CLAS 251/RELS 251-500: Classical Mythology

TR 2:20-3:35 CHEM 100

Professor: Justin Lake
Office: Academic Building 330A
Hours: Thursday 11:30-12:30 and by appointment
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Scope of the course and goals: This course will examine the canonical stories of the Greek and Roman mythological tradition, paying special attention to the social and historical context in which these myths developed and attained literary form. Topics to be considered include: ancient and modern theories of myth, creation narratives (Greek and Near-Eastern), the Olympians and the practice of religion in ancient Greece, Greek heroes and hero-cults, Homer, the Athenian Tragedians, the Roman adaptation of Greek myth, and the coming of Christianity.

Learning Outcomes: After taking this course students will be able to:

1) Enumerate and discuss the most important literary sources for Greek and Roman mythology.
2) Contrast the various approaches taken towards Greek and Roman myths by ancient and modern commentators (e.g., allegory, euhemerism, Myth and Ritual theory).
3) Describe and discuss major literary works of Classical Antiquity, including Hesiod’s Theogony, Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, Aeschylus’s Oresteia, Sophocles’s Oedipus Rex, Euripides’s Medea, Hippolytus, and Trojan Women, and Virgil’s Aeneid.

Core Objectives:

Critical Thinking: Students enhance their critical thinking skills by reading ancient myths within the cultural context of the societies that produced them and learning different interpretive strategies (e.g., Christian moral allegory, euhemerism, Myth-and-Ritual theory).

Communication: Students develop their communications skills through class discussion of assigned readings and written work on exams. To develop visual communications skills students consider how literary and iconographic evidence for Greek and Roman myth and religion complement one another and enhance our understanding of these traditions.

Social Responsibility: Students learn to cultivate an appreciation for the different belief systems of ancient societies and to consider why ways of thinking that are alien (and sometimes offensive) to us were so prevalent in Antiquity.

Personal Responsibility: Students cultivate personal responsibility by reflecting on topics conducive to 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.

Prerequisite: None

Required Texts:

Stephen Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, and Stephen Brunet, eds., Anthology Of Classical Myth: Primary Sources in Translation [Abbreviated as ACM]
Diane Amson Svalrien, trans., Euripides: Alcestis, Medea, Hippolytus (Hackett)

Robert Fagles, trans., The Iliad (Penguin Classics, 1998)

Robert Fagles, trans., The Odyssey (Penguin Classics, 1999)

Robert Fagles, trans., The Oresteia (Penguin Classics)

NB: All three exams will require extensive passage identification; all passages will be drawn from the editions cited above. You are welcome to use alternative translations of the key texts. This should not pose a problem when it comes to identifying passages, but be aware that the translations will look different.

**Grading:** Your grade will be calculated according to the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First exam:</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam:</td>
<td>40%</td>
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* Please note that there will be no opportunity for extra credit.

**Grading Scale:** A = 100-90   B = 89-80   C = 79-70   D = 69-60   F = below 60

**Attendance and Preparation:** Regular attendance is a prerequisite for success in this class, but attendance will not be taken. Questions on the Exams will be drawn from both the lectures and from the readings, so it is imperative that you read the assigned material thoroughly and take notes in class. I will post the Power Point slides for the lectures on the course website prior to each lecture. The slides are intended to provide a framework for taking notes and to help you study for exams, but they are not a substitute for attending class.

**Absences:** Regular attendance is necessary to succeed in this class, as a significant portion of the material on the Mid-Term and Final Examinations will be taken from lectures. In the case of absences on exam days, a make-up will only be allowed if there is a university-excused absence. Please see http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm for current policy on university-excused absences. In accordance with University Student Rule 7.1.6.1, for illness- or injury-related absences of fewer than three days a note from a health care professional confirming date and time of visit will be required in order to count the absence as university-excused; for absences of three days or more, the note must also contain the medical professional’s confirmation that absence from class was necessary. In the case of an absence you are responsible for completing any missed work and obtaining notes from your fellow students.

**Academic Integrity:** "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do." You are expected to be aware of the Aggie Honor Code and the Honor Council Rules and Procedures, stated at http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/.

**Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute providing comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, B-118 Cain Hall (845-.637). For additional information, visit http://disability.tamu.edu.
SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Week 1: The Nature of Myth

(1) T Jan. 14: Introductory Lecture: What is Myth?


Week 2: Origins and Creation


Week 3: The Olympians (I)


(6) Th Jan. 30: Olympian goddesses: ACM, pp. 169-178 (Homer's Hymn to Demeter), pp. 197-203 (Homer's Hymns to Aphrodite)

Week 4: The Olympians (II)

(7) T Feb. 4: Apollo and Dionysus: ACM, pp. 178-187 (Homer's Hymn to Apollo), p. 203 (Homer's Hymn to Dionysus)

(8) Th Feb. 6: The Afterlife and the Underworld: Odyssey Book 11

Week 5: Heroes Before the Trojan War (I)

T Feb. 11: Exam # 1


Week 6: Heroes Before the Trojan War (II)


(11) Th Feb. 20: Jason and the Argonauts: ACM, pp. 25-30 (Apollodorus, Library); pp. 322-328 (Ovid's Heroides)

Week 7: Epic I: The Trojan War and the Iliad

(12) T Feb 25: Homeric Questions [Iliad Books 1, 3-4, 6]

(13) Th Feb 27: Gods and Men in the Iliad [Iliad Books 9, 11, 16]
Week 8: Epic II: *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

(14) T March 4: The Return of Achilles [*Iliad*, 18, 19, 22, 24]

(15) Th March 6: The Fall of Troy and its Aftermath/The Telemachia [*Odyssey* 1, 6-8]

(March 10-14: Spring Break)

Week 9: Epic III: The *Odyssey*

(16) T March 18: The Journey Home [H&P *Odyssey* Books 10, 12-14]

(17) Th March 20: The Revenge of Odysseus [*Odyssey* 19-23]

Week 10: Greek Tragedy I

T March 25: Exam #2

(18) Th March 27: Myth and Greek Tragedy: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

Week 11: Greek Tragedy II

(19) T April 1: The *Oresteia* [Aeschylus, *Libation-Bearers* and *Eumenides*]

(20) Th April 3: The Myth of Thebes: *Oedipus Rex* at https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/oedipustheking.htm

Week 12: Greek Tragedy III

(21) T April 8: Euripides and Gender [Euripides, *Medea* & *Hippolytus*]

(22) Th April 10: Euripides on Women and War [Euripides, *The Trojan Women*]

Week 13: Rome and the Greek Inheritance

(23) T April 15: *Aeneid* I

(24) T April 17: (33) *Aeneid* II, VI (ACM, pp. 410-430)

Week 14:

(25) Th April 21: (34) Ovid [TBA]

(26) Th April 23: Modern Interpretations of Myth [TBA]