

FALL 2022 – REL 332

Class Meetings **TR 11.00-12.35pm**

Office hours: MW 10-11 and TR 1-3 and by appointment

Instructor: Nina Papathanasopoulou

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Myth and Religion

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Myth and Religion offers an introduction to the religion and myths of the ancient Greeks, largely based upon the written words of the ancient Greek themselves. The course will study a selection of important Greek mythological stories and figures as represented in Greek literature and art, beginning with selections from the earliest extant Greek literature – Homer, Hesiod, and the Homeric Hymns, and moving on to reading selections of Greek drama. From these readings we shall attempt to understand the Greek cosmogony and the place of gods and humans within it. While studying myth, we will address Greek religion as an integral part of the ancient Greek polis. During the course students will become proficient in a variety of methods of analysis and interpretation of these myths; critically engage with select scholarship; and study the role of myth in helping individuals and communities organize their understanding of the world. Through research, writing, and daily in-class analysis, students will engage with key issues treated by the myths: these include the role of the divine, gender conflict, personal and communal identity, the consequences of war, human and divine justice, self-sacrifice, political ambition, and the societal roles of women, slaves, and foreigners. The course treats primarily the ancient material. We shall, however, also examine a selection of these myths in the visual and performing arts.

The first part of the class will consist of a combination of lecture and discussion. Students will be required to have prepared questions related to the readings and will be asked to engage in conversation concerning the myths discussed. In the second part of the class I will show slides with visual representations of the myths (on pottery, temples, tombs, etc.) and/or look at the way in which these myths have been received in modern times, and rendered into different kinds of artwork. Students will thus become familiar with many sources of these myths and gain a deeper understanding of the relevance of these myths for society today.

LEARNING GOALS

This course will primarily teach students to:

- Identify and explain the value of Greek mythology both for the ancients and for our world today.
- Use textual and material evidence to analyze Greek thought.
- Analyze and evaluate the diverse ways in which ancient authors used myths to explore problems of their time.
- Examine the way Greek myths inform our understanding of Greek religion.
- Analyze and evaluate the diverse ways in which certain modern and contemporary artists used or use myths to explore issues of their time.
- Reflect on and compare the different means of communications used to convey mythological stories and to highlight human issues.
- Recognize the influence of Classical Mythology in our world today and gain a deeper appreciation of performances, artwork, and other creative expression based on Classical myths.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Attendance, Class Contribution, and Moodle posts 25%** – Attendance at all scheduled meetings is required. Class Contribution includes physical and mental presence in the classroom, arriving on time, preparation, participation in class discussions, and posting occasionally on the moodle forum. Reading assignments are to be completed before each class session. CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately to the Student Affairs Office.
- **Midterm 20%** – Identification of passages, characters, situations, themes, symbols, and ritual practices; passage analysis; and evaluation of select myths and issues.
- **Two Written Assignments 30%** – Topics and instructions will be given in advance. 3-5 pages each.
- **Final 25%** – Identification, passage analysis, and evaluation of select myths and issues.

Class contribution is one of the most important factors for determining your grade for the semester. I expect all of you to come prepared, engage in our discussions, ask questions, and voice your opinions in class. If you are extremely uncomfortable speaking in front of a large group of students, you may send your opinions or afterthoughts in writing via email. If you never participate in class and do not send any thoughts by email, your contribution grade will be low.

Details about assignments and exams will be given in advance. I will accept no late assignments or make-up exams unless discussed with me in advance. If you are unable to come to class, please let me know beforehand.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is literary theft. As such, it is a serious offence which will not be tolerated either at your home institution or at CYA. Plagiarism on an examination or in a paper will result in an F for the course. You must cite the author of any and all ideas that you use that is neither common knowledge nor your own idea. If you are in doubt, it is safest to cite the source. (Check the Student Handbook, pg. 7).

Academic Accommodations

If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Office of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

Required Texts:

- 1) Aeschylus, *Oresteia*. Translated by Peter Meineck. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998.
- 2) Athanassakis, Apostolos N., trans. *The Homeric Hymns*. 2nd edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- 3) Burkert, Walter. *Greek religion: archaic and classical*. Translated by John Raffan. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985.
- 4) Easterling, P.E., and J.V. Muir, eds. *Greek Religion and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- 5) Homer. *The Iliad of Homer*. Translated by Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- 6) Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Emily Wilson. New York: W.W. Norton, 2018.

