HRS 151, Section 2: World Mythology (Fall 2014)
Instructor: Judith Poxon
Email: judith.poxon@csus.edu and jlpoxon@netscape.net
Office: MND 2012 Phone: 278-5040 (during office hours only)
Office hour: Wednesday, 4:30-6:00, and by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS:  Gilgamesh: A New English Version, Mitchell (trans.)
Beowulf: A Verse Translation, Heaney (trans.)
Ceremony, Silko
The above texts are available for purchase or rental in the campus bookstore. An additional required text is the World Mythology Reader, which must be purchased through universityreaders.com. Other reading materials, in the form of online readings or handouts, may also be assigned as needed.

RECOMMENDED TEXT:  A Pocket Style Manual, Hacker (any edition)
This text is a valuable resource on grammar, punctuation, style, and use of sources, and will continue to be helpful throughout your college career and beyond. You can find used copies online for under $10.00; I recommend Powell’s Books, at powells.com.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:  Introduction to the nature and function of myth. The specific literature studied will be exclusive of classical mythology, and because of the breadth of subject matter, will vary in content. The mythology of at least four cultures will be covered each term. Units: 3.0

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  Because the study of mythology covers a vast range of myths and approaches, this class will not be comprehensive, but is meant as an introduction, to inspire interest and further study. In this section we will examine some myths of the Near East, South Pacific, Northern Europe and the indigenous peoples of North America. In addition to reading and discussing primary source materials, we will consider a number of scholarly approaches to the significance of myth within different cultural contexts.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Upon successful completion of this course, the student should:
- be able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the definition of myth and its purpose as an important expression of culture.
- be familiar with the essential mythology of the featured societies and be able to draw cross-cultural comparisons.
- have an understanding of how modern theorists have approached the study of myth.
- recognize and appreciate the continuing influence and value of mythology in the arts and society.

CLASSROOM POLICIES: The following will not be tolerated except in the case of emergencies: use of any electronic devices (laptops, tablets, cell phones, etc.) for any purpose; arriving more than five minutes late for class; leaving and re-entering the classroom; and eating, sleeping, reading outside materials, or having private conversations. In addition, and more importantly, I expect an atmosphere of respect for other students’ opinions, and an objective and empathetic response to the material we study together. Observing these guidelines will help ensure a better learning experience for all. PLEASE NOTE: If you have a documented disability and verification from the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities (SSWD), and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to provide documentation of disability to SSWD and meet with a SSWD counselor to request special accommodation before classes start. SSWD is located in Lassen Hall 1008 and can be contacted by phone at (916) 278-6955 (Voice); (916) 278-7239 (TDD only); or via email at sswd@csus.edu.
PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism has become a major problem on this campus, and I will not tolerate it. You are all responsible for familiarizing yourselves with the CSUS policy regarding academic honesty, which can be found at [www.csus.edu/umanual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm](http://www.csus.edu/umanual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm). In addition, you should know how to recognize and avoid plagiarism. Helpful information in this regard can be found in *A Pocket Style Manual*, by Diana Hacker (available on campus or at any good bookstore), and at [http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353](http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353).

I will return all plagiarized (unoriginal) work ungraded; you may, at my discretion, be allowed to resubmit the plagiarized assignment. However, in cases of clearly deliberate plagiarism, you will receive a 0 for the assignment, and will not be allowed to resubmit. Repeated instances of plagiarism will result in a failing grade in the course. I will spend some time going over my expectations in this regard before your paper is due.

REQUIREMENTS: All students will need to:
- attend class. I will not keep track of your attendance, but the material you’ll be reading for this class is difficult, so the clarification offered in lectures will be crucial. Also, I will lecture on material that is not covered in reading assignments, and you will be responsible for that material, too.
- complete all assigned readings by the date for which they are listed in the Schedule of Assignments (below).
- submit written responses to study questions (on syllabus) on each week’s reading assignment.
- participate in classroom discussions and complete periodic in-class writing assignments. Success in this part of the class, which will be the basis of the participation part of your grade, will depend on keeping up with the assigned reading. You will not have the opportunity to make up any missed in-class writing assignments.
- write one paper of 6-7 pages on an assigned topic, according to guidelines to be furnished later. All papers must be turned in by the due date shown on the syllabus unless other arrangements have been made with me in advance; if you must miss class on the day the paper is due, you may email your paper to me, but you must also submit a hard copy on our next class meeting. These assignments are expected to conform to accepted standards of academic usage, and to be free of errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. Again, I recommend *A Pocket Style Manual* as a good reference.
- take one quiz and two in-class essay exams, which will be based on all assigned readings and material covered in lectures. There will be no opportunity for make-up exams except in the case of real and demonstrable emergency.

NOTE: For free, one-on-one help with writing in any class, visit the University Reading and Writing Center in Calaveras 128. The Writing Center can help you at any stage in your reading and writing processes: coming up with a topic, developing and organizing a draft, understanding difficult texts, or developing strategies to become a better editor. To make an appointment or a series of appointments, visit the Reading and Writing Center in CLV 128. The center also offers tutoring for one unit of academic credit through ENGL121. For current Writing Center hours and more information, visit the website at [www.csus.edu/writingcenter](http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter).

