Texas A&M University

Core Curriculum

Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Language, Philosophy and Culture

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Language, Philosophy and Culture. Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.

The proposed course must contain all elements of the Foundational Component Area. How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

The course (CLAS/RELS 25: Classical Mythology) examines the mythological traditions of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, beginning with the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations of the Greek Bronze Age and extending through the reception of Classical Mythology in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Modern era. A particular focus of this class is the way in which myths were re-interpreted in accordance with the belief systems of different periods. Thus, we will not only read Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, we will examine how the poems were re-interpreted in Antiquity through the lens of physical and moral allegory in order to defend Homer from the charges leveled against him by rationalist critics, and we will see how Christian monks and clerics credited the mythological traditions of Pagan Antiquity with concealing timeless truths beneath a veneer of falsehood. We will pay particular attention to the mentality and world-view of the ancient civilizations that produced these myths and to the way that historical, cultural, and religious considerations affected the way in which they were interpreted.

Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

The proposed course is required to contain each element of the Core Objective.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

This course enhances critical thinking by asking students to read, understand, and analyze ancient myths within the cultural context of the societies that produced them, and to evaluate the different ways that the same myths have been interpreted by later cultures (e.g., Christian moral allegory, euhemerism, Myth-and-Ritual theory). Student development of critical thinking is evaluated through written exams.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

This course enhances communications skills by requiring students to discuss assigned readings in class (oral) and answer questions about them on exams (written). It enhances understanding of visual communication by asking students to consider how literary and iconographic evidence for Greek and Roman myth and religion complement one another and enhance our understanding of these traditions.
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Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

This course enhances social responsibility by helping students to cultivate an appreciation for the different belief systems of ancient societies and asking them to consider why ways of thinking that are alien (and sometimes offensive) to us were prevalent in Antiquity. Students will demonstrate their engagement with these questions through discussion and written exams.

Personal Responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making):

This course enhances personal responsibility by giving students the opportunity to reflect on topics conducive to reflection and personal growth, including (but not limited to): religious pluralism and the conditions in which it can exist, the role of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in society, and the ways in which the study of ancient cultures and their alien belief systems help to put our own beliefs into sharper perspective. Students' reflection on these questions is demonstrated through class discussion and written exams.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.