 stories belonging to one of these literatures. Then find a way to connect the story (or stories) to some of the major themes we have been discussing in class regarding myth and culture. What you are trying to show is whether and in what manner these themes are still with us, as shown in more "modern" versions of storytelling. Are the themes questioned, challenged, rejected, embraced, disguised in modern clothing, or...

2. Focus on a continent or culture we have not discussed in class. (This could be a culture of your own ancestry). Read one of the most celebrated myths from this culture and analyze its main themes to reveal some of the "fundamental truths" observed by this culture. These could relate to creation, life, death, kinship, love, heroism, social order, etc.

3. The "culture" you've been immersed in for the past few years has sprung from an institution, Eastern Illinois University, the center of your life as a college student. Write an essay in which you examine some of the outstanding rituals, symbols (language but also icons, buildings, etc.) and myths that make up this culture. To do a good job, you need to be a detached observer and perhaps critic. You can put a satiric spin on your discussion, but make sure the satire works!

4. Choose what you consider the most interesting female character you've read about in the myths we've studied. Analyze the character to reveal those dimensions you find to be exceptional and why. What do we surmise about the culture's views towards women as shown in your chosen myth?

If you have questions about the assignment, please stop by my office for a conference.