01:195:150:91 Fall 2012 ONLINE World Mythology

Steven Gonzagowski, Instructor

[stevengo@eden.rutgers.edu](mailto:stevengo@eden.rutgers.edu)

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays 7pm-9pm in the course E-college chat room or by appointment.

**Synopsis:**  In this course, we will examine the form and content of myths from various countries and eras, with particular emphasis on the mythology surrounding the notion of the hero and heroine. The works cover a wide variety of genres including: drama, epic poetry, oral tales, the anecdote, the essay, and film. The main focus is on the representation of the hero/heroine, which will be examined through various theoretical lenses including psychoanalysis, sociology, and gender theory.

**Instructor’s Learning Objectives**:

1. To determine what constitutes a myth and to examine the reasons that certain themes of myths endure over many centuries in various guises.
2. To consider myths from a comparative stance in order to determine similarities and differences among the mythological production of various cultures across the centuries.
3. To acquire awareness of the ways in which particular myths have shaped notions and formations of societal groupings such as the family and the nation in order to interrogate the premises and prejudices inherent in such groupings.
4. To further critical thinking and analytical skills by composing carefully considered written work that explores the meaning and structure of mythology according to your own interpretations.

**Department Learning Objectives:**

1. Students will demonstrate familiarity with a variety of world literatures as well as methods of studying literature and culture across national and linguistic boundaries and evaluate the nature, function and value of literature from a global perspective.
2. They will demonstrate critical reasoning and research skills; design and conduct research in an individual field of concentration (such as literary theory, women's literature, post colonial studies, literature and film, etc); analyze a specific body of research and write a clear and well developed paper or project about a topic related to more than one literary and cultural tradition.

**Required Texts**: Available at Rutgers University Barnes and Noble Bookstore. If you order your texts elsewhere, be sure to get the translations indicated below, as this will facilitate your reading comprehension!

Belcher, Stephen *African Myths of Origin.* Penguin USA ISBN: 9780140449457

Camões, Luís Vaz de *The Lusíads*. Oxford UP ISBN: 9780199539963

Chestnutt, Charles W. *The Conjure Woman & Other Conjure Tales*. Duke UP ISBN: 0822313871

Homer *The Odyssey*. Oxford UP. Oxford UP ISBN: 9780199536788

Morales, Helen *Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP ISBN: 9780192804761

Shapiro, Alan *The Oresteia (Aeschylus)*. Oxford UP ISBN: 9780195135923

Note that in addition to the above texts, I have posted required shorter readings under the **DOCS SHARING** tab on the E-college website. These readings are indicated by an asterix (\*) below.

**Course Rules and Requirements**

**Technological Requirements**: Access to a computer or laptop with broadband internet access, Windows or Mac operating system. You will need to use a compatible browser, such as Internet Explorer or Firefox—some of the videos and Flash animations may not be visible on Safari or Chrome. Also, note that all papers must be submitted in a .doc or .docx format so that I may comment upon them using the Microsoft Word Review feature. **Be sure to check your RUTGERS email accounts at least daily, as this will be the principal means of my communications with the class.**

**Course Design:**  Each week, after you complete the required reading from the texts, you will be expected to complete the following tasks in the following order:

1. Review the weekly **Lecture Notes**. The format of the weekly lecture varies; a lecture might be in the format of lecture notes, a Flash lecture on video recorded by the professor, an audio file, or a Power Point presentation.
2. Read and respond to the weekly **Discussion Forum** in a timely fashion by posting an original and intelligible response of approximately 200-250 words to the main questions listed under DISCUSSION on each weekly unit. I will at times post the first response as a model for you to follow and will facilitate the discussion by responding to your postings. Students who post earlier in the week usually have an easier time not repeating what has been said elsewhere on the **Discussion Forum**, In addition to posting your own original response, *you must also briefly respond to one or more of your fellow student’s postings each week*. In brief, this means you are required to post a minimum of twice under each **Discussion Forum** per week. **In weeks where you are divided into groups, note that there will be one deadline on Friday evening (11:59pm) for the original posting and one deadline on Sunday evening for the response to your fellow students’ postings (11:59 pm)**
3. Read and respond to the weekly **Online Learning Activity**, which varies from week to week and could consist of a timed quiz, viewing and responding to a brief relevant video/listening and responding to an audio file, or conducting online research on a topic and posting your findings.
4. Complete the required papers and submit them on time as an MS Word attachment via the E-college course website **DROP** **BOX**. There are two short (2-4 pages) papers required during the semester and one longer paper (7-9 pages) due at the end of the semester. The shorter papers are based on your close readings of two of our principal texts this semester, Homer’s *The Odyssey* and Camoes’ *The Lusiads* and do not require outside research. The longer paper is a comparative project that requires you to compare and contrast two or more mythological texts, one of which must be a primary text of this course. Detailed instructions on all three of these papers will be placed under the headings Paper One, Paper Two, and Final Paper under **Document Sharing** tab on the course e-college site.
5. Post under the **General Class Chat under the LIVE** tab on the e-college website as needed. This chat room is where you should post any general questions or concerns about the course or the course materials that you cannot answer by reviewing the course syllabus or the documents in the **Document Sharing** tab of the course. Please post these general comments and questions here rather than send me a separate email: if you have a particular question about the course or the course materials, chances are high that some of your fellow students will have the same question. In addition, if you would like to initiate further discussions about the course readings and paper topics beyond the scope of the weekly **Discussion Forums**, or to commiserate with each other, this is the place to do so. This general forum is not graded; however, your participation will be taken into consideration when I determine the final course grades.

