

Classical Mythology
HNR 300 — Junior Seminar, 3 credit hours
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Frederik Meijer Honors College
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General Description:

This course examines ancient Greek and Roman myths in their cultural and historical contexts, to explore their cultural relevance then and now. Myths are an attempt to order and understand human experience, grounded in a particular time and place, and mutable to new circumstance. We study myth as a product of a particular culture, but also as a product of human insight and exploration of our common human situation. These myths continue to influence modern literature and thought; through their study, we can better understand our own past and present. Classes consist of discussion, acting, writing, and lecture. Enrollment: 15-20.

Texts:

Hesiod, *Works & Days, Theogony*, trans. S. Lombardo (Hackett, 1993).
The Homeric Hymns, trans. D. Rayor (California, 2004).
Euripides, *Alcestis, Medea, Hippolytus*, trans. D. Svarlien (Hackett, 2007).
Euripides, *Bacchae*, trans. S. Esposito (Focus, 1998).
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. C. Martin (Norton, 2004).
Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. P. Walsh (Oxford, 1995).

Schedule

Week 1

Sept. 1 **Introduction to the course, myth theory, comparative mythology;**
 Working together/competition: Hesiod's *Works & Days* pp. 23-24.
3 **Creation:** Hesiod's *Theogony* (all), Ovid's *Metamorphoses* pp.15-18;
 Ages of Men: Hesiod's *Works & Days* pp.26-29, Ovid pp.18-21;
 Flood: Ovid pp.21-33.

Week 2

8 LABOR DAY RECESS
10 **Gods:** *Homeric Hymns* pp.86-103;
 Prometheus & Pandora: *Theogony* pp. 75-78 and *Works & Days* pp.24-25;
 Hesiod's *Works & Days* pp.30-35 (skim the rest).

Week 3

15 **Tricksters & Marxist theory:** *Hymns* Hermes #4, Ovid pp. 79-80.
17 **The Great Goddess in Mesopotamia:** *Hymns* Aphrodite #5,
 Ovid pp. 347 Ganymede. Electronic Blackboard (BB): Sappho's "Hymn to
 Aphrodite" (trans. D. Rayor, *Sappho's Lyre*, 1991) & Tennyson's "Tithonus."

Week 4

22 **Introduction to Athenian Tragedy & Xenia (Hospitality):** Euripides' *Alcestis*.

- 24 **Psychoanalytical theory:** Apuleius' "Cupid and Psyche."
- Week 5**
- 29 **#1 Analytical Essay Due. Lecture: Mystery Cults and the Afterlife.**
 Oct. 1 **Marriage with Death:** *Hymns* Demeter;
 Ovid pp.174-85 "Rape of Proserpina".
- Week 6**
- 6 **Prophecy:** *Hymns* Apollo #3; slide show on Delphi.
 8 **Healing:** *Hymns* Asclepius #16, Ovid pp. Coronis 73-79.
 Bring a dream to class.
- Week 7**
- 13 Meet in Library classroom 305: using databases for research paper.
 15 **Dionysos:** Euripides' *Bacchae*,
Hymns Dionysos #1, 7, 26;
 Ovid pp. 91-95, 100-103, 111-119.
- Week 8**
- 20 **Myth & Historical context (Peloponnesian War):** Euripides' *Medea*.
 22 Ovid pp. 223-42 Jason and Medea.
- Week 9**
- 27 **Feminist theory—girl/object:** Ovid pp. 33-38 Daphne, 350-2 Pygmalion.
 29 **Queer theory—gender bending:** Ovid pp. 331-337 Iphis & Ianthe.
Service Learning preparation.
- Week 10**
- Nov. 3 **#2 Comparative Mythology Research Paper Due.** Presentations of research.
Service Learning Mythology Workshop in High School (Group 1)
 5 **Orphism:** Ovid pp. 341-5, 369-72: Orpheus.
Service Learning Mythology Workshop in High School (Group 2)
Service Learning Mythology Workshop, Grades 4-10 (Group 3)
 Saturday
- Week 11**
- 10 **Forbidden sights:** Ovid pp. 95-100 Actaeon.
 12 **Service Learning Portfolio Due.**
 Ovid pp. 103-111 Tiresias, Narcissus and Echo.
- Week 12**
- 17 **Heracles:** Ovid pp. 303-317 Hercules.
 19 **Centaurs & Amazons:** Ovid pp. 416-7.
- Week 13**
- 24 **Theseus:** Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Ovid pp.537-40.
 26 THANKSGIVING

Week 14

- Dec. 1 **Minoan Tales:** Ovid pp. 269-72 Ariadne, Minotaur, Daedalus & Icarus.
3 Ovid pp. 45-64: Phaethon.
In-class reading from Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*.

Week 15

- 8 Storytelling of favorite myths in Ovid left unassigned.
10 Mythopoetics Project Workshop.

Final Exam Culminating Experience:

Mythopoetics Projects Due; Presentations of five-minute excerpts.

Grading policies:

Analytical Essay (25%)

Comparative Research Paper with Presentation (30%)

Service Learning Project & Portfolio (15%)

Mythopoetics Creative Project with Presentation (20%)

Participation (10%)

1. Participation includes in-class writing, group discussion and activities.
2. The first paper may be revised and resubmitted within a week of being returned.
3. The service learning project involves structured engagement with students in three different school districts. There is a choice of 3 times/dates.
4. The mythopoetics project is an interpretation, analysis, and recreation of myth making, using three myths from the course as a basis for creating a mythopoetics. In approximately 10 pages, students develop interpretations, complete stories, explore and create meaning, strive to make order out of chaos, and put old wine into new bottles. The whole piece should be connected through poetry or essay. The project can be more or less unified, with more or less "creative" writing (poetry or stories), but it must have a point developed through a coherent structure, support, and conclusion. Each student presents to the class a brief excerpt of the project.

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