

California State University, Sacramento
Humanities and Religious Studies
HRS 151: World Mythology – G.E. Area
Spring 2007

Instructor: Judy Thoma
M/W/F 11:00-11:50
Mendocino Hall 4004

Email: thomaj@saclink.csus.edu
Phone: 278-6444 (Dept. Office)
Office: Mendocino 2022
M/W 12:00 – 1:00, and by appt.

General Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to the nature and function of myth. The specific literature 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.

Specific Focus of This Section:

This section will examine mythology of the Near East, India, 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:

Eva M. Thury and Margaret K. Devinney:

Introduction to Mythology: Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths

Seamus Heaney, trans.: **Beowulf**

Leslie Marmon Silko: **Ceremony** (not in Hornet Bookstore, but widely available.)

Additional reading materials, as handouts, will be provided to students 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, chatting, coming in late, leaving early, disruptive behavior, etc...will affect your grade unfavorably. If you have special needs or extreme circumstances requiring you to miss class, come late, etc..., please discuss with the instructor.

**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) |
|---|--------------------------|
| 20% -Attendance and Participation----- | 60 points |
| 25% - Quizzes (4) **† multiple choice and short answer (25 points each) ----- | 75 points |
| 30% - In-class writing assignments (2)**♦----- | 90 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 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 **(3) writing assignments**, plain notebook paper is fine--a bluebook is okay, but not necessary.

©The **in-class writing assignments** will be graded on a simple rubric (1- minimal effort, 2-thoughtful attempt and some basic ideas, or 3-very good development in discussion of assigned topics and good use of information gained through the lectures and readings.) 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:

The writing assignment point conversion for the purposes of calculating your final grade will be as follows: Writing assignments totaling 6 points = 90 grade points; 5= 75 grade points; 4 = 60 grade points; 3 = 45 grade points; 2= 30 grade points; 1 = 15 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

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

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF MYTHOLOGY

Week 1 –Jan 29-Feb 2 Defining and categorizing myth;

Understanding the functions of myth

Read: (in the order listed; *T&D* hereafter refers to Thury and Devinney, authors of *Introduction to Mythology*):

- *T&D* 3-15 (Ch. 1, What Is Myth?)
 - *T&D*, 16-22 (Ch. 2, Ways of Understanding Myth)
-

Week 2 –Feb 5-9

- *T&D*, 548-559 (first part of Ch. 24, Household Tales including “The Goose Girl” and “The Raven”)
- *T&D*, 135-142 (Ch. 12, The Hero With a Thousand Faces)

Approaches to the Study of Myth; Myth and Modernity; Focus on Theory: Joseph Campbell

THE MIDDLE EAST

Week 3 –Feb 12-16

- **Read:** *T&D*, 483-515 (Introduction to Pt. 5, Myths and Dreams; Ch. 30, Man and His Symbols; C. G. Jung; Ch. 31, How to Perform a Jungian Analysis of a Myth or Fairy Tale); *T&D*, 413-429 (Ch. 26, Isis and Osiris); *T&D*, 53-60 (Ch. 5, Biblical Creation Stories)

Egyptian Cosmogony and the Myth of Isis and Osiris; Near Eastern Creation Stories: Genesis

Focus on Theory: C. G. Jung

 **Wed Feb 14 Quiz #1**

Week 4 –Feb 19-23

- **Read:** Excerpt from Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or Cosmos and History* (handout); *T&D*, 143-173 (Ch. 13, The Epic of Gilgamesh)

Focus on Theory: Mircea Eliade- *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

Week 5 –Feb 26-March 2

- **Read:** *T&D*, 269-273 (through the first paragraph on p.273 – no need to read the analysis of the Oedipus myth) and 174-185 (first part of Ch. 18, The Structural Study of Myth; Ch. 14, A Levi-Straussian Analysis of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*); *T&D*, 97-101 and 110-117 (Introduction to Pt. 2B, Myths of Creation and Destruction; Ch. 10, Biblical Flood Stories).

 **Wed – Feb 28 –In-class writing assignment # 1**

INDIA

Week 6 – March 5-9

Read: *T&D*, 186-201 (Ch. 15, *The Ramayana*)

Cultural context: The reflection and confirmation of Hindu values; What is dharma?

How does the code of dharma direct events in the myth?

Week 7 – March 12-16

(No Reading assigned)

Film and Discussion: *The Mahabharata*

 **Wed March 14 Quiz #2**

Week 8- March 19-23 (No Reading assigned)

Film and Discussion: *The Mahabharata* cont..

Week 9 – March 26-30 –SPRING BREAK- HAVE FUN and BE SAFE!

NORTHERN EUROPE

Week 10 –April 2-6

- **Read:** *T&D*, 61-72 (Ch. 6, *The Prose Edda's* Creation Stories); *T&D*, 103-109 (Ch. 9, Ragnarok); *T&D*, 202-216 (Ch. 16, Heroes in *The Prose Edda*); *T&D*, 443-461 (Ch. 28, The Rituals of Northern Europe: H. R. Ellis Davidson.)

The Cultural Context of Northern Europe; Myths of Creation and Destruction; Gods, Heroes, and Ritual Practices

 **Friday April 6 Quiz #3**

Week 11 – April 9-13

- **Begin Reading:** *Beowulf* (including Introduction)

Beowulf in Cultural Context; *Beowulf* and the Heroic Code

Week 12 – April 16-20

- **Read:** *Beowulf* cont.

 **Wed April 18 In-class writing assignment #2**

THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Week 13 – April 23-27

- **Read:** Handout: Malinowski, Mythology of the Kula; Handout: Maori Creation Cycle; Class contributions

Week 14 – April 30-May 4

Film and Discussion: *Whale Rider*

Begin reading: *Ceremony*

NORTH AMERICA

Week 15 –May 7- 11

- **Read:** *T&D*, 73-86 (Ch. 7, Native American Creation Stories from the Southwestern United States); *T&D*, 288-299 (Ch. 19, Raven: A Native American Trickster)
- **Continue reading:** *Ceremony*.


The Native American Cultural Context; Native American Creation and Trickster Myths

 **Wed May 9 Quiz #4**

Week 16– May 14-18

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

Summary, discussion and review

Week 17  **Wed May 23 10:15–12:15 Final Exam (Bring Scantron Form # 886 E)**