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ENG 3099G-099

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Dr. William J. Searle

English 3099G—sec. 66+—14:00-14:50—MWF—CH3160 (310)

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The following texts are used for English 3099G:


Attendance: Plan to attend every class. You might glance at page 52 of the 2002-2003 catalog concerning this matter. Obviously, a student seldom does well in a course when he or she cuts class frequently. For that reason, I have established the following attendance policy. For every five unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered one letter grade. If you have ten unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered two letter grades, etc. Late papers (exams, quizzes, etc.) will be accepted only in cases of extreme emergence—severe illness, official university activity, or other urgent reasons.
Departmental Statement on plagiarism: “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 the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty up to and including immediate assignment of an a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs office.”

A Brief Note on the Class:

Your participation (in the form of comments, responses, questions, and oral reports, etc.) is essential to the quality of this course. Speaking ancient Sumerian, dancing on table tops, and writing award-winning essays are not requirements. If, however, students in this class do earn awards for papers written in this course, your humble instructor, will boast about the authors for the next five years!

Several of the readings—especially the “Enuma Elish,” the Theogony, and the initial chapters of the Mahabharata—are challenging. Most selections, however, as The Epic of Gilgamesh, The Metamorphoses, Siddhartha, and Frankenstein, are very accessible. In any case, the course outline, I believe, suggests what is manageable in an Honors course on Myth and Culture. We can, if need be, reduce speed, back track, or even take an occasional detour when the situation warrants.

GRADING:

Fifteen percent: of your grade will be based on class participation, and another twenty percent will consist of group work and reading check quizzes. There will be also be two short essays, each a minimum of 1200 words (approximately 4 or 5 typewritten pages), worth twenty percent apiece, an individual class presentation worth fifteen percent, and a group project worth ten percent. Of course, you are responsible for keeping up with reading and writing assignments, even if you are unable to attend class. In other words, a missed class is not an excuse for not being prepared on your return. Learn the assignment from a classmate or from your instructor. 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.

Written requirements: Two essays of four or five typewritten pages apiece (each worth twenty percent) are required. You will have the opportunity to revise both papers, if you so desire. The oral presentation, explained below, must be accompanied by a typewritten handout.
Oral Presentations: Each of you will present an in-class project (fifteen percent), in which you examine secondary material (whether on historical context, an issue or theme, or biographical sketch of the an author, etc.) on the selections discussed in class. The basic format of the presentation would consist of a handout, a review/summary of the major points of the article, and an optional assessment of the article’s usefulness, virtues, flaws, omissions, etc. As you read this, I will either have copies of all of the secondary sources, exclusive of readings in Sacred Narrative, or will soon have them. Next week I will distribute these copies by lot. Any handout you distribute for the presentation should contain a brief summary, key quotations, and an outline of the argument, etc., along with he appropriate MLA works cited entry.

Reading Check quizzes/Group Work: Reading check quizzes will consist of five brief questions and an extra credit question. Group work usually consists of four or five students discussing three to ten questions, responding to them in writing, and finally presenting their responses orally to the class. Both the question sheets and answers are turned in at the end of class. Either the lowest quiz grade or absence from group work will be dropped. These activities will count twenty percent of your final grade.

Group project: Groups of four to six students will be selected by lot to present a secondary source to the class. Each group will provide a handout, a visual aid, and a written commentary. This activity is worth ten percent of your grade.

Class participation: Informal class participation will count fifteen percent. In any case, because this is an Honors course, we are all responsible for its success. I look forward to hearing from you.
A Very Tentative Outline for English 3099G

"The way to become truly human is to learn to recognize the lineaments of God in all the wonderful modulations in the face of man."
--Joseph Campbell, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#1—Mon. Jan. 13—Discussion of course and assignment of texts.
  Wed. “ 15—Video, either The Hero’s Journey, more probably, an episode of either the X-Files, or Buffy, the Vampire Slayer

Unit #1: Mediterranean Mythologies

“It’s curious, and should be humbling, that ‘evolution myths’ often foreshadow the dry ‘scientific findings’ of today.”
--Alexander Eliot, American Art Historian

Wk#2—Mon. Jan. 20—KING’S BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE—NO CLASS
  Fri. “ 24—Conclude “Enuma Elish,” handout; Begin The Epic of Gilgamesh, pp. 61-96; Remember there’s a glossary of names and terms in the back of the book. Group work

“A myth contains the story that is preserved in popular memory and that helps to bring to life some deep stratum buried in the depths of the human spirit.”
--Nikolai Berdyayev, Russian Philosopher

Wk#3—Mon. “ 27—Epic of Gilgamesh, pp. 97-117; conclude group work; Draw lots for group project.
  Wed. “ 29—Presentation #1 (on Gilgamesh?); loose ends; handout on Genesis distributed.
  Fri. “ 31—Judeo-Christian mythology: creation from Primal Myths, pp. 123-26, Chapters 1 and 2; video; Presentation?
“Myth, especially as codified in religion, has been the basis for the morality of a society.” --J. F. Bierlien, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#4—Mon. Feb. 3—Excerpts from Genesis, chapters 3 and 4; Presentations?  
Wed. “ 5—Chapters 6 through 9, and 11 of Genesis, video  
Fri. “ 7—Excerpts from Genesis, the Abraham story, chapters 12-25. Presentation?

