Humanities 140: Mythology
HUM140 Section 1 (21873)
MW: 11:00-11:50
PG-153
Spring 2018

Instructor
Mr. J.A. Smith
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Office Hours MW 12:00-1:00, by appt.
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Texts

Required Texts
Richard Wagner. The Ring of Nibelung (A. Porter, trans.). Norton. 0-393-00867-3

We start reading from Golden Legend in the third week of class. The other two books are used in the middle and end of the semester. That gives you time to order your books on line if you find good deals out there.

Course Description and Objectives

Official Course Catalogue Description:
Comparative themes and figures from various mythologies of the world. Interpretation of myths; their influence on art, culture, and history.

Description and Statement of Objectives for this course

This course will comprise a set of introductory lectures on mythology, ostensibly world mythology, delivered from the perspective of the “Humanities.” These will be introductory lectures, yet the true subject of these lectures, as you will discover, will cause us to focus particularly upon a set of stories that are predominantly European: our stories will come from the Greeks and Romans, the Celts and Germans, the Scandinavians, not to omit the early Assyrians, Persians, Hittites, Egyptians. This course will not attempt to be a vast survey of world mythology. Rather, we’ll pursue a particular theme in mythology that will allow us to explore in detail the mythological implications of a focused set of stories. We’ll explore variations on that theme from a variety of cultures and we’ll observe the theme transforming over time as stories are adopted, assimilated, and passed on by new people.

for this class, I always hope to show students that, if you choose your theme wisely, you can use mythology to help answer some interesting questions not only about the purposes and uses of mythology for other peoples in other places and times, but about how myth surfaces in your own world view, here and now. I hope to show you that, whether you realize it or not, you go through life thinking mythically. I’ll show how that works by helping you articulate for yourself all that can be understood in the word, mythology. And I’ll do that by sharing with you some very interesting stories.

But wait! There’s more!

These lectures will treat mythology by unpacking myths from a set of literary classics selected from over a very broad period of European history. We’ll survey, as we progress through the course, differing ways in which the predominant literature of various periods in European history incorporated and used myths. Our final “text,” a classic bit of cinema, will even allow us to consider how our own mass media regularly package and convey myths. And so we shall study not only the “what” of story-telling but the “how.” At no extra cost, the course will expose the student to some major contemporary theoretical approaches to mythology.

**SDSU’s GE Pledge to you:**

“This course is one of nine courses that you will take in General Education Foundations. Foundations courses cultivate skills in reading, writing, research, communication, computation, information literacy, and use of technology. They furthermore introduce you to basic concepts, theories and approaches in a variety of disciplines in order to provide the intellectual breadth necessary to help you integrate the more specialized knowledge gathered in your major area of study into a broader world picture.”

“This course is one of four Foundations courses that you will take in the area of Humanities and Fine Arts. Upon completing of this area of Foundations, you will be able to: 1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments; 2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures; 3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance; 4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.”

Here’s some of what we’ll do in this class to show that we have succeeded in those four goals:

1) define mythology and then read literature from diverse cultures and times and appraise their systems of mythology.

2) interpret how myth translates into narratives in different media (poetry, prose, opera, film)
3) compare the pantheons of deities from various cultures to derive difference and identify universal similarities

4) assemble analogous cultural items in our own society that prove our own mythological thinking today

5) argue why mythology is so persistent, pervasive, and yet so unapparent in European culture

We’ll do all of this through lectures in class, and you’ll demonstrate your mastery of those course objectives through multiple and regular Bb exercises and through three examinations.

3 Units = 3 Lecture Hours Per Week

Two of the weekly lecture hours for this course happen face to face in the lecture hall on Mondays and Wednesdays. And one hour per week happens via “podcast.” Sometimes these podcasts are just me lecturing to you, sometimes these “podcasts” are movie features I want you to watch. I try to set these podcasts up so they’re available to you on Friday morning each week, just as though you were attending Friday lecture. These podcasts are linked to the University streaming server and they’re by and large about a Gigabyte of data to download. To succeed in this class, you’ve got to have access to these audio-visual materials no less than you have access to Bb. Make sure you’re set up with a computer that can show you .mpeg movies (.mp4 and .m4v format) and that you have a fast enough connection to the internet to make your podcast-watching smooth and enjoyable.

