

REL 332 Ancient Greek Mythology and Religion Spring 2024

Course Instructor(s): Nina Papathanasopoulou

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Class Times (days, hours): MW 8.45-10.20am

(Office) Hours Available: Available by appointment

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 the ancient material, as well as representations 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.

The course includes **fields trips** to the Acropolis and its museum, the Theater of Dionysus, the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis, the sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron, and the Heroes' memorial tomb at the site of Marathon. **Two of the field trips take place on a Friday and are a mandatory component of the class.**

Learning Goals

This course will primarily teach students to:

- Identify and explain the value of Greek mythology both for the ancients and 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).

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:

ALL TEXTS ARE AVAILABLE ON MOODLE:

- 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*

SPRING 2024 – MW – Tentative Schedule

Field Trip to Delphi and Olympia (Jan. 25-27)	
Jan. 29th	Introduction to the course; Definitions of Myth; Myth and Religion
Feb. 31st	Historical and Geographical Overview; Approaches to myth; Greek Religion; the Olympian Deities; polytheism Reading: Burkert 216-219; Gould "On Making Sense of Greek Religion" in Easterling: 1-33
GREEK COSMOLOGY	
Feb. 2nd	Zeus , the Divine Order; Poseidon ; Ages of Man – Greek Sanctuaries & Temples Reading: Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i> 1-210; 456-508; 621-969; Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i> 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"
Feb. 5th	Prometheus - Sacrifice Reading: Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i> 509-620; Aeschylus' <i>Prometheus Bound</i> ; Burkert 55-9 (sacrifice)
Feb. 7th	Origins of Women Reading: Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i> 58-128; <i>Theogony</i> 573-620; Semonides 7
GREEK GODS AND GODDESSES	
Feb. 9th (Friday!)	Life and Death: Demeter, Persephone, and Hades Reading: <i>Homeric Hymn to Demeter</i> ; Burkert 159-161 (Demeter); 285-290 (Eleusinian mysteries) *SITE VISIT TO THE SANCTUARY OF DEMETER AT ELEUSIS* FIELD TRIP: 8.30-12.30pm
Feb. 12th	Sex and Virginity: Aphrodite Reading: <i>Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite</i> ; Burkert 152-56 (Aphrodite) Recommended: C. Segal (1974), " <i>Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite</i> : A Structuralist Approach"
Field Trip to Peloponnese (Feb. 13-16)	
Feb. 19th	Wisdom and War: Athena Reading: <i>Iliad</i> 5.1-8; 114-43; 733-864; 22.158-305; <i>Odyssey</i> 1.1-220; 13.187-250; Burkert 139-43 (Athena) Recommended: Panos Valavanis (2004), "The Panathenaia and Athena" *SITE VISIT TO ACROPOLIS AND PARTHENON* - MEET AT ACROPOLIS MAIN ENTRANCE 8.45AM
Feb. 21st	Civilization and Transition: Apollo and Hermes Reading: <i>Homeric Hymn to Hermes</i> and <i>Homeric Hymn to Apollo</i> ; Burkert 114-118 (Oracles); 143-149 (Apollo); 156-159 (Hermes)
Feb. 26th	Freedom and Ritual: Dionysus Reading: Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i> ; Burkert 161-167; 223-5
Feb. 28th	Theater as Healing: Dionysus and Asclepius - First Written Assignment due Recommended: P. Cartledge (1997), "Deep Plays: theatre as process in Greek civic life" *SITE VISIT TO THE THEATER OF DIONYSUS AND THE ACROPOLIS MUSEUM* - MEET AT THEATER OF DIONYSUS ENTRANCE AT 8.45AM
Mar. 1st (Friday!)	Hero Cults and Tomb Cults; Artemis Reading: Burkert 149-52 (Artemis); Evgenia Vikela (2008), "The Worship of Artemis in Attica: Cult Places, Rites, Iconography", Ekroth (2010), "Heroes and Hero-Cults" * SITE VISIT TO THE SANCTUARY OF ARTEMIS AT BRAURON AND TO THE TOMB MEMORIAL AT MARATHON * - FIELD TRIP: 8.30-2.30pm
MYTHS OF SOCIAL ORIGINS	
Mar. 4th	The House of Atreus and Myths of Matriarchy – Sacrifice and Omens Reading: Aeschylus' <i>Agamemnon</i> 1-1330
Mar. 6th	MIDTERM EXAM
Mar. 11th	The House of Atreus – Sacrifice and Libations Reading: Aeschylus' <i>Agamemnon</i> 1331-end; <i>Choephoroi</i>
Mar. 13th	The House of Atreus – Avenging Spirits and Divine Justice Reading: Aeschylus' <i>Choephoroi</i> and <i>The Furies</i>

	Recommended: F. Zeitlin (1978) "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth & Mythmaking in the <i>Oresteia</i> "
GREEK HEROES AND HEROINES	
Mar. 20th	Theseus and Heracles – Heroic Cults Reading: Apollodorus on Theseus (p.54-7) and Heracles (p.33-45); Heracles handout
Mar. 27th	Achilles – Semi-Divine Heroes; Superhuman Powers Reading: <i>Iliad</i> 1, 6, 9, 16, 18-19; 21-22; Burkert 119-125 "The Spell of Homer"
Apr. 1st	Odysseus – Gods and Humans; Immortality; Defining Humans Reading: <i>Odyssey</i> 5-8
Field Trip to Northern Greece (Apr. 2-6)	
Apr. 8th	Odysseus Reading: <i>Odyssey</i> 9-12
Apr. 10th	Oedipus – Miasma, Fate, Prophecy, Hubris Reading: Sophocles' <i>Oedipus Tyrannus</i>
Apr. 15th	Traits of a Greek Heroine; Helen and Penelope Reading: <i>Iliad</i> 3; <i>Odyssey</i> 19, 22, 23
Apr. 17th	NO CLASS (Field trips to Eleusis and Brauron instead)
Apr. 22nd	Medea Reading: Euripides' <i>Medea</i>
Apr. 24th	Medea today; Contemporary Adaptations Reading: Euripides' <i>Medea</i> , Martha Graham's <i>Cave of the Heart</i> , and Cherubini's opera Apr. 25 th - Second Written Assignment due
May 8th	Review Session; Final Reflections on Myth and Religion
May 13-16th	FINAL EXAM