“In its fullest expression, the case for myth is universal; myth has a life of its own, and with its own spiritual resources, keeps finding clever ways of using every kind of human making to spread its potency.” --Sean Kane, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#5—Mon. “ 10—Abraham story concluded. Quiz  
Wed. “ 12—Group Projects due—to be presented in class.  
Fri. “ 14—LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE—NO CLASS

“...we need myths to determine and to evaluate the various facts presented to us. We need myths to answer the questions, ‘Who am I? How do I fit into the worlds of society and nature? How should I live?’”  
--Barbara C. Sproul, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#6—Mon. “ 17—Paper #1 Assigned; Hesiod’s Theogony on handout distributed. Student conferences on essay #1: MTWThF  
Wed. “ 19—Graeco-Roman Mythology: excerpts from the Theogony; Student presentations or Video  
Fri. “ 21—excerpts from Hesiod’s Theogony, student presentation.

“An the pervading purposes of our mythmaking ancestors, all down the centuries, has been to awaken us.” --Alexander Eliot, American Art Historian

Wk#7—Mon. “ 24—Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Book I, Group work  
Wed. “ 26—conclude group work on Book I.  
Fri. “ 28—Paper #1 due; excerpts from Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Student presentation.
"Myth embodies the nearest approach to truth that can be stated in words."
--A. K. Coomarswamy, Indian Philosopher

**Wk#8—Mon. Mar. 3**—excerpts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, group work
  Wed. “ 5—excerpts from Ovid
  Fri. “ 7—Paper#1 returned; loose ends, student presentation

**SPRING RECESS—MAR. 8 THROUGH MAR.16—NO CLASS**

Unit #2: Eastern Mythologies: Hinduism and Buddhism

"Myth, whether Christian or other, is an of truth if the form of a story."
--*Encyclopedia Britannica*

**Wk#9—Mon. Mar.17**—Introduction to Hinduism, selected myths from *Primal Myths*, pp. 179-92, student presentation.
  Wed. “ 19—excerpts from the *Mahabharata* (MBH), Part I, video
  Fri. “ 21—excerpts from MBH, group work

"Myths reveal the structure of reality, and the multiple modalities of being in the world; that is why they are exemplary models of human behavior.” --Mircea Eliade, American Scholar of Myth

**Wk#10-Mon. Mar.24**—excerpts from Part II of the MBH, video
  Wed. “ 26—excerpts from the MBH—group work
  Fri. “ 28—excerpts from the MBH, conclude group work

"A myth is a symbolic story which demonstrates in Alan Watts’ words, ‘the inner meaning of the universe and human life.” --Andrew Greeley, Priest and Novelist

**Wk#11-Mon.** “ 31—Paper #2 assigned; Student conferences on paper #2 MTWThF
  Wed. Apr. 2—Excerpts from MBH, Part III, quiz? Video?
  Fri. “ 4—excerpts from MBH—student presentation.

"Accordingly, myth is here defined very broadly as a narrative (story) concerning fundamental symbols that are constitutive of or paradigmatic for human existence.” --Bernard F. Batto, American Scholar of Religion
Wk#12-Mon. Apr. 7—Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, Background, video, handouts
   Student conferences on paper #2—MTWThF
   Wed. “ 9—Hesse’s *Siddhartha*
   Fri. “ 11—Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, student presentation

   “Myths are not regarded as a random collection of stories; in a culture there is a clear correlation between the distribution of mythical themes and what is considered socially relevant in that culture.”
   --Lauri Honko, Finnish Folklorist

Wk#13-Mon. “ 14—Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, student presentation.
   Assignment of first 10 chapters of *Frankenstein*
   Wed. “ 16—NO CLASS—PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE
   Fri. “ 18—NO CLASS—PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE

   Unit #3: Modern Mythologies

   “Certainly science, like so many of the earlier myths, appears to explain the natural world around us. But science can only answer how things happen; it is unable to tell us why.” – J. F. Bierlien, American Scholar of Myth

Wk#14-Mon. “ 21—Video documentary on *Frankenstein*
   Wed. “ 23—*Frankenstein*, group work, Paper #2 due
   Fri. “ 25—*Frankenstein*, group work

   “‘You are my creator, but I am your master; obey.’”
   --Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

Wk#15-Mon. “ 28—*Frankenstein*—student presentations
   Wed. “ 30—Paper #2 returned; *Frankenstein*, student presentations
   Fri. May 2—*Frankenstein*, student presentations

Exam week: Optional revision of Paper #2 due on Monday, May 5