

California State University, Sacramento  
Humanities and Religious Studies  
HRS 119: Classical Mythology – G.E. Area C4  
Fall 2009

Prof. Thoma  
Section 2 – M/W 1:30-2:45pm  
Mendocino 1020

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+ see ^

^ I rarely answer my phone.

**Special note for fall 09: The information in this syllabus is subject to change as issues related to furlough planning are updated and resolved**

**Course Description:**

This course is designed as an introductory exploration of Greek and Roman myths and their influences on Western culture. The phenomenon of the hero and heroine in the context of Classical myth will also be examined. We will consider the accepted roles and treatment of the working class and women in Classical society, and how mythology served to support or challenge social norms. Students will complete extensive and careful readings from a variety of primary source materials, including major epics and plays, such as Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey*, works of Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Virgil and as time allows, Ovid. An introduction to the general nature and function of myth is included to provide students with a foundation from which to build a thorough understanding of the cultural-historical significance of Classical Mythology.

**Required Text:**

**Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights*, 5th ed.**

*Optional: Pierre Grimal, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Penguin Books, 1991*

The Grimal text is recommended as an excellent reference for use during this course and for those who may have a continuing interest in Classical Mythology. It is also available in the CSUS library for "in library use only" (BL 715.G713 1986)

**Course Objectives:**

Successful students will:

- acquire a sophisticated knowledge of Classical mythology, its principal narratives and "players."
- develop an appreciation for its integration into the "cultural vocabulary."
- comprehend the function of Classical Mythology as an expression of the universal human experience.
- advance their skills of critical analysis in reading and writing.
- recognize the influence and elements of Classical Mythology as it is expressed in art and literature in the present as well as the past.
- expand their understanding of themes and ideas in Classical Mythology which have expression in other world cultures.

**Requirements and Grading:**

Careful and thoughtful reading and writing are fundamental aspects of this course, therefore, it is essential to complete all reading assignments and be attentive to lecture materials and presentations. (Take notes!) Attendance is required as per departmental attendance policy – grade reductions (and loss of educational experience!) will result from excessive absences.

Respectful participation in class discussions is encouraged and may affect your overall grade favorably.\*

Disrespectful conduct, including, but not limited to, cell phones ringing, chatting, coming in late, leaving early, disruptive behavior, etc..., will affect your participation grade unfavorably. If you have special needs or extreme circumstances requiring you to miss class, come late, etc..., please discuss with the instructor.

**\*IMPORTANT !** *If you are a student who experiences anxiety simply at the thought of speaking up in class, please see me or email me for helpful strategies and tips for reducing stress and improving your learning experience. I consider all students equally important to the classroom dynamic.*

Course grades are determined by the following:	(Possible Points)
25% -Attendance and Participation ‡-----	75 points
30% - Quizzes (4-lowest grade dropped) **+ (30 points each) -----	90 points
20% - In-class writing assignment (2)**♦-----	60 points
25% - Final**- short essay and multiple choice-----	75 points
<u>100%</u> -----	<u>300 points</u>

A	-----300-277 points
A-	-----276-268 points
B+	-----267-261 points
B	-----260-246 points
B-	-----245-237 points
C+	-----236-230 points
C	-----229-216 points
C-	-----215-206 points
D+	-----205-199 points
D	-----198- 186 points
D-	-----185-175 points. <b>You should have come to see me long before it got to this point.</b>
!	-----Yikes. " "

*It is your responsibility as a committed student to keep track of your point total and manage your study habits accordingly. This will eliminate grade "surprises" at the end of the semester.*

‡ The attendance and participation grade will include points accumulated by good attendance (15 pts), class discussion (15 pts), regular "journaling" (25 pts) and some miscellaneous "TBA" opportunities (20pts).

\*\* All tests and writing assignments must be taken at the scheduled times. Students may not leave and return to the classroom during quizzes, writings or the final. Take care of any necessary tasks before or after the class session.

+For the (4) **quizzes** you will need **Scantron form 882-E**, for the (2) **writing assignments**, plain notebook paper is fine--a bluebook is okay but not necessary. For the final you will need **Scantron 886-E**.

♦ The **in-class writing assignments** will be graded on a simple rubric (1- minimal effort, 2-thoughtful attempt and some basic ideas, 3-very good development in discussion of assigned topics and good use of information gained through the lectures and readings and 4-excellent application of knowledge and analysis of material including good creative interpretation.) Good writing skills will be important in presenting your ideas well, but emphasis will be on *thinking* rather than mechanics of writing. These assignments are not tests, but exercises in analysis of information and creative application of your knowledge. No additional preparation beyond completing assigned readings and attentive presence in class should be necessary to do well on the writings. More detailed instructions and guidelines will be given at the time of assignments.

