SYLLABUS FOR CLASSICS 310 (#20715)
GREEK & ROMAN MYTH & LEGEND

Fall 2011 Semester, San Diego State University
Brett Robbins, PhD., Department of Classics & Humanities
Class Hours: M/W 2-3:15 PM, Classroom: AL-105
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1) COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why should we bother learning the myths of people who lived thousands of years ago, we who pride ourselves on our social progress, fueled by technological innovation unimaginable to the ancient Greeks and Romans? Because certain aspects of the ancient world pertain quite directly and essentially to our own world, such as the stories they told and lived by. This course focuses on the ancient world but no less importantly on how it pertains to and influences our own. When we read Homer's Iliad and witness the greatest of the Greek heroes acting decidedly unheroically, we recognize in him certain traits that remind us of modern characters we encounter in movies and on TV. To draw this analogy is to understand the ancient world in its own right but also our own world through the eyes of those who invented the very characters we today take for granted.

If this sort of simultaneous inquiry into the past and the present interests you, to understand our own society better by coming to terms with its ancient roots--in this course, primarily through its stories--then you are in the right place. With the advent of the Internet and mobile life and other technology-driven inducements to instant gratification, it's refreshing to realize that the disregard for the past so prevalent today is something to overcome rather than to accept unquestioningly. On the contrary, in this class we will learn firsthand that to privilege the times we live in and to respect the lessons available to us from the past are by no means mutually exclusive. We can benefit from what the ancient Greeks and Romans had to teach us while keeping our feet planted firmly in our own times, and the myths we'll be reading and discussing in this class go a long way toward achieving that broad-based perspective.

2) INTERNET COMPONENT

We'll be making frequent use of the Internet, and in particular Blackboard and e-mail, to carry out various activities necessary for conducting this course. For that reason, to participate in it you must have access to the Internet (either on- or off-
campus) and must check your e-mail at least once a day (in case I make changes or clarifications or the like) and your Blackboard account at least a few times a week or whenever an e-mail message I send you urges you to log onto it.

"Courses that fulfill the 9-unit requirement for Explorations in General Education take the goals and skills of GE Foundations courses to a more advanced level. Your three upper division courses in Explorations will provide greater interdisciplinary, more complex and in-depth theory, deeper investigation of local problems, and wider awareness of global challenges. More extensive reading, written analysis involving complex comparisons, well-developed arguments, considerable bibliography, and use of technology are appropriate in many Explorations courses."

4: "This is an Explorations course in the Humanities and Fine Arts. Completing this course will help you to do the following in greater depth:
1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments;
2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures;
3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance;
4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities."

3) OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COURSE

In this course you will 1) learn about the most significant people, characters, events, ideas, monuments, and institutions of ancient Greece and Rome, 2) encounter the greatest works of art, architecture, and literature of antiquity by looking at (in the case of art and architecture) and reading (in the case of literature) the primary sources themselves rather than settling for a secondhand acquaintance with them through the filter of one or another text-book (to this end your only required reading will come directly from the minds of the ancient authors so they can speak to you on their own terms), and 3) ascertain connections between these people, characters, events, ideas, monuments, institutions, and art works and their counterparts in our own society which, after all, is a direct descendent of Greco-Roman civilization. On the three exams administered throughout the semester, you will be expected to identify with a high rate of accuracy the author, period, context, and cultural importance of the literary passages and material artifacts of ancient Greek and Roman culture you encounter in your take-home readings and classroom lectures and discussions.

4) PREREQUISITES FOR THIS COURSE

While I expect you to prepare the assigned readings before coming to class, they may not make complete sense to you until we hash them out together. Therefore,
rest assured that I expect from you no knowledge whatsoever about ancient mythology when you arrive on the first day of class. Granted, we’ll have some fun comparing what preconceived notions you’ve acquired from how the ancient world is depicted in literature, the mass media, etc., but that will only be to gain a sense of satisfaction at the end of the semester that the false clichés and stereotypes you once harbored have been dispelled by experiencing their works for yourselves. The only prerequisite for this course, then, is one thing and one thing only: a curiosity about the stories the ancient Greeks and Romans told to come to terms with their world and the uses to which we have put them to use in our own contemporary adaptations of these ancient models. Other than that: the cleaner the slate when the course begins, the better!

