**Introduction to Mythology: Myth and Film (01:195:244:02)**

Mon/Wed 1:10-2:30

Campbell A2

Instructor: Prof. Kathleen Sclafani

Office Hours: Mon/Wed before or after class, by appointment

Email: [Ksclaf@aol.com](mailto:Ksclaf@aol.com)

Mailbox: Comparative Literature Dept.

195 College Ave., College Ave. Campus

**Course Overview**:

Throughout history myths have been passed on using various means, from storytelling and performance to all forms of written texts. Since the start of the 20th century, film has become the newest and in some ways most powerful medium through which myths are transmitted. In this course we will explore how film communicates the myths of a given society to its members. By combining the study of myth theories with film analysis, we will attempt to explore the ways in which films both influence and reflect the way we think, and why movies are much more than “just entertainment”.

The first part of the course focuses on three major theoretical approaches to the study of myth: Jung and his theory of the collective unconscious, Levi Strauss’ structuralism, and the understanding of myth as ideology. Though there are many others, these three approaches are particularly applicable to the analysis of film, and can help us to analyze its “mythic impact”. During the remainder of the semester we will view films that transmit myths of heroes and of monsters in both Hollywood and non-Hollywood cinema. After each section students will present a film of their own choosing, using the theories we’ve discussed to examine the way it works as myth.

Books to Purchase:

Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein* (any edition).

Euripedes *Medea and Other Plays* (Penguin Classics; translated by John Davie)

(These texts can be purchased from Amazon, either used or new, for a few dollars)

Other readings:

Besides the texts above, all other readings can be found on online in the ecollege course shell provided for this class (click on “doc sharing” on the top menu). To log in, go to <https://ecollege.rutgers.edu>

**Be prepared to print out the readings and bring them to class when notified. You must also bring your text if we are using it that day in class**

Films:

All of the films assigned are available on either Netflix (if you have an account) or Amazon instant video (for a few dollars each).

**Course Requirements:**

1. **1-2 page responses** to the assigned film, when required (see syllabus), submitted into the ecollege course shell provided for this class under “dropbox” **before the start of class on the day it is due**. **You should bring hard copies to class as well (20%).**
2. **Class participation.** This includes regular, on-time attendance (if you miss more than 4 sessions you are at risk for failure), being prepared for class and keeping up with the reading and writing assignments **(20%).**
3. **Quizzes (announced and unannounced) and an exam (20%)**
4. **A group or individual power point presentation on a film of your choosing** that corresponds to an assigned topic (you may also choose to write a longer paper in lieu of the presentation) **(20%)**
5. **An 8-10 page paper expanding upon the topic chosen for the presentation, or a 12-15 page paper in lieu of a presentation (20% or 40% without presentation)**

**Please note**:

\*\***There is no extra credit – please focus your energies on completing assigned work thoroughly and on time.**

**Comparative Literature Learning Goals:**

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. Students 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.

3. Students will demonstrate competency in one foreign language and at least a basic knowledge of the literature written in that language.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Topics** | **Readings** |
| **PART I: THEORIES OF MYTH** |  |
| **Sept 5 Introduction: What is Myth?** | Video clip from The Power of Myth (Campell/Moyers – found in course shell on left menu); Segal “Joseph Campbell’s Theory of Myth” (Dundes) and “Myth and Psychology”, inc. Adonis myth excerpt (from *Myth: A Very Short Introduction)* |
| **Sept 10 The Psychological Approach to Myth** | Thury “How to Perform a Jungian Analysis of a Myth or Fairy Tale” |
| **Sept 12 Jungian Analysis of Myth and Dreams** | Thury, “The Structural Study of Myth: Edmund Leach on Claude Levi-Strauss” |
| **Sept 17 Structuralism (Levi Strauss)** | Thury *The Epic of Gilgamesh* |
| **Sept 19 *Gilgamesh*** | Ellwood, *The Politics of Myth*, Ch 1 |
| **Sept 24 Myth as Ideology** | Video on *The Writer’s Journey* (Vogler); Bordwell article on superheroes; Segal “The Future of the Study of Myth” |
| **Sept 26 Film as Myth?** | Ray *A Certain Tendency in Hollywood Cinema* Ch 3; view *Casablanca;* response paper |
| **PART II: FILM AND THE MYTH OF THE HERO** |  |
| **Oct 1 *Casablanca* andthe Mythology of the American Hero** | “A collective text by the Editors of *Cahiers du Cinema*: John Ford’s *Young Mr. Lincoln*” |
| **Oct 3 *Young Mr. Lincoln:* Film as Ideology** | View *Hero* (Zhang 2002)*;* response paper |
| **Oct 8 Chinese Heroes of the Wuxia Tradition** | Zheng, “What Makes a Blockbuster Good”; Larsen article |
| **Oct 10 The Hero Myth in the Context of Global Cinema** | Stam and Spence, “Colonialism, Racism and Representation”; Diawara, “Popular Culture and Oral Traditions in African Film” |
| **Oct 15 Hollywood’s Africa, Africans’ Response** | View *Moolaade* (Sembene 2004)*;* response paper. |
| **Oct 17 The Hero in Sub-Saharan African Film** | View *Black Orpheus* (Camus 1959); Perrone, “Don’t Look Back...” |
| **Oct 22 Black Orpheus** | Rough draft due 10/24 (upload into doc sharing); Allen, “The Role of the Star in Film History: Joan Crawford |
| **Oct 24 The Female Star in Classic Hollywood** | Review of group mates’ drafts (upload into doc sharing); View *Mildred Pierce* (Curtiz 1945)*;* response paper; Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” |
| **Oct 29 The Star as Goddess and Spectacle** | View *Kill Bill I* (Tarantino 2003); Jordan “Women Refusing the Gaze” (excerpts) |
| **Oct 31 The Revenge of the Goddess** | Paper due 11/5 |
| **Nov 5 Presentations: The Hero in Film** | Euripedes *Medea* (by 11/12) |
| **Nov 7 Presentations: The Hero in Film** | Warner, “Monstrous Mothers”; Creed, “Horror and the Monstrous Feminine” (by 11/14) |
| **PART III: MONSTERS, MYTH AND FILM** |  |
| **Nov 12 “Monstrous” Women: Female Monsters in Greek Mythology** | View *Alien* (Scott 1979); response paper |
| **Nov 14 Modern Female “Monsters” in Film** | Read *Frankenstein* by Dec 5; article from *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* |
| **Nov 19 TheVampire Myth** | View *Near Dark* (Bigelow 1987); response paper |
| **Nov 26 The Vampire in American Society** | Thury, “Prometheus, The Greek Trickster”; Graves, “The Births of Hermes, Apollo, Artemis and Dionysus” |
| **Nov 28 Prometheus and Frankenstein** | View *Frankenstein* (Whale 1931); response paper |
| **Dec 3 James Whale’s *Frankenstein*** | Picart, “Rebirthing the Monstrous” |
| **Dec 5 Myth in Whale and Shelley** | Complete exam on ecollege by 12/12 |
| **Dec 10 Presentations: Monsters in Film** |  |
| **Dec 12 Presentations: Monsters in Film** |  |
|  |  |