GRADING: Your final grade will be based on the following point totals:
- Participation: 100 points
- Study questions: 15 points each, for a total of 150 points
- Paper: 150 points
- Quiz: 50 points
- Exams: 100 points each, for a total of 200 points
Your final letter grade will be determined according to a standard distribution (i.e., 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, etc.), but I am inclined to round up for students who make a real contribution to class. 😊 You should keep track of your own status in the class, but you may double-check it with me at any time.

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**NOTE:** All reading assignments are to be completed by the date for which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change, but I will give advance notice if changes need to be made. Please bring your readers and books to class. WMR = World Mythology Reader.

**Wednesday 9/3: Introduction to course**

**Wednesday 9/10: Foundations**
Read: WMR, pp. 1-30
Study question:
1. Choose one of the myths found on pp. 25-30, and discuss it in terms of at least two of the “Great Themes of Myth” (pp. 7-23).

**Wednesday 9/17: Theory I**
Read: WMR, pp. 31-49
Study questions:
1. Briefly explain Malinowski’s thesis that “an intimate connection exists between the word, the mythos, the sacred tales of a tribe, on the one hand, and their ritual activities, their moral deeds, their social organization, and even their practical activities, on the other.” Do you find his argument persuasive?
2. According to Wilson, myths for Jung are “psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul [and as such] require psychological interpretation.” What concepts does Jung develop as the heart of his method of psychological interpretation of myths? Do you agree that myths require psychological interpretation?

**Wednesday 9/24: Theory II**
Read: WMR, pp. 51-67
Study questions:
1. According to Doniger, Lévi-Strauss sees myth as “a form of language,” and argues that the primary function of myth is to resolve the tension created by the way language requires us to organize our experience of the world in terms of binary oppositions (such as life/death, love/hate, etc.). How is the structuralist approach to myth based on this view?
2. According to Whomsley, what is Campbell’s concept of the heroic monomyth, and why does Campbell believe this monomyth is so important?

**Wednesday 10/1: QUIZ; Mesopotamia I**
Bring one #882-E scantron form.
Read: WMR, pp. 69-75, and Gilgamesh, “Introduction” (pp. 1-64)
Study questions:
1. According to Rosenberg’s overview of Babylonian religion and your reading of the Enuma Elish, how did the ancient Mesopotamian people see the gods and their relationship to those gods? Why did the gods create human beings, and how did this affect the lives of the Mesopotamian people?
2. Explain Mitchell’s argument that in Gilgamesh the concept of the heroic monomyth is subverted.
Wednesday 10/8: Mesopotamia II
Read: Gilgamesh, pp. 69-199
Study questions:
1. How does Gilgamesh express the worldview of Mesopotamian religion?
2. Is Gilgamesh a good example of the heroic monomyth? Why or why not?

Wednesday 10/15: Northern Europe I
Read: WMR, pp. 77-80, and Beowulf, “Introduction” and pp. 3-67, line 1007
Study questions:
1. According to Rosenberg and your reading of “The Creation, Death, and Rebirth of the Universe,” how did the Norse people understand the nature of the gods and the universe?
2. What does Heaney tell us about the characteristics of Norse society? What are the virtues of that society?

Wednesday 10/22: Northern Europe II
Read: Beowulf, pp. 67-213
Study question:
1. How does the inclusion of all the references to the wars between the Geats, the Danes, and the Swedes shape our sense of the world that Beowulf inhabits?
2. Which, if any, of the theoretical approaches to myth is helpful to us as readers trying to understand the significance of the story? Why?

Wednesday 10/29: FIRST EXAM (6:00-8:00)
Bring at least one blue book.

Wednesday 11/5: The South Pacific I
Read: WMR, “Maori Mythology” and “The Creation Cycle”
Film: Whale Rider
Study question:
1. What do the myths of the Maori “Creation Cycle” tell us about how the Maori saw the gods, the world, and human nature? Does the “Creation Cycle” give us a model for gender relations? If so, what is it?

Wednesday 11/12: The South Pacific II
Film: Whale Rider
Study questions:
1. Explain the tension between Paikea and Koro. What does Paikea want, and why is her desire a problem for Koro?
2. How is that tension affected by the traditional mythology of the Maori people?

Wednesday 11/19: Indigenous North America I
Read: WMR, pp. 89-99, and Ceremony, pp. 1-85
Study questions:
1. What were the traditional lives of the Pueblo people like? What was their economy based on, and how did their environment affect their livelihood?
2. What is animism, and how is it expressed in Pueblo religion?
3. What is Tayo’s situation in the beginning of Ceremony?

Wednesday 11/26: NO CLASS
Wednesday 12/3: Indigenous North America II  
Read: Ceremony, pp. 85-163  
Study questions:  
1. Why do you think Silko includes the poems in Ceremony? How do they affect your understanding of the prose narrative of the novel?  
2. What does Tayo have to accomplish to resolve the situation he is in at the beginning of the novel? How does he do what he needs to do?

Wednesday 12/10: Conclusion  
No new reading assignment; no study questions

Wednesday 12/17: SECOND EXAM (5:15-7:15)  
Bring at least one large blue book.