



Instructor: Rita Pasqui

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Class meets: R 5:30 - 8:30pm
Collierville Center 134

Office: JO 108-I

Office hour: MW 11:30-12:30 and by
appointment

Mailbox: JO 108 (1st floor)

Description of the course

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to classical mythology. Both literary and material sources will be considered. The myths of the Greeks and the Romans will be examined from different perspectives, such as their historical context, their social relevance, their religious significance and their implications in terms of gender and sexuality.

The topics targeted will include, but will not be limited to, myths of creation and destruction, Olympian deities, myths of fertility, myths of death and heroic figures.

In the very last section of the course we will explore how Western literature and culture have frequently reworked ancient myth in ways that are significant both to ancient and modern culture.

Regular quizzes will test your mastery of reading and lecture material. The midterm exam will be administered on October 10 (1:00pm-2:25pm). The date of the final exam is December 12 (10:30am-12:30pm).

Regular discussions will develop from the problems presented by the texts at hand; participation and attendance in class are therefore of paramount importance.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this subject the student will be able to:

1. Define myth (and difference with respect to folklore and legend).
2. Differentiate between the characteristics, themes, and patterns of myths.
3. Explain the origins and purposes of myths as well as the different interpretations given in more recent times.
4. Assess the relevance of mythological themes in modern culture.
5. Compare the tradition of Greek and Roman mythology with other forms of mythology.

Essential Skills

1. Communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience.
2. Respond to written, spoken, or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.
3. Apply a systematic approach to solve problems.
4. Use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.
5. Locate, select, organize, and document information using appropriate technology and information systems.
6. Analyze, evaluate, and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.
7. Show respect for diverse opinions, values, belief systems, and contributions of others.
8. Interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.
9. Manage the use of time and other resources to complete projects.
10. Take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and consequences.

Course schedule

Class 1: Introduction.

Welcome to Classical Mythology! This first week we will introduce the course. We will also begin to think about the topic at hand: how can we begin to define "myth"? How does myth work? What have ancient and modern theorists, philosophers, and other thinkers had to say about myth? This week we will also begin our foray into Homer's world, with an eye to how we can best approach epic poetry.

Readings: No assigned texts this week, but it is necessary that you begin next week's reading so that you can participate in discussions during Module 2. Always look at the readings assigned for the week after and get prepared for the first day of the following module.

Lecture 1 - 08/29/19

Introduction - What is mythology?
Ways of understanding myth

Class 2: Becoming a Hero.

In week 2, we begin our intensive study of myth through Homer's epic poem, the *Odyssey*. This core text not only gives us an exciting story to appreciate on its own merits but also offers us a kind of laboratory where we can investigate myth using different theoretical approaches. This week we focus

on the young Telemachus' tour as he begins to come of age; we also accompany his father Odysseus as he journeys homeward after the Trojan War. Along the way, we will examine questions of heroism, relationships between gods and mortals, family dynamics, and the Homeric values of hospitality and resourcefulness.

Readings: Homer, *Odyssey*, books 1-8 (translation by Fagles highly recommended)

Lecture 2 - 09/05/19

Homer's *Odyssey* I
Homer's *Odyssey* II; functionalism

Class 3: Adventures Out and Back

This week we will follow the exciting peregrinations of Odysseus, "man of twists and turns," over sea and land. The hero's journeys abroad and as he re-enters his homeland are fraught with perils. This portion of the *Odyssey* features unforgettable monsters and exotic witches; we also follow Odysseus into the Underworld, where he meets shades of comrades and relatives. Here we encounter some of the best-known stories to survive from all of ancient myth.

Readings: Homer, *Odyssey*, books 9-12

Lecture 3 - 09/12/19

Homer's *Odyssey* III
Homer's *Odyssey* IV; structuralism

Class 4: Identity and Signs

As he makes his way closer and closer to re-taking his place on Ithaca and with his family, a disguised Odysseus must use all his resources to regain his kingdom. We will see many examples of reunion as Odysseus carefully begins to reveal his identity to various members of his household—his servants, his dog, his son, and finally, his wife Penelope—while also scheming against those who have usurped his place.

Readings: Homer, *Odyssey*, books 13-20

Lecture 4 - 09/19/19

Homer's *Odyssey* V
Homer's *Odyssey* VI; **QUIZ #1**

Class 5: Gods and Humans

We will finish the *Odyssey* and then take a close look at the most authoritative story on the origin of the cosmos from Greek antiquity: Hesiod's *Theogony*. Hesiod was generally considered the only poet who could rival Homer. The *Theogony*, or "birth of the gods," tells of an older order of gods, before Zeus, who were driven by powerful passions—and strange appetites! This poem presents the

beginning of the world as a time of fierce struggle and violence as the universe begins to take shape, and order, out of chaos.

