"Myth" is a term that is difficult to stably define: it means both the dominant religious figures and stories of a culture (as in Greek, Roman, or Norse mythology), AND something that can be proven to be false (as in "Mythbusters"). Yet myths are stories that we just cannot stop telling, whether it's true or not, because it seems to serve a deeper psychological and sociological function.

In this introductory course, we will attempt to stabilize this definition by looking at a variety of texts from ancient to modern times that are from literature, philosophy/theory, and anthropology. We will consider various categories of the traditional notion of myth: in the hero narrative, creation/destruction myths, and stories from fertility cults. We will then look at how myth may function in the modern world in advertising, films, and even social media. Lastly, we will explore the contemporary fascination with zombies, and how one anthropologist debunks this myth, while discovering a community with a certain ideology and material circumstances that make this phenomenon possible. A brief study of the voodoo pantheon can finally revise our previous conceptions of ancient and modern myths.

**Learning Outcome Goals:**

In this course, students will develop tools to analyze myths from various cultures by learning to recognize the use of narrative structures and archetypal figures, as well as recognize the determining connection between the myth and the material conditions in the society in which it is disseminated.

These student learning goals that have been developed by the Program in Comparative Literature for its respective majors, minors, and for non-majors who take these courses as electives:

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.

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

Required Texts:

Joseph Campbell *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* ISBN 9781577315933

(I will be using the Bollingen Series version: ISBN 0691017840)

Homer *The Odyssey* (Allen Mandelbaum translation) ISBN 978-0553213997

Diane Wolkstein *Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth*: ISBN 9780060908546

Roland Barthes *Mythologies*:ISBN 9780374521509

Wade Davis *The Serpent and the Rainbow*: ISBN 978-0684839295

Online on Sakai: excerpts from the Books of Genesis and Exodus, The Epic of Sunjiata, and excerpts from *The Haitian Voodoo Handbook* by Kenaz Filan and *Tell My Horse* by Zora Neale Hurston.

Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown:

Students will complete a midterm exam, three short papers, and a research presentation.

Attendance/Participation 10%

Midterm 25%

Presentation 15%

Paper 1 15%

Paper 2 15%

Paper 3 20%

Attendance/Participation: Everyone is expected to come to every class on time. More than 20 minutes of lateness will be counted as an absence. If you will be observing a religious holiday that conflicts with our class schedule, please let me know the first week of class. Students will be expected to sign in at the beginning of every class. Students are expected to participate actively in discussion and any assigned group work. Also, for each class presentation the rest of the class is expected to not only take notes, but also to pose questions to our presenters about their chosen topics.

If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website [**https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/**](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/) to indicate the date and reason for your absence.  An email is automatically sent to me.

*Please note:  You may make up an exam and/or hand in a paper/presentation late only in the case of a family emergency (death, terminal illness) or a severe illness.*

**Current Academic Integrity Policy**:

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

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

**Upon submission of any work in this class, it is understood that this work is NOT a collaboration with any other person, and that all information and writing therein is only that of the student submitting the work.** Anyone caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the assignment and risks further penalties.

*Consult Don't Plagiarize: Document Your Research! For tips about how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accident.* [*http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib\_instruct/instruct\_document.shtml*](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml)

*Take a 20 minute interactive-tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity,* [*http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html*](http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html)

Preliminary Course Schedule:

Wed Sep 5: What is myth?

*Part One: The Hero and the Monomyth*

Mon Sep 10: Sunjiata

Wed Sep 12: Campbell

Mon Sep 17: Campbell

Wed Sep 19: Campbell

Mon Sep 24: Exodus

Wed Sep 26: Exodus

Mon Oct 1: Odyssey

Wed Oct 3: Odyssey

Mon Oct 8: Odyssey

Wed Oct 10: Odyssey

Mon Oct 15: Odyssey

Wed Oct 17: Odyssey and midterm review

Mon Oct 22: In class midterm exam

*Part Two: Beyond the Monomyth...*

Wed Oct 24: Genesis and the creation myth

Mon Oct 29: Inanna

Wed Oct 31: Inanna

Mon Nov 5: Inanna

Wed Nov 7: Inanna

*Part 3: Myth and the Modern World*

Mon Nov 12: Essay #1 due Mythologies

Wed Nov 14: Mythologies

Mon Nov 19: Mythologies

Wed Nov 21: No Class! Friday classes before Thanksgiving break!!

Mon Nov 26: Essay #1 rewrites due. Mythologies

Wed Nov 28: Mythologies creative piece due (Essay #2) 3 pages minimum.

 The Serpent and the Rainbow

Mon Dec 3: The Serpent and the Rainbow

Wed Dec 5: The Serpent and the Rainbow

Mon Dec 10: The Serpent and the Rainbow

Wed Dec 12: The Serpent and the Rainbow

Final Paper #3 due: 4-5 pages