**Attendance:** Because this course meets entirely online, attendance is based upon your prompt weekly participation in the weekly Discussion Forums **and** Online Learning Activities. You are allowed to miss two of either of these during the semester. After you miss two, **each** Discussion and **each** Online Learning Activity that you miss will result in your final course grade being lowered by one point. It is imperative to note that although this is an asynchronous course, it is **NOT** a self-paced course. This means that you must complete each weekly Discussion Forum **and** Online Learning Activity sometime during the week in which it is assigned, between 12:01am on Monday morning and 11:59 pm on Sunday evening. After 11:59 on Sunday evenings, I will lock down the Discussion Forums and Online Learning Activities so that you will have read-only access, which means that you will not be able to post and will therefore lose the applicable participation points for that week.

**Netiquette:** Although your postings on the Discussion Forums and your answers to the Online Learning Activities do not require as formal of a level of academic English as the three papers, please try to avoid the use of internetese, such as “u” for you, etc. Since our means of communication in this course is written, please be aware of the possibility of miscommunication and compose your comments in the clearest, most constructive way that you can. It is ok for you to disagree with each other’s postings when commenting upon them; however, be certain to do so in a supportive and constructive manner.

**Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Policy:**

Plagiarism is the use of other people’s words or ideas without proper acknowledgment; when referring to other people’s ideas or using other people’s words include a footnote, or a page number of the work in question, in parentheses, at the end of the sentence in which you refer to that person’s ideas or words, following MLA format. Include a Works Cited page at the end of your paper. Violations of the Rutgers University Academic Integrity policy include: cheating, fabrication, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity. You should familiarize yourself with the policy in its entirety at the following link:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf>

**Grading:**

Participation (Discussion Boards and Online Learning Activities): 30%

Quizzes: ` 15%

Close Reading Papers (2-4 pages each) 30%

Final paper (7-9 pages ) 25%

**Grade Points**: A (92-100), B+ (87-91), B (80-86), C+ (77-80), C (70-76), D (60-70), F (59 and below)

**Weekly Schedule**

**WEEK ONE (09/04/12 - 09/09/12)**: **Introduction to Course**

**Reading**: Read the handout on Some **Definitions of Myth** and the brief readings listed below (located under the **Document Sharing Tab** on the e-college website):

Joel Chandler Harris (Georgia, USA) “Brer Rabbit Fools Sis Cow”\*

Franz Kafka (Austro-Hungarian Empire) A Knock at the Manor Gate”\*

Luis Bernardo Honwana (Mozambique) “The Hands of the Blacks”\*

Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm (Germany) “The Straw, the Coal and the Bean”\*

Edith Hamilton (Greece) “The story of Orpheus and Eurydice, as told by Apollonius of Rhodes”

S.E. Schlosser (New Jersey, USA) “Joseph Bonaparte and the Jersey Devil”\*

**Discussion Forum**: Post a paragraph introducing yourself and stating your reasons for taking this particular course as per the guidelines listed on the Discussion Forum. Also, be sure to review the syllabus and familiarize yourself with the course requirements and format. Post any questions you have in the **General** **Chat** on the **LIVE** tab of the course e-college webpage.

**Online Learning Activity:** Write a paragraph (200-250 words or so in which you offer your own definition of myth and post it in the **DROP BOX**. Also indicate which of the above readings most closely fits your personal definition of myth.