Readings: Homer, *Odyssey*, books 21-24

Hesiod, *Theogony* *(*the Works and Days* is NOT required for the course)*

Lecture 5 - 09/26/19

Closing remarks and discussion on *Odyssey*
Myths of creation I
Myths of creation II

Class 6: Ritual and Religion

This week's readings give us a chance to look closely at Greek religion in its various guises. Myth, of course, forms one important aspect of religion, but so does ritual. How ancient myths and rituals interact teaches us a lot about both of these powerful cultural forms. We will read two of the greatest hymns to Olympian deities that tell up-close-and-personal stories about the gods while providing intricate descriptions of the rituals they like us humans to perform.

Readings: Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*; Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (there are two hymns to each that survive, only the LONGER *Hymn to Apollo* and the LONGER *Hymn to Demeter* are required for the course)

Lecture 6 - 10/03/19

Hymn to Demeter (myth of death and fertility)
Hymn to Apollo (rituals in Delphi); myth and ritual

Class 7: Eros and the Labors of Love

Stories of love, fulfilled and unfulfilled, loom over a great part of ancient literature. Eros (Passionate Love) and Pothos (Desire), represent the human emotions, but also a philosophical principle, an impulse or tendency towards something we lack, which has moved the story of cosmic and human existence since the beginning.

Readings: Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*; Euripides' *Medea*

10/10/19

MIDTERM EXAM

Lecture 7 - 10/17/19

Hymn to Aphrodite; The Greek Tragedy and *Medea*

Class 8: Justice

What counts as a just action, and what counts as an unjust one? Who gets to decide? These are trickier questions than some will have us think. This unit looks at one of the most famously thorny issues of justice in all of the ancient world. In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*—the only surviving example of tragedy in its

original trilogy form—we hear the story of Agamemnon’s return home after the Trojan War. Unlike Odysseus’ eventual joyful reunion with his wife and children, this hero is betrayed by those he considered closest to him. This family’s cycle of revenge, of which this story is but one episode, carries questions of justice and competing loyalties well beyond Agamemnon’s immediate family, eventually ending up on the Athenian Acropolis itself.

Readings: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*; Aeschylus, *Eumenides*

Lecture 8 - 10/24/19

Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*
Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*

Class 9:

This week we encounter two famous tragedies, both set at Thebes, that center on questions of guilt and identity: Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* and Euripides’ *Bacchae*. Oedipus is confident that he can escape the unthinkable fate that was foretold by the Delphic oracle; we watch as he eventually realizes the horror of what he has done. With Odysseus, we saw how a great hero can re-build his identity after struggles, while Oedipus shows us how our identities can dissolve before our very eyes. The myth of Oedipus is one of transgressions—intentional and unintentional—and about the limits of human knowledge. In Euripides’ *Bacchae*, the identity of gods and mortals is under scrutiny. Here, Dionysus, the god of wine and of tragedy, and also madness, appears as a character on stage. Through the dissolution of Pentheus, we see the terrible consequences that can occur when a god’s divinity is not properly acknowledged.

Readings: Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*; Euripides, *Bacchae*

Lecture 9 - 10/31/19

Guilt and identity in Euripides
Analysis of the tragedies; Oedipus and Freud

Class 10: The Roman Hero, Remade

Moving ahead several centuries, we jump into a different part of the Mediterranean to let the Romans give us their take on myth. Although many poets tried to rewrite Homer for their own times, no one succeeded quite like Vergil. His epic poem, the *Aeneid*, chronicles a powerful re-building of a culture that both identifies with and defines itself against previously told myths. In contrast to the scarcity of information about Homer, we know a great deal about Vergil’s life and historical context, allowing us insight into myth-making in action.

Readings: Vergil, *Aeneid*, books 1-5

Lecture 10 - 11/07/19

Aeneid I
Aeneid II

Class 11: Roman Myth and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Our consideration of Vergil's tale closes with his trip to the underworld in book 6. Next, we turn to a more playful Roman poet, Ovid, whose genius is apparent in nearly every kind of register. Profound, witty, and satiric all at once, Ovid's powerful re-tellings of many ancient myths became the versions that are most familiar to us today. Finally, through the lens of the Romans and others who "remythologize," we wrap up the course with a retrospective look at myth.

