

**COURSE DESCRIPTION: MYTHIC BACKGROUNDS TO LITERATURE,  
ENGLISH 3403.001**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Catherine Martin, Patterson 449, 678-2686, [cgmartin@memphis.edu](mailto:cgmartin@memphis.edu)

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

**Note:** *Many of these texts exist in multiple editions/issues, any of which are acceptable.*

Book of Genesis, Holy Bible (preferably KJV)

*Gilgamesh*, trans. Andrew George (Penguin ISBN 0-140-44919-1)

Hesiod, *Works and Days and Theogony* trans. Stanley Lombardo (Hackett 0-87220-179-1)

Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Harper Collins, ISBN 0-06-090479-8)

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Penguin, ISBN 978-0-140-44058-4)

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. John Leonard (Penguin 2000 ISBN 0-140-43439-3)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Film: *Oh Brother Where Art Thou?*

**OPTIONAL TEXTS:** *Penguin Dictionary of Classical Mythology*

**AIMS AND ORGANIZATION:**

This course compares and contrasts the foundational myths of Western civilization with their later incarnations in epic, novel, and film. Many detail either a sexual fall or its opposite, sexual “salvation” as in the story of Cupid and Psyche (below), which we will cover along with three other major themes dominating both ancient and modern sources:

1) *Creation and Fall* --origins in Genesis; *Theogony*, *Works and Days*, *Metamorphoses* book 1  
*Modern Incarnations*--*Paradise Lost*, books 1-2, 4, 5-7, 9, and *Frankenstein*, part 1

2) *The Monstrous Journey*—origins in Homer’s *Odyssey*, *Metamorphoses*, books 7-11.  
*Modern Incarnations*--*Paradise Lost*, book 3; *Frankenstein* part 2, *Oh Brother Where Art Thou?*

3) *Apocalypse and Reincarnation*—origins in the Book of Revelation, *Metamorphosis*, Book 15, “The Teachings of Pythagoras.” *Modern Incarnations*--*The Time Machine*, *The Road*.

**Illustration Below: A symbolic butterfly hovers over Psyche poised between innocence and sexual awakening**

