

California State University, Sacramento  
Humanities and Religious Studies  
HRS 119: Classical Mythology – G.E. Area C4  
Fall 2008

Prof. J. Thoma  
Section 2 M/W 1:30-2:45  
Mendocino 3013

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Office Hours: Wed 12:00-1:00 and by appt.

**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)
15% -Attendance and Participation-----	45 points
30% - Quizzes (4-lowest grade dropped) **+ (30 points each) -----	90 points
30% - In-class writing assignment (2)**◆-----	90 points
25% - Final**- short essay and multiple choice-----	75 points
<u>100%-----</u>	<u>300 points</u>

<b>A</b>	----- <b>300-275 points</b>
<b>A-</b>	----- <b>274-265 points</b>
<b>B+</b>	----- <b>264-252 points</b>
<b>B</b>	----- <b>251-238 points</b>
<b>B-</b>	----- <b>237-231 points</b>
<b>C+</b>	----- <b>230-222 points</b>
<b>C</b>	----- <b>221-207 points</b>
<b>C-</b>	----- <b>206-196 points</b>
<b>D+</b>	----- <b>195-189 points</b>
<b>D</b>	----- <b>188-174 points</b>
<b>D-</b>	----- <b>173-151 points</b>

*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!*

**\*\* 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 = 90 grade points; 7 = 80 grade points; 6 = 72 grade points;  
5 = 66 grade points; 4 = 58 grade points; 3 = 50 grade points; 2 = 40 grade points; 1 = 20 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 – Sept 3**

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 8, 10**

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 15, 17**

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



**Wed– Sept 17--Quiz # 1→ (Chs. 1-3, 5)**

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#### **Week 4 – Sept 22, 24**

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 29, Oct 1**

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 - Oct 1--Quiz # 2→ (Chs. 4, 6-9)**

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#### **Week 6 – Oct 6, 8**

Read: H&P, Ch. 10 and 11- Heroes and Heroines of Myth; [www.sacred-texts.com/cla:Adlington's trans. of Apuleius' tale of the marriage of Cupid and Psyche](http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla:Adlington's%20trans.%20of%20Apuleius'%20tale%20of%20the%20marriage%20of%20Cupid%20and%20Psyche)  
(found under the Classics heading, "Roman.")

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#### **Week 7 – Oct 13, 15**

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



**Wed - Oct 15-- In-class writing assignment # 1**

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#### **Week 8 – Oct 20, 22**

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 27, Oct 29**

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 29-- Quiz # 3→ (Chs. 10-13)**

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**Week 10 – Nov 3, 5**

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

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**Week 11 – Nov 10, 12**

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

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**Week 12 – Nov 17, 19**

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



**Wed- Nov 19– Quiz #4→ (Chs. 14-17)**

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**Week 13 – Nov 24, 26 (Nov 26 holiday)**

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*

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**Week 14 – Dec 1, 3**

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 3 - In-class writing assignment #2**

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**Week 15– Dec 8, 10**

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

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Week 16–  **MONDAY, DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> 12:45PM**  **FINAL EXAM** 

happy holidays!