On Moodle: Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*; Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*; Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Electra*, Euripides' *Medea* and *Bacchae*

Tentative Schedule:

Sept. 6th – Introduction to the course; Definitions of Myth; Myth and Religion

Sept. 8th – Historical and Geographical Overview; Approaches to myth; Greek Religion; the Olympian Deities; polytheism

Reading: Burkert 216-219; John Gould "On Making Sense of Greek Religion" in Easterling: 1-33

GREEK COSMOLOGY

Sept. 13th – **Zeus** and the Divine Order; **Poseidon**; Ages of **Man** – **Greek Sanctuaries and Temples**

Reading: Hesiod, *Theogony* 1-210; 456-508; 621-969; Hesiod, *Works and Days* 1-234

Recommended: Burkert 125-31 (Zeus); 136-39 (Poseidon); Burkert 84-92; Coldstream "Greek Temples: Why and Where?" in Easterling 67-98; J-P. Vernant, "Hesiod's Myth of the Races"

Field Trip to Crete (Sept. 14-17)

Sept. 20th – **Prometheus** - **Sacrifice**

Reading: Hesiod, *Theogony* 509-620; Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*; Burkert 55-59 (sacrifice)

DATE TBA – Performance of *Prometheus Bound* at Herodeion (Odeon of Herodes Atticus) or Vrahon Theater followed by discussion with director and actors

MEET AT 8.30pm at the ticket booth

Sept. 22nd – Origins of **Women**

Reading: Hesiod, *Works and Days* 58-128; *Theogony* 573-620; Semonides 7

GREEK GODS AND GODDESSES

Sept. 23rd – NO CLASS – visit to Eleusis on Friday 9/30 instead

Sept. 27th – Sex and Virginty: **Aphrodite and Artemis**

Reading: Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite; Burkert 149-52 (Artemis) and 152-56 (Aphrodite)

Recommended: Evgenia Vikela (2008), "The Worship of Artemis in Attica: Cult Places, Rites, Iconography" in *Worshipping Women, Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens*, Onassis Foundation and Charles Segal (1974), "The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite: A Structuralist Approach"

Sept. 29th – Wisdom and War: **Athena**

Reading: *Iliad* 5.1-8; 114-143; 733-864; 22.158-305; *Odyssey* 1.1-220; 13.187-250; Burkert 139-43 (Athena)

Recommended: Panos Valavanis (2004), “The Panathenaia and Athena” in *Games and Sanctuaries in Ancient Greece*.

SITE VISIT TO ACROPOLIS AND PARTHENON - MEET AT ACROPOLIS MAIN ENTRANCE 11AM

Sept. 30th (Friday!) - Life and Death: **Demeter, Persephone, and Hades**

Reading: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*; Burkert 159-161 (Demeter); 285-290 (Eleusinian mysteries)

SITE VISIT TO THE SANCTUARY OF DEMETER AT ELEUSIS

Oct. 4th – Civilization and Transition: **Apollo and Hermes**

Reading: *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*; Burkert 114-118 (Oracles); 143-149 (Apollo); 156-159 (Hermes)

Oct. 6th – Freedom and Ritual: **Dionysus**;

Reading: Euripides, *Bacchae*; Burkert 161-167; 223-5

Oct. 11th - Theater as Healing: **Asclepius**

Recommended: Charitonidou, “Epidauros: The Sanctuary of Asklepios”

SITE VISIT TO THE THEATER OF DIONYSUS AND THE ACROPOLIS MUSEUM - MEET AT THEATER OF DIONYSUS ENTRANCE AT 11AM

Oct. 13th – **MIDTERM EXAM**

Oct. 14th - **First Written Assignment due**

MYTHS OF SOCIAL ORIGINS

Oct. 18th – The House of **Atreus** and Myths of Matriarchy – **Sacrifice and Omens**

Reading: Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* 1-1330

Oct. 20th — The House of Atreus – **Sacrifice and Libations**

Reading: Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* 1331-end; *Choephoroi*

Nov. 1st – The House of Atreus – **Avenging Spirits and Divine Justice**

Reading: Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi* and *The Furies*

Recommended: F. Zeitlin (1978) “The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth & Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*”

Nov. 3rd – The House of Atreus – **Festivals and Dreams**

Reading: Sophocles’ *Electra*

Field Trip to the Peloponnese (Nov. 8-12)

GREEK HEROES AND HEROINES

Nov. 15th – **Theseus and Heracles** – **Heroic Cults**

Reading: Apollodorus on Theseus (p.54-7) and Heracles (p.33-45); Heracles handout

Nov. 17th – **Achilles** – Semi-Divine Heroes; Superhuman Powers

Reading: *Iliad* 1, 6, 9, 16, 18-19; 21-22; Burkert 119-125 “The Spell of Homer”

Nov. 18th – **Odysseus** – Gods and Humans; Immortality; Defining Humans

Reading: *Odyssey* 5-8

Nov. 22nd – Odysseus

Reading: *Odyssey* 9-12

Nov. 24th – **Thanksgiving Break**

Nov. 29th – **Oedipus** – Miasma, Fate, Oracles, Prophecy, Hubris

Reading: Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*

Dec. 1st – Traits of a Greek Heroine; **Helen** and **Penelope**

Reading: *Iliad* 3; *Odyssey* 19, 22, 23

Dec. 6th – **Medea**

Reading: Euripides’ *Medea*

Dec. 8th – Review Session or TBA

Second Written Assignment due

Dec. 12-15, 9.30am – **FINAL EXAM**