

ENG 2073.51: MYTHOLOGY

Contact Information for Dr. Cole

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Course Description

During this semester, we will investigate the ways how myth shapes, creates, and perpetuates culture. Our journey through Mythology will take us across continents and through time as we explore the stories that humans have told to understand the marvels of this world. When you think of mythology, you might first think of ancient Greek gods and goddesses. While we will include some Western mythology, we will also explore the myths from Asia, Australia, Africa, and the Americas. Every culture tells stories, even our own.

Our job will be to look at a selection of these myths from different times and different places in order to wrestle with questions such as: What can a myths tell us about the values and beliefs of the people who tell and listen to those stories? Do myths reflect or shape a culture? What are some similarities that myths produced by different cultures share with each other? How have myths been “used” by societies? And, perhaps the most interesting question: What are our modern myths and what do they tell us about ourselves?

This course will be necessarily fast-paced: we are attempting to cover several thousand years of myths from around the world in only fourteen weeks. As a result, this course also requires a heavy amount of reading and writing. It is your responsibility to keep up with the readings and the written assignments. This is a whistle-stop tour of World Mythology and you don't want to be left behind!

TAKE NOTE: Because myths often comprise foundational texts, many of the works we will read are considered sacred. As a result, we will be examining sacred texts from many cultures and religions. If you feel you cannot read and be open to analyzing such texts as literature, you should consider taking another course.

Course Aims and Objectives

This course aims:

- Correctly recognize/define/utilize literary terms appropriate for the study of mythology.
- Clearly explain key characteristics of historical periods, genres and/or texts introduced in the course.
- Effectively compare/contrast myths from different cultural systems and historical periods.
- Recognize and clearly explain the influence of cultural and historical contexts on the creation of myth and art.
- Perform a well-supported close reading of a literary text.
- Make original, supported observations about texts (i.e. do more than repeat the lecture/discussion).
- Understand the key theoretical approaches to the study of mythology.

In order for me to evaluate your progress with these course outcomes, you can expect to receive quizzes, discussion questions on Blackboard and in your online journal, and unit writing assignments.

Required Texts

Powell, Barry B. *World Myth*. New York, NY: Pearson, 2014. ISBN: 9780205730520 (WM on Course Schedule)

Segal, Robert A. *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-0198724704 (VSI on Course Schedule)

You will also need access to the following:

- Internet access;
- University e-mail access.

A few readings are not included *World Myth*, so websites or PDFs of those texts will be provided in the Course Schedule and on Blackboard. Be sure you read the stories on those sites and NOT in other books you may own!

Assignments and Grading

Your grade will be calculated according to a 1000 points system.

Writing Assignments (45%)

- Unit 1 (70 points; 750-1000 words): Due in Week 3.
- Unit 2 (70 points; 750-1000 words): Due in Week 5.
- Unit 3 (75 points; 750-1000 words): Due in Week 8.
- Unit 4 (75 points; 750-1000 words): Due in Week 10.
- Unit 5 (80 points; 750-1000 words): Due in Week 12.
- Unit 6 (80 points; 750-1000 words): Due in Week 16.

Unit Tests (30%)

- Test 1: Units 1-2 (100 points): Week 5
- Test 2: Units 3-4 (100 points): Week 10
- Test 3: Units 5-6 (100 points): Week 16

Other Assignments (25%)

- Reading journal (75 points): Each week will have a set question requiring a written response.
- Reading quizzes (75 points): Each week will have a reading quiz worth 5 points each.
- Participation (100 points): Each week will have discussion board questions related to the journal questions.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance Policy

Note that you will be graded for participation and not attendance. This is because we do not have a physical class in which you can be “present” at a certain time. Instead, you will be graded on participation. You do not participate merely by posting a couple of sentences on Blackboard. Participation means engaging with the class and contributing to discussion. I will have more guidelines for Blackboard Discussions below.

Communication Policy

Communication is key in any course, but especially so in an online course. Please feel free to contact me with questions about the course. You can e-mail me at any time, but please keep the following in mind:

- I will hold “virtual office hours” on Mondays and Wednesdays at 12.00-1.00 PM. I am guaranteed -- unless otherwise noted in the case of an emergency -- to be at the computer during these times. I will answer your e-mails and will be on Blackboard IM.
- If you want to talk on Blackboard IM but are unavailable during my office hours, e-mail me and we can arrange an alternate time.

As a rule, I try to respond to e-mails within 48 hours. If I haven't responded by that time, you may e-mail me again with a reminder e-mail. **If your question or request is time sensitive, then please note this in the subject line.**

Please practice professionalism in your e-mails. This means including a greeting and sign-off, referring to me as Dr. Cole, and including your name and course number.

Note: I will not reply to e-mails after 7.00 PM during the week and not at all on Sundays.

Participation Requirements

Participating in an online course is rather different from how you would participate in a face-to-face classroom. You might think that literature would be an easy course to do online -- all you have to do is stay on top of the reading, right?

