

California State University, Sacramento
Humanities and Religious Studies Department

HRS 151: World Mythology: section 1 – G.E. Area C3
Fall 2008

Instructor: J. Thoma

Time: M/W 12:00-1:15

Classroom : Mendocino Hall 4004

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Office Hours: Wed 10:30-11:30, 3:00-3:30
and by appt.

General Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to the nature and function of world mythology. The specific subject matter studied will be exclusive of classical mythology and the breadth of the subject matter will vary in content. The mythology of at least four world cultures will be covered each term. The teaching format of the class will be lecture with discussion as time allows and when appropriate to examination of the topics. 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 world mythology.

Specific Focus of This Section:

This section will examine mythology of the Near East, Pacific Islands, Northern Europe and North America. In addition to reading and discussion of primary source materials, our study will include an exploration of scholarly theoretical approaches regarding the role and function of myth within different cultural contexts.

Required Texts:

Judy Thoma: HRS 151 – World Mythology Reader Fall 2008 CSUS: available for purchase at www.universityreaders.com/students (the date of availability TBA)

Karen Armstrong: **A Short History of Myth**

Seamus Heaney, trans.: **Beowulf**

Leslie Marmon Silko: **Ceremony**

Additional reading material as handouts may be provided throughout the course of the semester.

Course Objectives:

Successful students will:

- acquire 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.
- develop 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.

Requirements and Grading:

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 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, texting, playing computer games, emailing, chatting, coming in late, leaving early, disruptive behavior, etc...will affect your grade unfavorably. **If you do have special needs or extreme circumstances requiring you to miss class, come late, etc..., please discuss with the instructor so appropriate accommodations can be made to help facilitate your success in the class.**

**If you are a student who experiences anxiety simply at the thought of speaking up in class, please see 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
15% - In-class writing assignment (1)** ^-----	45 points
15% - Project/presentation (1) ☺ -----	45 points
25% - Final**- short essay and multiple choice-----	75 points
<u>100%</u> -----	<u>300 points</u>

- A -----300-276 points
- A- -----275-267 points
- B+ -----266-255 points
- B -----254-243 points
- B- -----242-237 points
- C+ -----236-225 points
- C -----224-213 points
- C- -----212-204 points
- D+ -----203-192 points
- D -----191-180 points
- D- -----179-171 points

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 quizzes, the writing assignment and the final must be taken at the scheduled times. Students may not leave and return to the classroom during quizzes, writing assignment or the final. Take care of any necessary tasks before or after the class session. If you require special testing and/or writing accommodations, please consult with instructor.

+ **Quizzes:** you will need **Scantron form 882-E (4)**.

^ **The in-class writing assignment:** plain notebook paper is fine--a bluebook is okay, but not necessary. This assignment is not a test, but an exercise 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. Good writing skills will be important in presenting your ideas well, but emphasis will be on *thinking* rather than mechanics of writing. More detailed instructions and guidelines will be given at the time of assignment.

The writing assignment will be graded with the following guidelines in mind. A low grade (< 29) will be earned if the paper appears to be of minimal effort with little or no application of information gained through assigned reading and lecture material. An average grade to good grade (< 36) will be earned if the paper shows a thoughtful attempt and some basic ideas reflecting course material, and a high grade (37+) will be earned when the paper demonstrates a very good development in discussion of assigned topic and use of information gained through the lectures and readings.

☺ **Project/presentation:** This assignment will allow liberal creativity in order that you may expand your understanding of a particular world culture through its various forms of artistic expression. For your project you will share with the class aspects of a specific culture (of those covered this semester) by exploring visual, musical, theatrical, storytelling, poetic, dance or other arts. For example, you may create your own work inspired by a specific culture or you may choose to present actual music or a slide show of authentic art, etc...of a culture. You will be required to present a brief (1 page) prospectus of your project for approval. All projects must be accompanied by a short paper detailing your sources and explaining your approach, process and relevance and or relationship to the cultural source. Projects should meet expectations of university level standard in terms of quality of research, sources and final form.

