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ENG 3009G-005: Myth and Culture

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General description:
This course introduces you to the variety of ways in which myth has been conceptualized in human history, in the realms of religion, literature, psychology, and politics. We’ll focus on myth as a cognitive construct that allows us to gain some insight into the cultural foundations of various ancient and modern societies. The course material has been divided into four thematic units: 1) Understanding Myth; 2) Cycles of Creation, Death, and Rebirth; 3) The Goddess; 4) Myths in Context: a) the family, b) animals in myth, c) adventures of the hero).

Course requirements:
1. 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 and let me know.

2. Papers:
You will write three 4-page papers (typed, double-spaced). The first draft of the paper will be written in class. Using my comments and suggestions, you will revise, expand, and polish the paper at home. The second draft will receive a grade. English 3009 is a “writing-intensive” course, so you can submit one of your essays to your electronic writing portfolio.

3. Exams and quizzes:
You will take two exams during the semester. The first will cover all the material studied since the beginning of the semester; the second one will cover material studied since the first exam. Both exams will have two parts: a short-answer section followed by an essay question. Pop quizzes might be given occasionally, so come to class prepared!

Grading Policy and Scale:
Each paper is worth 20% (60% total), the two exams are worth 30%; the quizzes 10%. A+: 98-100; A: 95-97; A-: 91-94; B+: 87-90; B: 82-86; B-: 81-85; C+: 77-80; C: 71-76; C-: 69-70; grades below 70 are in the D range; grades below 60 fall in the F range.

Conferences:
Please stop by office to discuss 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:
Achebe, Things Fall Apart
Erdoes and Ortiz, American Indian Myths and Legends
Harris and Platzner, Classical Mythology
Martel, Life of Pi
Kovacs, The Epic of Gilgamesh
Rinpoche, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying
Rosenberg, World Mythology
Scheub, The African Storyteller
Sproul, Primal Myths

Units, Class Meetings and Readings:

Unit I: Understanding Myth (myth and culture, myth and symbol, myth and religion, myth and ritual, externalist vs. internalist theories of myth)

1/13: Introduction to the course

1/15: Sproul, Introduction, pp. 1-14; Harris and Platzner, Chapter 2 (“Ways of Interpreting Myth”; read page 34-43)

Unit II: Cycles of Creation, Death, and Rebirth (Egypt, Babylonia, Ancient Persia, The Near East, Africa, India, Tibet, Ancient Greece)

1/20: Rosenberg, “Osiris, Isis, and Horus” (pp. 12-21); Rosenberg, “The Enuma Elish” pp. 3-11.


1/27: Sproul, from “The Koran” pp. 151-155. Islam and Sufism (Rumi’s poetry; hand-out in class)


2/5: Rinpoche, pages 28-81.

2/10: First in-class writing

Unit III: The Goddess (the Ancient Greeks, Native Americans)

2/12: Harris and Platzner, pp. 83-116

2/17: pp.83-116 (continued); Rosenberg, Medea, 204-241.

2/19: Rosenberg, Medea, (continued)


Revised First Essay is Due. Review for the first exam.

2/26: First Exam

Unit IV: Myths in Context:
a) The Family and Community

3/2: Achebe, Things Fall Apart

3/4: Achebe (continued)

3/9: Achebe (continued)

3/11: Second in-class writing

Spring Break

Unit IV: Myths in Context:
b) Animals in myths


3/25: Erdoes and Ortiz, “What’s This? My Balls for your Dinner?” (p. 339); Rosenberg, “Raven and the Sources of Light” pp. 634-636;
Unit IV: Myths in Context:
c) Adventures of the Hero

3/30: Kovacs, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*; see also Rosenberg, “The Epic of Gilgamesh”

4/1: Gilgamesh (continued)
Revised Second Paper Is Due.

4/6: Third in-class writing

4/8: Rosenberg, “The Iliad” (pp. 106-153)

4/13: The Iliad (continued)

4/15: Martel, *Life of Pi*

4/20: *Life of Pi*

4/22: *Life of Pi*
Revised Third Paper Is Due.

4/27: Evaluation and review

4/29: Second Exam