Readings: Vergil, *Aeneid*, book 6; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, books 3, 12, and 13.

Lecture 11 - 11/14/19

Aeneid III (myths of the Underworld); **QUIZ #2**
Myths in Ovid

Class 12: Folktale and Myth

You may wonder why we devote a week on fairy tales in a mythology course. It turns out that fairy tales and myths are related in a few ways. It has been suggested that myths reveal the fundamental nature of the human mind. Freud and Jung found that similar elements occur in dreams too. If fairy tales are related to dreams, these stories may represent, like myths, something that is essential to what it is to be human. They share many characteristics with myth.

Readings: watch the film *The Wizard of Oz*

Lecture 12 - 11/21/19

Folktales and Vladimir Propp; the meaning of
The Wizard of Oz (Proppian analysis)
Final remarks

Final Exam: 12/12/2019

5:30pm – 7:30pm

Required texts (available from the bookstore)

These translations are strongly recommended. They are a pleasure to read, and we'll be using the pagination systems in these books for reference. Not having them will be somewhere between a minor and a major annoyance. Books are available for purchase at UM Bookstore and on the Internet.

- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Robert Fagles, trans. (New York: Penguin, 1997 or 2006). ISBN 10: 0140268863 / ISBN 13: 9780140268867
- *Homeric Hymns*, Sarah Ruden, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005) ISBN 10: 0872207269 / ISBN 13: 9780872207264

- Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days*, M. L. West, trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988 or 2009) ISBN 10: 019953831X / ISBN 13: 9780199538317
- *Greek Tragedies, Volume 1*, ed. by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, third edition) ISBN 10: 022603528X / ISBN 13: 978-0226035284
- *Greek Tragedies, Volume 3*, ed. by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, third edition) ISBN 10: 022603593X / ISBN 13: 978-0226035932
- *Euripides I: Alcestis, Medea, The Children of Heracles, Hippolytus (The Complete Greek Tragedies)* ed. by Mark Griffith, David Grene, Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, third edition) ISBN 10: 0226308804 / ISBN 13: 978-0226308807
- Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Robert Fitzgerald, trans. (New York: Vintage, 1990) ISBN 13: 978-0679729525
- Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, David Raeburn, trans. (New York: Penguin, 2004) ISBN 13: 978-0140447897
- Other materials will be uploaded on E-Learn (see folder "Readings")

Online resources (free)

- www.theoi.com
- <http://www.maicar.com/GML/>

Iphone/ipod apps (optional)

Mythology Greek - Ancient Greek Mythology

Myth Glossary - Roman Mythology

Roman Gods - Greek Gods



Course requirements

Attendance

Regular participation and prompt attendance are required. If a student misses more than two classes without an excuse or is consistently unprepared for class, his/her grade will be significantly affected.

Quizzes CANNOT be made up. Make-up exams will only be given if a medical or family emergency arises, and the Dean of Students office notifies me.

Grades

Final grades will be weighted as follows:

- Attendance and participation 25%
- Quizzes and assignments 25%
- Midterm exam 25%
- Final exam 25%

Grading Scale

	A 94–99	A- 90–93
B+ 87–89	B 84–86	B- 80–83
C+ 77–79	C 74–76	C- 70–73
D+ 67–69	D 64–66	D- 60–63
	F 59 and below	

Exam dates

Quiz #1 Lecture 4 (09/19/19)

Quiz #2 Lecture 11 (11/14/19)

Mid-term exam: Lecture 7 (10/10/19)

Final Exam: 12/12/2019 - from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Plagiarism

Academic dishonesty of any kind is not tolerated at the University of Memphis. The penalties for plagiarism and other forms of academic fraud are severe. The University expects you to resist the temptations and pressures that may lead you to consider plagiarism or other forms of cheating. If you are not certain about what constitutes plagiarism, ask your instructors. But the responsibility of avoiding plagiarism is ultimately yours, and yours alone.

Academic Misconduct

The purpose of a university education is to learn. Cheating, plagiarizing, and other acts of dishonesty do not contribute to learning. They are, rather, attempts to avoid learning that defeat the very purpose of education. They are rightly regarded as both unethical and illegal under the academic standards of the University of Memphis.

For more details about the University policies please refer to:

http://www.memphis.edu/history/misconduct_policy.htm

Student Disability Services

Any student who may need class or test accommodations based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to speak with me privately to discuss your specific needs. Students with disabilities should also contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at 110 Wilder Tower, 678-2880. SDS coordinates accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Cell phone and laptop use is prohibited in class.



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