!Important! Presentation times will be allocated to each culture section, for instance, if your project interest falls in the Near East unit, you will be presenting early in the semester. Conversely, if you choose a Native American focus, you will be allocated time in the latter part of the semester, and so on. Check the course calendar below to make note of these presentation times. A presentation assignment calendar will be circulated and students who have not signed up by the fourth week will be given an assigned time and culture by the instructor! Yikes!

More detailed information on the project/presentation will be given during class session.

! Make-up for missed writing assignment or project: (One only! You may not make up both writing assignment and project!) Assignment for makeup will be a 7-10 page paper on a topic assigned by instructor. (again, Yikes!) The paper will be thoroughly checked for plagiarism and must follow standard guidelines re: font and form! Evidence of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero points for the assignment. No exceptions.

Final Exam: The final will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. It will only be comprehensive as it pertains to basic, theoretical concepts and practices in the study of myth. The greater focus will be on the material covered in the second half of the semester.

You will need Scantron form 886-E.

*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

Complete all reading assignments **before** the class week for which they are listed and be prepared to discuss them.

Week 1 - September 3–

Introduction; defining myth.

Read: (KA refers to Karen Armstrong's A Short History of Myth)

- KA: What is a Myth? (1-11)

Week 2 –September 8, 10 –

Categorizing myth; understanding the history and functions of myth.

Read:


- KA: The Paleolithic Period (12-40)
 - KA: The Neolithic Period (41-57)
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Week 3 –September 15, 17 –

Egyptian mythology: Approaches to the Study of Myth; Egyptian Cosmogony; focus on Theory: Mircea Eliade: the Eternal Return.

Read: (WMR refers to World Mythology Reader)

- WMR: Egyptian Mythology ()
- KA: The Early Civilizations (58-78)
- WMR: Introduction; Great Themes in Myth; Ways of Understanding Myth ()

 **Quiz #1-Wed 9/15**

Week 4 – September 22, 24 –

The Myth of Isis and Osiris; focus on Theory: C. G. Jung

Read:


- WMR: Egyptian Mythology (); How to perform a Jungian Analysis of a Myth or Fairytale ()

Week 5 – September 29, October 1 -

Mesopotamian Mythology; focus on theory: Campbell

Read:

- WMR: Mesopotamian Myth ()

 **Project presentations for Egypt and the Near East**

Week 6 – October 6, 8 –

Focus on theory: Levi-Strauss

Read:

- WMR: *the Epic of Gilgamesh* ().

Quiz #2-Wed 10/8

Week 7 – October 13, 15 -

Northern European Mythology: The cultural context of myth in Northern Europe;

Read:

- WMR: Northern Euro. Myth ()
- begin *Beowulf*

Week 8- October 20, 22 -

Northern Europe cont.: Pagan and Christian values and ideas in myth; the heroic code.


Read:

- continue *Beowulf*


Week 9 – October 27, 29 –

Read:

- finish *Beowulf*

 **Quiz #3-Wed 10/29**

Week 10 – November 3, 5 –

 **Project presentations for Northern Europe**

Mythology of the Pacific Islands; Maori Creation Cycle

Read:

- WMR: Pacific Islands Mythology ()

Week 11 – November 10, 12

Pacific Islands continued, preparation for the film *Whalerider*.

Film: *Whalerider*

Week 12 – November 17, 19

Native North American Mythology; The Native American Cultural Context; Native American creation and trickster myths.

Read:

- WMR: Maps and ()
- begin *Ceremony*

 **Wed In-class writing assignment**

Week 13 – November 24, 26

Discussion of *Ceremony* and the role of myth in the modern world.

Read:

- continue *Ceremony*

Week 14 – December 1, 3

Read:

- continue *Ceremony*


 **Project presentations for Pacific Islands and Native North America**




Week 15 – December 8, 10

Read:

- finish *Ceremony*

Summary, catch-up, discussion and review

 **Quiz #4-Wed 12/10**

Week 16–  Friday December 19th 10:15am-12:15pm -  Final Exam 

(Bring Scantron Form # 886 E)

Have a Great Break!

(Get invited to all the best holiday dinners and parties by impressing people with your vast knowledge of mythology in the world around you!)