Not quite. This IS a reading intensive course, but as scholars of literature we don't learn much by reading in isolation. It is just as important to discuss what we are reading with your peers and with me as it is for you to keep up with the texts.

This is why you have required discussion questions each week. You can post your responses and read those of your classmates' in the discussion forums. You can also reply to each other (in fact, that's part of the discussion assignment. More on that below.). You may also start your own threads in each unit's discussion forum if you have other questions or topics you'd like to talk about that I hadn't posted.

What are the participation requirements, then?

- To stay on top of the reading for each week;
- To post regularly on the discussion boards;
- To keep up with your personal journal.

Discussion Boards

In order to make the discussion forums more manageable, I have randomly divided the class into four discussion groups. Each group has about six people in it, so instead of trying to stay on top of twenty-four people's posts, you only have to keep up with the posts written by the five other members in your group. To find your group, go to "My Groups" on the bottom of the left navigation menu.

There will be discussion questions about the readings for each week. Responses to forum discussion questions must be posted by 11.59 PM on Thursday of each week. **In order to receive**

full credit you need to respond to a question that I have posted and also reply or comment on TWO of your peers' responses.

- Your initial response to the discussion question should be at least 300 words.
- Your responses to your peers should be at least 150 words.
- Sign all of your posts with your full name.

Keep in mind that “basic” responses and using the minimum word count will result in “basic” grades. Your initial response should include significant analysis discussing all of the assigned texts. The responses to other students should actually engage with what they have written, either adding to or analyzing further what the student has written. When replying, try to engage deeply (instead of superficially) with the position you are responding to. **Simple responses such as “I agree,” one-sentence responses, or copies of the same response posted to multiple people even with a few words changed will not be graded.**

Netiquette

Remember that when you post on the discussion board, you are interacting with real people. It is easy to dash something off quickly from the comfort of our homes without really thinking about how someone might react when they read what we’ve written. So, while we **DO** want open, intellectual, and vigorous discussion, avoid “rudeness” or “ugliness.” Pay attention to your tone and practice diplomacy. Use emoticons when you need to help convey tone. Note that I do not allow students to delete postings. (In truly extraordinary circumstances I will consider deleting a post. Anyone who believes a posting should be deleted should e-mail me.)

Writing Assignments

Each unit has a writing assignment that is due on the last Friday of the unit (see the course schedule for due dates). This essay is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your close reading and analytical skills. **Each essay needs to do TWO things:**

- Include a close reading of one (or two) myths read in that unit;
- Include an analysis and interpretation of that myth (or myths) using one of the theories we covered in that unit.

The writing assignments will be submitted via Blackboard **only**. Do NOT e-mail me your essay as an attachment. **The essay should be:**

- No fewer than 750 words and no more than 1000 words (points will be deducted if the essay goes over or under the word limits);
- Written in Times New Roman font, size 12;
- Have 1-inch margins on all four sides.
- Include a Works Cited and use MLA citation styles.

If you have trouble submitting the assignment on Blackboard, e-mail me **well before** the deadline so that I can help you.

Quizzes and Tests

***If you wait until the end of the week to take quizzes and exams and you have computer problems, you will be out of luck and no extra time will be given to you to complete them. Only the quizzes and exams that are submitted in Blackboard will be graded. So, to ensure**

you have the chance to have a quiz or exam re-set if you run in to computer problems, you need to take them before noon on Saturdays.

All quizzes will be 10 multiple-choice questions covering the reading assigned for that week. The best way to study for these is to read the assigned readings carefully and to fully engage in the journal and discussion board questions.

All exams will contain two parts.

- The first part will be multiple choice questions based on the quizzes; no books are allowed for this part.
- The second part will be an essay, for which you must use your books.

You will be allowed 30 minutes for the first part and 2 hours for the essay part for each exam. Read and follow the directions carefully, especially on the essay part.

Note that as soon as you open each part of the exam, the timer starts and runs until you click the submit button. While Blackboard may say that you can save and come back later to complete the exam, this is NOT true; if you save and leave, the test will not let you back in, so you must be prepared to complete the entire part of the exam when you open it.

Tips:

- Use the most reliable computer and connection available to you.
- Do not take a Blackboard test using a dial-up connection. If necessary, take the test from a secure computer on campus, from your local public library, or from a friend's secure and reliable computer.
- Turn off your pop-up blocker (if you have one).
- Be sure to have "cookies" enabled.
- Do not have multiple windows open. Do not play music through your computer while taking a test. Close everything else and just open the test window.
- Do not attempt to multitask in any way while taking a test.
- Don't use AOL browsers to take a Blackboard test.
- Click on the link for a test only when you're ready to take it; back-outs aren't allowed and retakes aren't possible.
- Click on the link for a test only once; do not double click.
- Do not try to print or copy the test as this could interfere with your browser connection and cause you to be locked out.

Time Expectations

Due to the nature of survey courses, you will be required to keep up with the readings and assignments for each week. The reading you will do on your own; however, I do have a few expectations:

- Responses to journal questions will be posted on your personal blog by 11.59 PM on Tuesday of each week;
- Initial responses or replies to discussion questions in the forums will be posted by 11.59 PM on Thursday of each week.
- Replies to two of your peers' responses in the discussion forums must be posted by 11.59 PM on Friday of each week.