**WEEK TWO (09/10/12 - 09/16/12)**: **Background and Context of Classical Greco-Roman Mythologies**

**Reading**: *Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction* by Helen Morales and the Lecture Notes.

**Discussion Forum**: Respond to the questions on Morales’ approach to mythology and don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow student’s postings. **Note that I have divided the class into five groups whose names are based upon mythical creatures from Greek Mythology: Chiron, Medusa, Minotaur, Pegasus, and Trojan Horse. Each group has been assigned a chapter from Morales’ book under the Discussion Forum. You must do your original posting under your group’s question no later than 11:59pm on Friday, September 14 and respond to one of your fellow student’s in the group by 11:59 pm on Sunday, September 16.**

**Online Learning Activity:**  Read Sigmund Freud’s brief essay “The Head of the Medusa.” \*(under **Doc** **Sharing**) Write and post a brief paragraph in the **DROP BOX** that explains how either psychoanalysts (as described by Morales in Chapter V) or feminists (as described by Morales in Chapter VI) would critique Freud’s interpretation of a classical myth.

**WEEK THREE (09/17/12 - 09/23/12):** **The Hero’s Homecoming**

**Reading**: Homer, *The Odyssey* (Ancient Greece) Books 1 through 12. Also read the **Lecture Notes**, download and review the handout on important terms in *The Odyssey* from Docs Sharing*,* and start to watch the BBC documentary on “The Truth of Troy” on the Webliographyon the course website.

**Discussion Forum**: Respond to both the question on *The Odyssey* that has been assigned to your group and then respond to a fellow student’s posting in another group (see the questions in the Discussion **Forum** for further details).

**Online Learning Activity**: Quiz # 1 After you have completed the required reading and responded to the Discussion Forum, log on to take the first quiz. Note that the quizzes are all in the form of a single essay question, are open book, and are timed. You have approximately 30 minutes to respond to the question, so be sure to log in and take the quiz only when you are certain you will have an uninterrupted half an hour to answer the question. You may use your texts, and indeed, you should support your response to the question **by citing applicable quotes from the text.**

**WEEK FOUR** **(09/24/12 - 09/30/12):**  **The Hero’s Homecoming (Continued)**

**Reading**: Homer, *The Odyssey* (Ancient Greece) Books 13-24 and **Lecture Notes.** Be sure you have watched *The* *Truth of Troy* in its entirety.

**Discussion Forum**: Respond to both the question on *The Odyssey* that has been assigned to your group and then respond to a fellow student’s posting in another group (see the questions in the **Discussion** **Forum** for further details).

**Online Learning Activity:**  Watch the BBC documentary, The Truth of Troy, which is located on the course **Webliography** tab at the top right of the course home page. Write a paragraph of about 250-300 words that considers the relationship between mythology and history.

**WEEK FIVE (10/01/12 - 10/07/12):** **Some Reworkings of the Odyssey**

**Reading**: Margaret Atwood “Helen of Troy Does Countertop Dancing”\*

Margaret Atwood Selections from “Circe Mud Poems”\*

Constantine P. Cavafy “Ithaka” (poem)\*

Hilda Doolittle “At Ithaca” (poem)\*

Tennyson “Ulysses” (poem)\*

Fernando Pessoa “Ulysses” (poem)\*

Lecture Notes

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s postings.

**Online Learning Activity**: Using Google or another comprehensive search engine, locate a painting, sculpture or other work of art (such as a vase painting) that pictures a theme or scene from *The* *Odyssey*. Post an image of this artwork and a paragraph about how this particular work depicts an aspect or scene from Homer’s epic. Remember that the art work need not be from ancient Greece or Rome, as throughout the ages, many artists and sculptors have been drawn to Homer’s work.

\*\*\*\*\* PAPER ONE DUE IN THE DROP BOX NO LATER THAN 11:59pm SUNDAY OCTOBER 7th \*\*\*\*\*

**WEEK SIX (10/08/12 - 10/14/12)**: **An Alternative Version of the Hero’s Homecoming**

**Reading**: Aschelyus *Oresteia* and Lecture Notes

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s postings.

**Online Learning Activity**: Quiz # 2, to be completed after you have done the reading and posted to the Discussion Forum for this week.

**WEEK SEVEN** **(10/15/12 - 10/21/12**): **A Feminist View of Greek Mythology**

**Reading**: Platzner and Harris “The Great Goddess and the Goddesses: The Divine Woman in Greek Mythology”\* and Lecture Notes

**Discussion Forum:** Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s postings.

**Online Learning Activity:**  For this week's **Online Learning Activity** you are asked to consider any goddess and/or female deity from any mythological tradition and consider briefly the duality that she represents. What are some of her positive aspects and what are some of her negative aspects? Please compose a brief (250 word or less) consideration of her dual nature of and post it in the Drop Box.

