Spring 1-15-1997

ENG 3099-099: Myth and Culture

Bonnie Irwin  
Eastern Illinois University

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Through comparative analysis of myths from selected cultural traditions, we will examine relationships among mythical, historical, anthropological and scientific ways of understanding. We will be reading primary texts of myths as well as secondary criticism, and the class will consist of lecture and discussion based upon these readings. The course is divided into roughly 5 sections: Theoretical Grounding; Tibetan Buddhist Mythology; Navajo Mythology; Mayan Mythology; Greco-Roman Mythology. Along the way, we will be discussing other traditions as well as our own mythologies and how we interact with them.

Required texts:
Kane, S.  *Wisdom of the Mythtellers*
Gold, P.  *Navaho and Tibetan Sacred Wisdom: The Circle of the Spirit*
Lhalungpa, L.  *The Life of Milarepa.*
Ovid.  *Metamorphoses.*
Tedlock, D.  *Popol Vuh*
Zolbrod, P.  *Diné Bahane': The Navaho Creation Story*

Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>400 pts (100, 100, 200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>150 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Myth</td>
<td>150 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1000 pts</td>
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Information for Students with Disabilities:
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accomodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Papers:
There will be two shorter papers (1000 words) and one longer paper (1500-2000 words); topics for the first two papers will be distributed approximately 2 weeks before the due date of the paper. These papers will be about issues in the reading and in our own mythologies. The third paper will be tied to the oral presentation and will be based on your interpretation of a particular theme relating to myth; topics will be arranged through individual conferences. Your source material for the third paper and the presentation will be an issue of *Parabola*, a journal about myth. An assignment sheet concerning this paper will be forthcoming.
You are allowed one late paper (up to a week) without penalty. Any additional late papers will result in a lowering of your grade. All papers must be turned in to pass the course!
Journal:
You will be expected to keep a response journal on your reading. Each entry is due on the date it is listed in the syllabus. I will pick these up daily and return them to you the next class. Each entry should be 1-2 pages handwritten or the equivalent typed. They will be evaluated on a + √ - Ø basis. Please see the “Guidelines for Response Journal” for further information.

Presentation:
Each member of the class will do an individual presentation, tied to the third paper assignment and based on an issue discussed in Parabola. The presentations will be approximately 15 minutes in length and may include visual and/or audio aids, handouts, and class activities. More information will be provided during the second week of class. Presentations are scheduled for the last 5 weeks of the class and will be arranged no later than March 13.

Exam:
There will be a midterm examination. It will consist primarily of short answer and essay questions. If you have done the reading and attended class regularly, it should not be that difficult.

Class Myth:
There will not be a final in this class. In place of a final, we as a group will be constructing a class myth. You will have class time to prepare this assignment, but may find that you also have to do work individually or in groups outside of class. The entire class will get one grade for this project, with adjustments made based on your evaluation of each other. More information will follow around week 5 when you have a better understanding of the definitions and functions of myth.

Attendance:
I take attendance each class period, but there are no points assigned to attendance itself. You are responsible for taking care of your own absences: getting the notes from a classmate, getting any handouts and assignments from me. It is obviously in your best interest to attend class every time because you will always miss something if you do not. See "Participation" for more information.

Participation:
100 points are allocated for participation. Keep up with the reading and come to class! We will also have frequent group projects that will be conducted in class. I will generally provide you with a question or task that you will address in small groups. Although the written and oral products of each group will be evaluated, what is most important is active participation. There will be no make-ups given on group assignments and in-class activities.
Course Objectives:

--to break down cultural misunderstandings and barriers
--to recognize similarities among cultures
--to learn what myths are and how they function
--to learn about cultures that may be unfamiliar
--to learn more about our own culture and mythology
--to learn different ways of teaching about cultures and texts

Central Themes/Issues:

--What is the nature of the divine? Is it a force, a living being? Male or female? One or many? Human qualities and emotions? What kind of demands are made by the divine on the people?

--What is the relationship between human beings and the divine? How do people interact with the divine? How are good and evil determined? What kind of demands do people make upon gods? Is fate or free will a more powerful force in life?

--What is the social contract? How should individual needs and group obligations be balanced? What are the obligations of a citizen? How are individuals supposed to act within society? Consider rights vs. duties, appropriate behavior, class and caste, cooperation vs. competition. What is the relationship among different cultures and races?

--Where do we come from? How was the world created and why? What is the role of natural phenomena in the creation process? What happens to human beings after death? Does this affect human beings' attitudes toward life?

--What are the essential and social natures of men and women? Are gender roles clearly delineated? What is the essence of human nature? What values are important? What is the relative importance of family, children, love and duty with the family?