The content of these podcasts are exactly equivalent to in class lectures: I test on the content of this “distance content.” You are responsible to take notes on podcasts in a timely manner. You’ll hear me reference in class content on the podcast and vice versa.

The podcasts in no way substitute for Monday/Wednesday lecture content and vice versa.

Method of Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation of the student’s progress toward our course objectives will involve two midterms (on Mondays of the sixth and eleventh week of the class), a final, and some periodic (and short) reading quizzes. The midterms will be short answer responses which require the student to identify divinities, persons, concepts, places, etc., mentioned in lecture (and podcast) as well as identification of key passages from nightly reading assignments. The final will be in the same format, covering material for the final third of the course. The second midterm will be given more weight in the grade-book than the first midterm, and the final will be given more weight than the second midterm. Thus, your chances of improving your grade as you improve your test taking technique are optimized. Reading quizzes will be given at Bb: make sure you have easy access to the
web for this course.

Given that the overwhelming abundance of material on the midterms and final will be taken directly from the content of daily reading and lectures, success in the class depends on your daily attendance and copious note taking.

I leave supplementary materials, and helpful “links” for you on line at Bb. Yes, I put the PowerPoints up at Bb as well.

Your Bb quizzes are all given equal weight in my gradebook. (*My gradebook, not your Bb gradebook.*) You will have about 15 Bb quizzes by the time the semester is over, and all of these contribute equally to 25% of your grade (see below). Therefore, each reading quiz is worth about 1.5% of your total course grade, and each question of each quiz is worth about 0.15% of your total grade. How much time do you think, in a class of 300 students, do you think I am able to devote to 0.15% of each student's grade? Therefore, I highly recommend that you keep taking each and every quiz till your grade is 100% (at least once). That takes care of all sorts of worries for you. Because do I look worried?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading quizzes and “response” material</th>
<th>25%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Midterm</td>
<td>(Wednesday 21 Feb.) 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Midterm</td>
<td>(Wednesday 21 March) 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Monday, May 7, 10:30a-12:30p) 30%</td>
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**Grading Scale**

A = 90%; B = 80%; C = 70%; D = 60%; F = below 60%

I apply plusses and minuses to grades in the top and bottom 2% of each grade range.

**How to Communicate with me**

There are scores of students enrolled in this course. There's one of me. Students usually send me emails to ask questions about the course, ask for clarification about when things are due, complain to me that something isn’t working on Blackboard. I get dozens of emails like that some days. I can’t possibly find the time to write back to most the queries I get. Here’s what I do instead: I post announcements at Bb, I make announcements in class, and I occasionally find the time to write you back an email to say thanks for alerting me to a problem.

For matters that have to do with your own grade or standing in the class, email is the wrong format and ineffective. If you need to have problems taken care of with your grade as you see it in Bb, that requires you to come see me face to face: either before class (during office hours) or at the end of class. If your problem can’t be taken care of in 2-5 minutes, schedule an appointment with me and we’ll meet, or I’ll give you specific instructions on what to email to me.
In any email to me, use this format:

“Joe:

I am a student in your 11:00am HUM 140 Myth class. My RedID is XXXXXXXX. On Monday, Jan 27 I was taking the reading quiz (due Jan. 27) and the question said, “What is the Cave of Wonders real name?” I wrote “Cave of Dreams” but got no credit. I am wrong? Thanks. See you Wednesday!

The All-New Student Disability Services Blurb

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Intellectual Properties

I own the class and reserve rights to all intellectual property I haven’t stolen from others. You must ask me for permission to record the class (which I grant you strictly for purposes of course review). Ask my permission to bring any guests to class. Ownership of the class includes the specific right to monitor and adjust course content (namely the reading schedule) to aide student progress toward the course objective.