Late Work

As a rule, I do *not* accept late assignments. **If you know you will be out of town or without Internet access on the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to turn that assignment in on or before the due date.** I may accept a late assignment, but only in extremely extraordinary circumstances and with prior approval.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES**Disability Support Policy Statement**

If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the office of Disability Support Services (CFO 106, 940-898-3835, dss@twu.edu) in order to obtain the required official notification of your accommodation needs. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss approved accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Academic Dishonesty

In submitting graded assignments, you are affirming that you have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance and that **you are submitting original work** (that is, brand-new writing that you have not used in any other class).

Honesty in completing assignments is essential to the mission of the University and to the development of the personal integrity of the student. In submitting graded assignments, students affirm that they have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance, and that they have abided by all other provisions of the Code of Conduct in the TWU Student Handbook. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or other kinds of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in appropriate sanctions that may include failing an assignment, failing the class, or being suspended or expelled. Suspected cases in this course may be reported to Student Life. The specific disciplinary process for academic dishonesty is found in the TWU Student Handbook. The TWU library link, "Avoiding Plagiarism," will aid students in completing their assignments with integrity.

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE

What follows is a skeletal outline of reading and writing assignments for the semester. This calendar is subject to change.

* refers to texts that I will provide in addition to the texts available in the WM and VSI.

Unit 1: Introduction & Beginnings**Week 1: Introduction: What is Myth?**

Readings: VSI, Introduction, pp. 1-9
 WM, Ch. 1, "The Nature of Myth," pp. 1-12
 "What is myth?" from *A Short History of Myth*, Karen Armstrong.*
 pp. 41-58, *Ishmael*, Daniel Quinn. *

Week 2: Creation

Readings: VSI, Chapter 1, "Myth and science," pp. 10-21
 WM: pp. 17-24, *The Akkadian epic of creation*, Babylonian
 pp. 69-73, *Creation by Atum*, Egyptian
 pp. 73-80, *Creation in Memphis*, Egyptian
 pp. 157-165 *The creation of the world*, Greek
 pp. 229-232, *Brahma creates the world*, Indian
 pp. 304-306, *Japanese creation of the world*, Japanese
 pp. 306-307, *Origin of the Japanese islands*, Japanese

Week 3: Creation

Readings: VSI, Chapter 1, "Myth and science," pp. 21-29
 WM: pp. 368-370, *Poetic Edda: The creation of the world*
 pp. 406-407, *Popol Vuh: The Maya creation of the world*
 pp. 407-409, *Popol Vuh: The creation of the humans*, Mayan
 pp. 441-445, *Polynesian creation myths*, Polynesian
 pp. 445-446, *The Polynesian creation of humans*, Polynesian
 pp. 451-452, *Maui raises the sky*, Polynesian
 pp. 455-456, *The origin of man*, Melanesian
 pp. 457, *The origin of the races*, Melanesian
 pp. 469-470, *The Australian origin of humankind*
 pp. 470-471, *The origin of the moon*, Australasian
 pp. 478-484, *Hopi creation*, American Indian
 pp. 514-521, *Creation in Uganda*, African

Unit 1 Writing Assignment due 11.59 PM on Monday, Feb. 8th.

Unit 2: Culture & Belief

Week 1: Heaven, Hell, and Flood

- Readings: VSI, Chapter 2, "Myth and philosophy," pp. 30-35
WM: pp. 35-39, "The Great Flood," Babylonian
pp. 80-83, "Tale of the shipwrecked sailor," Egyptian
pp. 83-86, "The destruction of humankind," Egyptian
pp. 315-19, "The jeweled branch from paradise," Japanese
pp. 326-29, "The celestial robe of feathers," Japanese
pp. 378-79, "The world renewed," Scandinavian
pp. 487-88, "Sedna, mistress of the underworld," Inuit
pp. 502-504, "The girls enticed to the sky," American Indian
pp. 533-36, "The disobedient daughter who married a skull," African

Week 1: Death and Fire

- Readings: VSI, Chapter 3, "Myth and religion," pp. 36-42
WM: pp. 33-35, "The descent of Ishtar," Babylonian
pp. 250-54, "How Rama rejected Sita," Indian
pp. 433-34, "The journey to Tlapallan," Aztec
pp. 449-51, "Maui goes in quest of fire," Polynesian
pp. 457-58, "The Melanesian origin of fire," Melanesian
p. 471, "The Australasian origin of fire," Australasian
pp. 484-87, "Raven, bringer of abundance," American Indian
pp. 488-89, "The release of the wile animals," American Indian
pp. 509-11, "Cherokee origin of fire," American Indian
pp. 542-45, "Nyikang and the sun," African

Test #1 due 11.59 PM on Sunday, Feb. 21.

Unit 2 Writing Assignment due 11.59 PM on Monday, Feb. 22.

Units 3-6 TBA.