**WEEK EIGHT** **(10/22/12 - 10/28/12):** **Mythology of the European “Discovery” of the World**

**Reading**: Lecture Notes on Portugal’s role in the Age of Discoveries: Carefully review this lecture before you attempt to read *The Lusiads*. In addition, be sure to download and refer to the study guides on the various Cantos of Camoes’ epic, which contain vital information on the History of Portugal with which you are most likely not familiar.

*The Lusiads* Cantos I-IV

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s postings.

**Online Learning Activity**: Watch the video clip, “What the Finns need to know about Portugal.” Choose **one** of the many facts mentioned here—it can be anything from invention of the pasteis de Belem, the pastry created in a Lisbon convent during the Renaissance, to Queen Catherine of Braganza, who introduced tea to the British. Briefly research your chosen fact online and post a paragraph explaining its importance to Portugal.

**WEEK NINE** **(10/29/12 - 11/04/12): Europe’s Discovery of the World (Continued)**

**Reading**: *The Lus*i*ads* Cantos V-X and Lecture Notes. Be sure to download and refer to the Study Guide from the Shared Docs folder to facilitate your reading.

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s posting.

**Online Learning Activity**: Quiz # 2, to be completed after you have done the reading and posted to the Discussion Forum for this week. Remember that this is an open book quiz and **you should attempt to use an applicable quote or two from The Lusiads to back up your main point(s)!**

**WEEK TEN (11/05/12 – 11/11/12)**: **Myths of Africa from before and after the Age of Discoveries**

**Reading**: *African Myths of Origin* Introduction, pages 6-48, 74-116 and 253-267 and Lecture Notes

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s postings.

**Online Learning Activity:**  Choose one of the African myths you have read and relate it back to one of the definitions of myth that we examined at the beginning of the course. In what ways does your chosen tale relate back to that definition of myth? Post a brief (200-300) word analysis.

**WEEK ELEVEN**: **(11/12/12 - 11/18/12):** **Race** **and American National Mythology**

**Reading**: Lecture Notes on the Myth of the “Happy Darky” and the Nadir of American Race Relations

Entries on “Happy Darky” & “Plantation Fiction” from *The Companion to Southern Literature\**

Joel Chandler Harris “Little Mr. Thimblefinger and his Queer Country”\*

“Brother Rabbit’s Riddle”\*

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s posting.

**Online Learning Activity:**  Watch the film clip from the opening sequence of thecontroversial 1915 silent film, *Birth of a Nation* (aka *The Clansman*). Post a brief (200-300 word) paragraph that shows how these film clips relate to the definition of Plantation Fiction

\*\*\*\*\* PAPER TWO DUE IN THE DROP BOX NO LATER THAN 11:59pm SUNDAY NOVEMBER 18th\*\*\*\*\*

**WEEK TWELVE (11/19/12 - 11/26/12)**: **Race and American National Mythology (Continued)**

**Reading**: Charles Waddell Chestnutt The *Conjure Woman and Other Tales* (pages 1-83) and

Lecture Notes

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s postings.

**Online Learning Activity:**  Quiz # 3, to be completed after you have done the reading and posted to the Discussion Forum for this week. Remember to back up your main point(s) with **specific examples** from the readings!

**WEEK THIRTEEN (11/26/12 - 12/02/12)**: **Race and American National Mythology (Continued**)

**Reading**: Charles Waddell Chestnutt *The Conjure Woman and Other Tales (pages 84-157)*

Zora Neale Hurston “How It Feels to be Colored Me”\*

Lecture Notes

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s postings.

**Online Learning Activity:**  Download and read Zora Neale Hurston’s brief article, “How it feels to be Colored Me.” Consider the ways in which this article contests the Happy Darky myth that we have studies. Post a response of 200-300 words in the Drop Box.

\*\*\*\*ONE PAGE OUTLINE OR ABSTRACT OF YOUR FINAL 7-9 PAGE PAPER DUE IN DROP BOX\*\*\*

**WEEK FOURTEEN (12/03/12 - 12/09/12):** **URBAN MYTHS**

**Reading:** Selected Urban Myths from around the World Wide Web\* and Lecture Notes

**Discussion Forum**: Answer one of the suggested questions and respond to it in a brief paragraph. Don’t forget to also respond to one of your fellow classmate’s postings.

**Online Learning Activity:**  Respond to the question asking you to define the relationship of urban myths to the definition of myth that you wrote during week one and post a brief (200-300 word) definition in the course Drop Box.

\*\*\*\*FINAL PAPER DUE IN THE DROP BOX NO LATER THAN 11:59PM ON 12/14/12\*\*\*\*\*