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ENG 3009-005: Myth and Culture

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English 3009G Section 005
Myth and Culture
Spring 2006

Dr. Carol Stevens

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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 Near Eastern, Greek, 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 a lot of 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 3009 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 stories of some of the worlds great cultures (specifically, 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

Texts

Dundes, Sacred Narrative
Hesse, Siddhartha
Leonard and McClure, Myth and Knowing
Lhalungpa, The Life of Milarepa
Menchu, I, Rigoberta Menchu
Ovid, Metamorphoses (tr. Innes)
Sandars, The Epic of Gilgamesh
Tapahonso, Saani Dakataal
Tedlock, Popol Vuh
Zolbrod, Dine Bahane, The Navajo Creation Story

Grading:
Unless otherwise specified in class, your grade will be based upon 100 points assigned as follows:

- **Mid-term Exam** 10 points
- **Final Exam** 15 points
- **Paper assignments involving some research and revision**—worth 20 and 25 points—45 points
- **Group work and presentations** 10 points
- **Participation**—includes attendance, participation in class discussion, **WebCT discussion**, shorter writings and quizzes

I will use numbers rather than letters. This will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 61-70=D. All assigned writings and exams must be done for you to pass the course. We may add, cancel, or revise some assignments. In that case, point totals may be adjusted also. You may revise a paper from this course for your Electronic Writing Portfolio.

### Responsibilities and Policies

1. **Come to every class meeting, and keep the lines of communication open.** Late work gets lowered grades unless we’ve come to a clear understanding **BEFORE** the due date.

2. **Attendance is important, as is participating in the discussions and bringing your contributions to the class.** More than three absences will result in your getting many fewer participation points. But there will be generous points for people who share their thoughts on the readings and issues through class discussion and the **WebCT list**.

3. **The ethics of academic honesty dictate that students do their own work—always.** Taking someone else’s words OR thoughts and using them in your own writing without giving credit is plagiarism. It can result in a failing grade for the paper and the course, must be reported to Judicial Affairs, and can receive other penalties as well. **Students who have difficulty with the mechanics of documentation but make a good-faith effort to cite their sources will be required to rewrite their papers until satisfactory.** The **Writing Center has excellent tutors who can answer questions about documentation.** The English Department’s Statement is as follows: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—“The appropriation of 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 course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs office.** Please cite all sources, including internet sources, and be sure the text of your papers makes it clear whether you are summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting directly.

4. **If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.**

5. **Online discussion information:** I will **set up a WebCT discussion list for this class.** Each student will be required to write and post five thoughtful responses to our reading assignments on the list. These responses must be done before we discuss the reading in class, and should be 1-2 paragraphs long. I will sometimes suggest approaches in class, but spontaneous responses are fine too. Responses must be posted at **least 24 hours before the class for which the reading assignment is due**, so that they can be read by students and the instructor before the class discussion. Unless you are the first person to post on a topic, you **must respond to the posting of at least one other student.** In addition, you must quote from a passage in the assigned reading that you work into your response. I’ll record the postings week to week, **and assign points at the end of the semester based on clarity, thoughtfulness, and completeness.**

6. **Papers should be typed, double-spaced, with your name, the class, section number and date at the top, should have one-inch margins, and should use MLA style for documentation.**
Important Dates to Remember
Final revisions of papers will be due Thursday Feb. 9 and Tuesday April 18.
Group projects will be assigned and due throughout the semester.
Mid-term Exam will be on Tuesday Feb. 22 in class
Final Exam will be Wednesday, May 3, 2:45-4:45 in our classroom.

Please note: Any policy statement or syllabus is, by its very nature, a tentative document. Changes in any part, including grading, are possible during the semester. An announcement in class will be considered sufficient notice of such change.