*The writing assignment point conversion for the purposes of calculating your final grade will be as follows:*

*Writing assignments totaling 8 points = 60 grade points; 7 = 54 grade points; 6 = 48 grade points; 5 = 42 grade points; 4 = 36 grade points; 3 = 30 grade points; 2 = 24 grade points; 1 = 10 grade points*

*Adjustments may be made to this syllabus at the discretion of the instructor. Students will be given reasonable notice prior to any such changes.*

### **Course Calendar**

All reading assignments are to be completed **before** the class week for which they are listed.

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#### **Week 1 – Aug 31, Sept 2**

Introduction to the nature and function of myth.

Approaches to the study of myth; Background to Classical Mythology

Read: Harris and Platzner (hereafter referred to as H&P), Chs. 1 and 2.

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#### **Week 2 – Sept 9**

Read: H&P, Ch. 3-In the Beginning: Hesiod's Creation Story

Read: H&P, Ch. 5- The Great Goddess and Goddesses: Divine Women in Greek mythology

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#### **Week 3 – Sept 14, 16**

Read: H&P, Ch. 6- The Olympian Pantheon



**Wed– Sept 16--Quiz # 1→ (Chs. 1-3, 5)**

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#### **Week 4 – Sept 21, 23**

Read: H&P, Ch. 7- In Touch With the Gods: Apollo's Oracle at Delphi

Read: H&P, Ch. 8- Dionysus: Rooted in Earth and Ecstasy

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#### **Week 5 – Sept 28, 30**

Read: H&P, Ch. 4- Alienation of the Human and Divine: Prometheus, Fire and Pandora

Read: H&P, Ch. 9- Land of No Return: The Gloomy Kingdom of Hades



**Wed – Sept 30--Quiz # 2→ (Chs. 4, 6-9)**

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#### **Week 6 – Oct 5, 7**

Read: H&P, Ch. 10 and 11- Heroes and Heroines of Myth; [www.sacred-texts.com/cla](http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla):

Adlington's trans. of Apuleius' tale of the marriage of Cupid and Psyche

(found under the Classics heading, "Roman.")

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#### **Week 7 – Oct 12, 14**

Introduction to the Homeric Epics beginning with the *Iliad*. Read: H&P, Ch. 12

Heroes at War; the *Iliad*



**Wed - Oct 14-- In-class writing assignment # 1**

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#### **Week 8 – Oct 19, 21**

Introduction to the *Odyssey*. Read: H&P, Ch.13- A Different Kind of Hero:

The Quest of Odysseus

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Week 9 – Oct 26, 28

Introduction to Greek Drama,

Read: H&P, Ch. 14- The Theater of Dionysus;

Read: H&P, Ch. 15-The House of Atreus: the *Oresteia*



Wed – Oct 28-- Quiz # 3→ (Chs. 10-13)

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Week 10 – Nov 2, 4

Read: H&P, Ch. 16- The Tragic House of Laius: Sophocles' Oedipus Cycle.

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Week 11 – Nov 9 (no class 11/ 11 Veterans' Day)

Read: H&P, Ch. 17-A Different Perspective on Tragedy... Euripides- *Medea*.

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Week 12 – Nov 16, 18

Read: H&P, Ch. 17 Euripides- *the Bacchae*.



Wed- Nov 18– Quiz #4→ (Chs. 14-17)

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Week 13 – Nov 23

Read: H&P, Ch. 18- The Roman Vision: Greek Myths and Roman Realities;

Virgil-*The Aeneid*. Read: H&P, Ch. 19- Virgil's Roman Epic: *the Aeneid*

--Nov 25 no class meeting, however, here is your assignment: Eat: Turkey with Mashed Potatoes, cranberries and yams--with your hands in your backyard. Watch: Your neighbors' faces as your family members tear the turkey apart and throw the pieces at each other to enjoy. Follow feast with banging on metal trash can lids (or playing old *Slayer* cds) and dancing\* in a circle around pine trees.\* If you have them, wear animal skins instead of clothes. Trust me-this will all make sense to you by this time in the semester. Have a nice holiday.

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Week 14 – Nov 30, Dec 2

Read: H&P, Ch. 20- *Metamorphoses*

As time allows, discussion of mythical elements in Petronius' "Dinner with Trimalchio" from the *Satyricon*, chapt. 5, and *the Golden Ass* by Apuleius (both readings accessed in [sacred-texts.com](http://sacred-texts.com) under the Classics heading).



Wed- Dec 2- In-class writing assignment #2

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Week 15– Dec 7, 9

Summary and catch-up- Read: H&P, Ch. 21- The Persistence of Myth.

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Week 16–  MONDAY, DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> 12:45PM  FINAL EXAM 

happy holidays!