

Bergen Community College
School of English
Department of Composition and Literature
Course Syllabus

LIT229-000 Myth and Literature

Instructor:
Office
Phone:
E-mail:
Office Hours: TBA

Course Description:

Myth and Literature is a three-credit general education course that gives students an overview of the mythology of various selected cultures and shows the relation of mythology to our everyday lives. Works range from antiquity to the present. After taking this course, students will be able to analyze and understand mythic symbols in literature (theory, poetry, short stories, and novels). WRT 101 is required. 3 lectures, 3 credits. Humanities elective. 3 Lecture Hours. 3 Credits.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the structure of classical mythology in literature.
2. Analyze various structures of myth in literature through reading and writing.
3. Explain how literary myths reflect societal rituals and ways of life in various cultures.
4. Critique, comprehend, and compare cultural myths, including creation myths, in literature.
5. Write papers that demonstrate facility with information literacy and library research databases.
6. Incorporate properly formatted research in support of an argument; and draw conclusions about a mythic topic or theme.
7. Study the ethical implications of myth in literature and its relevance to contemporary society.

Course Content:

This course will trace the structure of myth in literature and society. It will study myths and fairy that are believed to be true but set in the distant past or another world of extra-human, inhuman, or heroic characters. Attention will also be paid to the many critical and social theories of myth from the 19th and early 20th centuries (Freud, Frazer, Muller, Jung, etc.). The course will study the unconscious human truths of myth, which are prior to knowing. Some of the mythic themes we will research and discuss are: transformation in mythic character; patterns of the heroes journey; mythic heroes of ancient and modern cultures; steps in the hero or heroine's journey; what makes a hero mythic; modern works of film or literature with mythic aspects (such as: *Pan's Labyrinth*, *Pygmalion*, *Lars and the Real Girl*, or *The Shape of Things*); creation myths, fertility myths; apocalypse, future myth, trickster or messiah figures, comparative myths.

Required Texts:

Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes by Edith Hamilton.

ISBN: 978-0-446-57475-4

Jung, C.G. *Four Archetypes*.

ISBN: 0-691-01766-2

Three Tragedies by Sophocles. Trans. David Grene.

ISBN: 0-226-30792-1

LaBute. *The Shape of Things*

Sylvia Plath. Poems, including "Medusa."

Grading Policy: Your final grade will be computed in the following way:

Quizzes, journals, papers 20%;

Discussion Forum 20%.

Midterm 20%

Final 20%

Participation 20%

Course Requirements:

Students are required to do the following:

1. Engage in course reading or research everyday.

In addition to researching outside class, you are expected to participate in class discussions, take quizzes, and do ALL assignments relating to the reading.

2. Complete all papers using proper documentation and MLA style. Complete all writing exercises, including critical essays, structural analyses, reading responses, in-class assignments.

Quizzes, tests, and assignments are due by the dates assigned and by the end of the class that day. If for any reason the work is turned in after the date assigned, your grade will be lowered a third of a letter grade for each academic day the assignment is late. After a full week, the assignment will earn a grade of zero.

3. Complete a midterm and final examination based on the readings and class lectures. These will be blue book exams and all materials covered until previously. Exam content will consist of one-part reference and identification questions on all the readings and lectures. The other part will be a required essay that pulls together course themes and demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of course texts.

The exams will last for the full course period. They may not be repeated or restarted, so plan to come to class on exam dates prepared to write undisturbed without books or Internet access.

4. Complete several quizzes on assigned readings. You can use your books and notes to take these quizzes. They will be timed, multiple choice, or true/false. I may drop your lowest grade.

Papers Submission Policy:

There will be several formal papers and other small writing assignments for the course. You are expected to write the papers using reference materials and MLA format. These papers should be double-spaced and include a works cited. Your grade will be based on your thesis, organization, quality of ideas, development, evidence, clarity, grammar, and technical prowess. For a sample paper and example of proper MLA documentation.

File Formatting: You must write your papers in a word processing format, such as Microsoft Word, and save them in docx, rtf (Rich Text Format), or PDF format. Directions for how to save in this format are posted under the section "Student Tips." When you save your file, name it with your last name and the assignment title. For example, if John Smith was submitting his first paper, he would save his file as Smith_Paper1.rtf

Plagiarism Policy:

Students are advised that the work written or posted in this course is to be their own. That means that **cutting and pasting information from the Internet into discussion postings, exams, or papers is prohibited** and does not count as a scholarly reference. References should have more information than a URL. Analysis of literature in the course is expected to be a synthesis of your own personal thoughts made into an objective argument. Papers should not include or mention any (primary or secondary) sources without citations.

If you use more than four words in a row from an outside source, they should be contained in quotation marks and cited appropriately. If you've put ideas from another source into your own words, you must also cite the source appropriately after the information you've used. If you are caught plagiarizing on exams or in papers you will

receive a failing grade for the assignment. If you are caught a second time, you will receive a failing grade for the course and a letter reprimand will be submitted to you and filed in the office of the Vice President of Student Affairs.

I will try to frame assignments and questions in the course so that you are encouraged to articulate your own thinking about the literature we read. Please do not rely on Internet web sites like Spark Notes or Internet repositories of student essays (i.e. www.Fastpapers.com) for ideas, phrasing, or insights into your reading. Instead, ask questions in the course site and attempt to work through your confusion as you express ideas in the discussion forum.

Sometimes you will be required to submit your papers to Turnitin.com in addition to submitting the paper to me. This website provides you with a full report of the degree to which your paper uses language inappropriately from other sources. A Student Guide on how to use Turnitin.com is under the Student Tips. Our class number and password and Turnitin will be sent to you in the course email system.

Course Outline/Tentative Schedule:

Introduction to Classical Mythology

Week 1 Myth and the Language:

Week 2 Structural Aspects of Myth.
Vladimir Propp

Week 3 Myth and Psychoanalysis
C. G. Jung, Archetypes

Week 4 Oedipus and Family Myth
Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*

Week 5 Oedipus and Hamilton
Tragedy vs. Epic
Due PAPER #1

Week 6 Heroes, Heroines, and Hero Archetype
Joseph Campbell, excerpts, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*
Mid-term Review

Week 7 Homeric Heroes, Odysseus, Achilles, Agamemnon
Mid-term Exam

Week 8 Fairy Tales Heroines and Monsters
Perrault's "Bluebeard"

Creation Myths

Week 9 Thematic study: Creation (*Eros/Thanatos*) stories
Psyche and Eros: Neumann, on *Amor and Psyche*

- Week 10** **Ancient and Contemporary Myth**
Camus' *The Outsider* and *Myth of Sisyphus*
C. G. Jung, Rebirth Archetype.
- Week 11** *Sisyphus* continued
Due: PAPER: #2
- Week 12** Franz Kafka "The Metamorphosis"
On Spirit archetype
- Week 13** **Trickster Archetypes and Myths**
Silko, *Ceremony*
Jung, Trickster archetype
- Week 14** Dostoevsky *The Double*; Jung, Pp. 85-100
Freud's "Dostoyevsky and Parricide"
- Week 15** Review for Final Exam, **Final Exam, Due: PAPER #3**