

LIT 327 | Ancient Tales Reborn Athens, Crete, Thebes, Mycenae, Corinth Summer Session I, 2025

Course Instructor: Dustin Dixon
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Class Times Mondays to Fridays
Office Hours Available: Before and after each class

Course Description

This course explores ancient myths that have their roots in the first millennium BCE and still capture the attention of modern audiences. We will focus especially on stories about Theseus, Ariadne, and the Minotaur and how their stories have been reimagined in works of literature and art from antiquity to today, as we study several other important ancient myths. We will discuss several questions: Is there such a thing as an "original" version of a myth? How do ancient and modern authors and artists change myths? How can we interpret newer and older versions of myths in dialogue? Why do modern authors return to stories of ancient Greece? How do shifts in perspectives in modern stories give us new insights into the myths and their diverse appeal? Our journey through myth will take us through Greek tragedy, Roman poetry, English novels and short stories, and Latin American fiction as we also visit several sites significant to ancient myths, including sites in Athens, Crete, Mycenae, Thebes, and Corinth.

You will develop key academic skills of reading, writing, and speaking in this class. Much of the class will be discussion based, and so it requires preparation by reading before class as well as your active participation during class. Speaking in class, both in daily participation and in presentations, will give you practice using course terms, concepts, and methods that we encounter in our readings. You will develop writing skills through brief assignments, a commonplace book, and a research paper.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify major works and genres of ancient literature that treat myth;
- Analyze and discuss the use of myth in ancient literature;
- Recognize modern adaptations of myths drawn from ancient Greece;
- Explain scholarly approaches to classical receptions;
- Reflect on the significance of myth in different media and across time;
- Write an analysis comparing the treatment of a Greek myth in ancient literature and in a non-classical work.

Course Requirements

The required assignments and tasks of the course encourage your full and active participation in all aspects of the course. These include participation and attendance, a commonplace book, presentations, a paper of about five pages, and a critical review paper of about three pages.

The **commonplace book** will serve as a key repository of your responses to readings, class discussions, and excursions, as you collect ideas about course content and important passages in a single document. The types of entries required are those that will sharpen your close reading and analytical skills, and preparing the entries will give you a foundation for contributing to in-class discussions. You will, therefore, be asked to bring your commonplace book to class every day.

This course requires your active **participation** daily. Participation in class will give you practice using course terms, concepts, and methods. While it can be difficult to speak in front of others, I expect everyone to participate in class discussion. Your participation grade will be based both on the quality and the frequency of your contributions. **The best participants in class are the best prepared.** I expect that before each class you will have prepared the assignment carefully and will have comments and questions about the material. The best contributions are those that keep us focused on the material, usually by offering questions and comments about particular passages of the texts. You should also listen to and engage with your peers respectfully (you can disagree without being disagreeable).

Two **presentations** will give you the opportunity to improve your speaking skills. One of these presentations will be occur on-site during an excursion and will concern a myth significant to a place. The other will be done in our classroom and will concern a non-classical work of literature that you choose.

For the five-page **paper**, you will analyze two works of literature, one ancient and one modern, that treat one of the myths associated with Theseus, Ariadne, or the Minotaur.

For the **critical review essay**, you will find, summarize, analyze, and critique a non-classical work of literature that treats any ancient myth. This work will also be the subject of your classroom presentation.

Class Field Work

This class includes several excursions to sites around Athens and Greece. These are significant to our study of myth, as we come to appreciate how places and objects are significant to mythology and literature.

Evaluation and Grading

Your final grade in the course will be determined by your grade on the following:

Commonplace book	25%
Participation and attendance	20%
On-site presentation	10%
Classroom presentation	10%
Paper (about 5 pages)	25%
Critical review essay (about 3 pages)	10%

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

100 – 93%	A	92 – 90%	A-		
89 – 87%	B+	86 – 83%	B	82 – 80%	B-
79 – 77%	C+	76 – 70%	C		
69 – 60%	D	59% and below	F		

CYA Regulations and Accommodations

Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences.

ePolicy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided.

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.