--Are human beings natural or unnatural beings? Are they custodians of the earth? If so, what does that entail? Or, on the other hand, are human beings merely another part of creation, no more or less important than anything else? How should one function in and with nature? Is nature a source of beauty? Is nature a product to be consumed?
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu Jan 14</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Diagnostic Survey, Writing Sample</td>
<td>Video: Fantasia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th Jan 16</td>
<td>What is Myth?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wisdom of the Myrtellers, pp. 14-31</td>
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**Quotation of the Week:**
"Myths are other peoples' religion." (Sam Keen)

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<tr>
<td>Tu Jan 21</td>
<td>Definitions and Distinctions (cont'd)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wisdom of the Myrtellers, pp. 55-60; 87-101</td>
<td>In-class writing assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th Jan 23</td>
<td>Oral Tradition exercise</td>
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<td>Wisdom of the Myrtellers, pp. 215-230; 251-256</td>
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**Quotation of the Week:**
"Myth embodies the nearest approach to absolute truth that can be expressed in words." (Ananda Coomaraswamy, Indian philosopher)

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<tr>
<td>Tu Jan 28</td>
<td>Oral Tradition discussion</td>
<td>Introduction to Buddhism</td>
<td>Navajo and Tibetan Sacred Wisdom, pp. 25-35; 47-53; 122-124</td>
<td>Prepare 3 discussion questions and list of 5-10 vocabulary words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th Jan 30</td>
<td>Life of Milarepa, pp. 9-35</td>
<td>Journal Assignment 1 due</td>
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**Quotation of the Week:**
"The real point of myth is not to give an objective world picture; what is expressed in it, rather, is how we human beings understand ourselves in the world." (Rudolf Bultmann, German theologian)

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<tr>
<td>Tu Feb 4</td>
<td>Life of Milarepa, pp. 41-88</td>
<td>[You may skip the songs/poems]</td>
<td>Journal Assignment 2 due</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Th Feb 6</td>
<td>Life of Milarepa, pp. 89-145</td>
<td>[You may skip the songs/poems]</td>
<td>Journal Assignment 3 due</td>
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<td>Assignment(s)</td>
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| Feb 11 | Tu     | *Life of Milarepa*, pp. 146-197  
[You may skip the songs/poems]  
**Journal Assignment 4 due** |
| Feb 13 | Th     | *Navajo and Tibetan Sacred Wisdom*, pp. 140-144; 150-154; 173-180  
**Mandala Workshop** |
| Feb 18 | Tu     | *Introduction to Navajo Culture*  
*Navaio and Tibetan Sacred Wisdom*, pp. 36-45; 53-55; 106-113  
**Prepare 3 discussion questions and list of 5-10 vocabulary words**  
**Paper 1 due** |
| Feb 20 | Th     | *Diné Bahane’, Part 1*  
**Journal Assignment 5 due** |
| Feb 25 | Tu     | *Diné Bahane’, Part 2*, pp. 81-125  
**Journal Assignment 6 due** |
| Feb 27 | Th     | *Diné Bahane’, Part 2*, pp. 126-168  
**Journal Assignment 7 due** |
| Mar 4  | Tu     | *Diné Bahane’, Part 3*, pp. 171-224  
**Journal Assignment 8 due** |
| Mar 6  | Th     | *Diné Bahane’, Part 3*, pp. 224-278  
**Journal Assignment 9 due** |
| Mar 11 | Tu     | Midterm |
| Mar 13 | Th     | Individual Consultations  
**Paper 2 due** |

--- SPRING (?) BREAK ---

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Assignment Details</th>
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| Tu Mar 25 | Popol Vuh, Part 1 | Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 10 due |
| Th Mar 27 | Popol Vuh, Part 2 | Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 11 due |

**Quotation of the Week:**
"Mythology is the womb of mankind's initiation into life and death."
(Joseph Campbell, myth scholar)

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| Tu Apr 1 | Popol Vuh, Part 3 | Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 12 due |
| Th Apr 3 | Popol Vuh, Part 4 | Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 13 due |

**Quotation of the Week:**
"Mythology is the study of whatever religious or heroic legends are so foreign to a student's experience that he cannot believe them to be true."
(Robert Graves, British poet and myth scholar)

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| Tu Apr 8 | Popol Vuh, Part 5 | Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 14 due |
| Th Apr 10 | Metamorphoses, Book 1 | Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 15 due |

**Quotation of the Week:**
"Myth is neither conscious poetry nor valid science, but the common root and raw material of both."
(George Santayana, philosopher)

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<th>Date</th>
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| Tu Apr 15 | Metamorphoses, Book 2, pp. 28-45; 54-56 | Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 16 due  
Paper 3 due |
| Th Apr 17 | Metamorphoses, Book 3, pp. 67-80; Book 4, pp. 86-87; Book 6, pp. 129-133 | Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 17 due |
### Quotation of the Week:

"Myth gives man, very importantly, the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he does understand the universe."

(Claude Levi-Strauss, French anthropologist)

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<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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| Tu  | Apr 22| Metamorphoses, Book 7, pp. 153-167, 174-180; Book 8, pp. 181-190; 200-204  
Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 18 due |
| Th  | Apr 24| Metamorphoses, Book 9, pp. 229-233; Book 10, pp. 234-237, 239-241;  
Book 11, pp. 259-265  
Parabola Presentations  
Journal Assignment 19 due |

### Quotation of the Week:

"Myth is a past with a future, exercising itself in the present."

Carlos Fuentes, Mexican author

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<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Apr 29</td>
<td>Preparation of Class Myth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>May  1</td>
<td>Preparation of Class Myth</td>
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### Quotation of the Week:

Myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the 'supernatural') into the World. Myth is regarded as a sacred story, and hence a 'true story,' because it always deals with realities. The cosmogonic myth is 'true' because the existence of the World is there to prove it."

(Mircea Eliade, myth scholar)

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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</table>
| T   | May  6| Performance of Class Myth  
2:45-4:45 |