**INTRODUCTION TO MYTHOLOGY**

**Fall 2012 -- 195:244:01**

**Monday/Thursday 8:10-9:30**

**MU-301; CAC**

**Instructor:** F. Betul Cihan-Artun

**E-mail:** [**betul.cihan@rutgers.edu**](mailto:fc240@rutgers.edu)

**Office Hours:** M 10-12 @ Au Bon Pain or by appointment

**Mailbox:** 195 College Avenue, Comparative Literature

**Learning Objectives and Fulfillments:**

This course aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills required to critically engage with myths, ancient and modern alike. To this end, students will get acquainted with major theoretical perspectives on myths and will be expected to discuss the relevance of these perspectives through the analysis of works of literature and visual material. Definitions and functions of myth, recurring themes thereof (such as creation, rites of passage, death and rebirth), myths’ relationship with the sacred, the self, and society, and last but not least, the relevance of myths for popular culture will be explored throughout the semester. Students are expected to think across national literatures and cultures and to consider the relationship of literary texts and theory to other disciplines and media.

We will take both a transcultural and a transdisciplinary approach to the subject matter, so as to (among these approaches’ other benefits) meet the departmental learning goals, which are:

- to 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.

- to demonstrate critical reasoning and research skills; to design and to conduct research in an individual field of concentration;

- to analyze a specific body of research and to write a clear and well developed paper or project about a topic related to more than one literary and cultural tradition.

This course fulfills **Core Learning Goal AHp** (analyzing arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies).

**Class Policy:**

Class participation will constitute a significant portion of your grade. This means that you are expected to attend lectures, keep up with the readings, and participate actively in class discussions (asking questions also counts as participation!).

You will have two reading quizzes (Week 6 & 13)—there will be no make-ups for them. In addition to quizzes, you are expected to submit one short paper (Week 4). For the final exam, you will be expected to write a six- to ten-pages long paper on one of the given topics. For the paper, I will definitely be looking for originality, good writing, solid arguments, and analytical reasoning.

Academic honesty is expected, that is, **plagiarism** will not be tolerated; if caught there is an automatic F on the assigned paper. For The university's policy on Academic Integrity, visit:

[**http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\_Policy\_9\_01\_2011.pdf**](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf)

As for the absence policy, after two missed classes, additional absences without any legitimate excuse, such as illness or religious observance, will negatively impact your class participation grade. You will receive a straight F if you miss more than 25% of classes.

**Grading System (value):**

Attendance & Participation % 15

Response paper % 10

Quizzes % 10

Midterm Exam % 25

Final Paper % 40

**Required Readings:**

Joseph Campbell. *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. ISBN-10: 1577315936. ($14.00)

Neil Gaiman. *American Gods*. ISBN-10: 0060558121. ($11.00)

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Propp. *Morphology of the Folktale*. (Chapter 1 & 9) (on *Sakai*)

Roland Barthes. “Myth Today”, in *Mythologies*. pp. 217-274. (on *Sakai*)

William Bascom. “The Forms of Folklore,” pp. 5-30. (on *Sakai*)

Lauri Honko. “The Problem of Defining Myth,” pp. 41-52. (on *Sakai*)

G. S. Kirk. “On Defining Myths,” pp. 53-61. (on *Sakai*)

Mircae Eliade. “Cosmogenic Myth and ‘Sacred History’,” pp. 137-152. (on *Sakai*)

Eric Dardel. “The Mythic” pp. 225-244. (on *Sakai*)

Robert A. Segal. “Joseph Campbell’s Theory of Myth” pp. 256-270. (on *Sakai*)

Claude Levi-Strauss. “The Structural Study of Myth” in *The Journal of American*

*Folklore* (1955).... (on *Sakai*)

Creation myths in *World Mythology*. Edited by Donna Rosenberg. (excerpts on *Sakai*)

**Recommended texts:**

Thury and Devinney. *Introduction to Mythology*.

David Adams Leeming. *The World of Myth*

Donna Rosenberg. *World Mythology*. 2nd ed.

Alan Dundes, ed. *Sacred Narrative*.

**Course Schedule:**

Week One:

Sept. 6: Introduction to the course; overview of the syllabus

Start reading the *Epic of Gilgamesh*

Week Two: Myth: Definitions and Function

Sept. 10: “Prologue: The Monomyth” (pp. 3-41) and “Epilogue: Myth and Society” (pp.

353-362) in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*.

Sept. 13: “The Problem of Defining Myth”, “On Defining Myths,”

**Response Paper (optional for extra credit)**

Week Three: Definitions-continued: Myth, Folktale and Legend

Sept. 17: “The Forms of Folklore,” *Morphology of the Folktale*: Chapter 1

Sept. 20: *Morphology of the Folktale*: Chapter 9; sample folktale: Cinderalla

Week Four: Major Themes: Creation, Destruction and Rebirth

Sept. 24: Greek, Mesopotamian, Norse, and Indian versions (excerpts on *Sakai*)

Read “The Mythic” by Eric Dardel

**Write-up: Proppian analysis of a folktale of your choice**

Sept. 27: Chinese, Japanese, Yoruba, Mayan, Aztec and Navajo versions (on *Sakai*)

Week Five: Myth and the Hero

Oct. 1: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*: pp. 45-88.

Oct. 4: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*: pp. 89-178.

Week Six: Myth and the Hero

Oct. 8: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*: pp. 179-233.

Oct. 11: Analysis of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

**Quiz** on Gilgamesh

Week Seven:

Oct. 15: Robert A. Segal. “Joseph Campbell’s Theory of Myth”

Discussion of various movies (e.g. Star Wars, Matrix, etc.)

Oct. 18: **MIDTERM EXAM!!!!**

Week Eight: Myth and the Sacred

Oct. 22: “Cosmogenic Myth and ‘Sacred History’,”

Start reading *American Gods*

Oct. 25: Discussion of the sacred in the creation myths reviewed in Week 4

Week Nine: Myth and Society

Oct. 29: “The Structural Study of Myth”; sample folktale: Cinderalla

Nov. 1: Discussion of *Gilgamesh*

Week Ten: Myth and Ideology

Nov. 5: *Mythologies*: “Myth Today”

Nov. 8: “Myth Today”- continue

**Response paper** (optional for extra credit)

Week Eleven: Myth and Ideology -Nationalism

Nov. 12: Case study: German nationalism

Nov. 15: Further analysis (to be assigned)

Week Twelve: Myth and Ideology –Popular Culture

Nov. 19: NO CLASS!!!

Nov. 20: THURSDAY CLASS - Analysis of various “mythemes” in popular culture (ads,

music video clips, TV shows, etc.)

Week Thirteen: (Post)Modern Mythologies

Nov. 26: *American Gods*

**Quiz** on *American Gods*

Nov. 29: *American Gods*

Week Fourteen: (Post)Modern Mythologies

Dec. 3: *American Gods*

Dec. 6: *American Gods*

Week Fifteen:

Dec. 10: Concluding Remarks

FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE DECEMBER ##!!!