Class Schedule

Class Day	Day/Date/Place	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due
1	Mon May 26 Athens	Arrival and Welcome
2	Tues May 27 Athens	Introduction to Ancient Greek Myth Readings: Apollodorus (Selections)
3	Wed May 28 Athens	Ovid's <i>Met.</i> 8.184–278 Ovid's <i>Heroides</i> 10 Catullus 64
4	Thurs May 29 Athens	Euripides' <i>Hippolytus</i> Visit to Theater of Dionysus and the Acropolis of Athens
5	Fri May 30 Athens	Reading: Kotsonas's "A Cultural History of the Cretan Labyrinth" Visit to Museum of Cycladic Art
6	Sat May 31 Athens	Free day
7	Sun June 1 Athens	Free day
8	Mon June 2 Night on the boat	Hardwick "From the Classical Tradition to Reception Studies" Jorge Luis Borges's "House of Asterion" PM: Departure for Crete
9	Tues June 3 Heraklion, Crete	Mary Renault's "The King Must Die" (selections)
10	Wed June 4 Heraklion, Crete	Mary Renault's "The King Must Die" (selections) Robert Bolaño's, "The Labyrinth" Visit to Knossos
11	Thurs June 5 Heraklion, Crete	Mary Renault's "The King Must Die" (selections) Dana Gioia's "Maze without a Minotaur" Archaeological Museum of Herakleion
12	Fri June 6 Heraklion, Crete	Julio Cortázar's <i>The Kings</i> DeLillo's "The Ivory Acrobat"
13	Sat June 7 Night on the boat	Visit Phaistos and Matala Departure for Athens
14	Sun June 8 Athens	Free day
15	Mon June 9 Athens	Martindale's "Thinking through Reception"
16	Tues June 10 Athens	Robert Bolaño's, "The Labyrinth" Visit to National Museum of Contemporary Art Identify a piece that is Labyrinthine / Hybrid / Monstrous
17	Wed June 11 Athens	Paper due
18	Thurs June 12 Athens	Day trip to Eleusis Presentation(s)
19	Fri June 13 Athens	Day trip to Thebes Presentation(s)
20	Sat June 14 Athens	Free day

21	Sun June 15 Athens	Free day
22	Mon June 16 Nafplion	Departure for the Peloponnese Visit the archaeological site of Corinth Presentation(s)
23	Tues June 17 Nafplion	Visit the archaeological site of Mycenae and its Museum Presentation(s)
24	Wed June 18 Athens	Visit the archaeological site of Epidauros and its Museum Presentation(s) Departure for Athens
25	Thurs June 19 Athens	Reading: Walcott's "Greece"
26	Fri June 20 Athens	Critical Review Essay due Presentations

N.B.: The course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and to keep up to date with current research.

Course Bibliography of Required and Recommended Texts

Primary texts

- Bolaño, Roberto. 2012. "The Labyrinth." *The New Yorker*.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. 1999. *Collected Fictions*, trans. by Andrew Hurley. Penguin.
- Cortázar, Julio. 2008. *The Kings*, trans. by Caridad Svich. *The Brooklyn Rail*.
- DeLillo, Don. 1988. "The Ivory Acrobat." *Granta*.
- Gioia, Dana. 1991. "Maze without a Minotaur." In *The Gods of Winter*. Graywolf Press.
- Greene, David and Richard Lattimore. 2013. *Greek Tragedies*, Vol. 1. The University of Chicago Press.
- Lee, Guy. 2009. *The Poems of Catullus*. Oxford University Press.
- Lombardo, Stanley (trans). 2010. *Ovid: Metamorphoses*. Hackett.
- Renault, Mary. 1988 [1958]. *The King Must Die*. Vintage Books.
- Sherrill, Steven. 2000. *The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break*. Canongate Books.
- Trzaskoma, Stephen M., R. Scott Smith, and Stephen Burnet (eds.). 2016. *Anthology of Classical Myth: Primary Sources in Translation*, 2nd edition. Hackett.
- Walcott, Derek. 1981. *The Fortunate Traveller*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Secondary texts

- Burian, Peter. 1997. "Myth into *Muthos*: The Shaping of Tragic Plot." In Easterling 1997: 178-210.
- Calame, Claude. 2009. *Greek Mythology: Poetics, Pragmatics and Fiction*, trans. J. Lloyd. Cambridge University Press.
- Edmunds, Lowell. (ed). 2014. *Approaches to Greek Myth*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gantz, Timothy. 1993. *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, 2 Vols. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hardwick, Lorna. 2003. *Reception Studies*. Oxford.
- Kotsonas, Antonis. 2018. "A Cultural History of the Cretan Labyrinth." *American Journal of Archaeology* 122: 367–396.
- Martindale, Charles and Richard F. Thomas (eds.). 2006. *Classics and the Uses of Reception*. Wiley Blackwell.
- Momigliano, Nicoletta. 2020. *In Search of the Labyrinth: The Cultural Legacy of Minoan Crete*. Bloomsbury.
- Zeitlin, Froma. I. 1990. "Thebes: Theater of Self and Society in Athenian Drama." In *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context*, 130–167. Princeton University Press.