5) CLASS FORMAT

We’ll rely on both lectures (Powerpoint and old school) and classroom discussions to come to terms with the stories of the ancient Greeks and Romans and how they continue to exert influence on the stories we continue to tell today (vis-à-vis the latter, your input via discussion will be indispensable). I expect you to come to class prepared, which means you’ve already read the assignments listed in the CLASS SCHEDULE for a given day.

6) REQUIRED TEXT

Although I welcome and encourage as much outside reading as you’d like to do to help you learn the material we cover in class and in our readings (for example, Wikipedia tends to do a pretty good job of providing you with background information about the figures and events we’ll be encountering in our readings), the readings you'll need to complete BEFORE coming to class on a given week will be contained within the only required text for this course, a very cool, very affordable little volume which is available at the SDSU Bookstore:

Lucia Impelluso: *Myths: Tales of the Greek and Roman Gods*
7) GRADING

Here's the breakdown:

3 non-cumulative exams (including the final), each worth (in chronological order) 30%, 35%, and 35% of your course grade.

Your grade for this course will be based on your ability to demonstrate a mastery of objective information you've acquired from the readings you've done and lectures you've attended and discussions you've participated in throughout the semester. Unfortunately, with 80+ people in class a more subjective approach to grading (response papers and the like) isn't feasible. Thus, while our focus in class will be on learning about the myths of the ancient Greeks and Romans and their links to our own society in a relatively broad-based and expansive manner, your exams will reflect how good you are at recalling information I consider to be essential for the student of western civilization to know and understand. To this end (and because I respect the desire of those who care about their GPAs to earn the best possible grade—I've been there), I'll do my best throughout the semester to make sure—especially via study guides and word-banks—that we're all on the same page regarding what data need to be learned in order to do well on exams.

8) CLASS SCHEDULE

DAY ONE (8/29) INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

DAY TWO (8/31) MEANING & CONTEXT OF MYTH

Reading: Myths, pp. 6-7 (Introduction)

DAY THREE (9/5) NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)

DAY FOUR (9/7) MYTHS OF CREATION--RISE OF ZEUS

Reading: Myths, pp. 10-27 (Saturn & the Clash of the Titans), pp. 282-285

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1 I reserve the right to change anything in this schedule—or, for that matter, in this syllabus as a whole—during the semester for whatever reason. If I do so, I'll be sure to inform you of it via e-mail, Blackboard announcement, and in class at least twice, so you can make the appropriate changes to your copy of this syllabus.
(Eros/Cupid), 216-221 (Phaethon), 228-229 (Endymion), 230-233 (Eos/Aurora).

DAY FIVE (9/12) MYTHS OF CREATION--ORIGINS OF MORTALS

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 484-489 (Ages of Mankind), 492-501 (Prometheus), 502-505 (Pandora), 506-509 (Pyrrha and Deucalion).

DAY SIX (9/14) MYTHS OF THE OLYMPIANS--ZEUS & HERA

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 30-31 (Olympus), 32-37 (Zeus/Jupiter), 254-257 (Graces), 264-267 (Ganymede), 236-241 (Muses), 78-83 (Hera/Juno).

DAY SEVEN (9/19) MYTHS OF THE OLYMPIANS--THE MALE DIVINITIES


DAY EIGHT (9/21) MYTHS OF THE OLYMPIANS--FEMALE DIVINITIES


DAY NINE (9/26) FILM

Reading: TBA

DAY TEN (9/28) MYTHS OF FERTILITY--DEMETER

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 334-337 (Demeter/Ceres), 448-454 ([Hades]/Persephone/Proserpina).

DAY ELEVEN (10/3) MYTHS OF FERTILITY--DIONYSUS

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 64-65 (Semele), 346-369 (Dionysus/Bacchus)

DAY TWELVE (10/5) HERACLES

Reading: *Myths* pp. 540-569, 578-585 (Heracles/Hercules), 80-82 (Deianeira).

DAY THIRTEEN (10/10) FILM

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DAY FOURTEEN (10/12) EXAM #1

DAY FIFTEEN (10/17) PERSEUS

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 66-69 (Danae), 512-523 (Perseus)

DAY SIXTEEN (10/19) MINOS

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 58-63 (Rape of Europa).

DAY SEVENTEEN (10/24) THESEUS

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 534-539 (Theseus), 476-477 (Minotaur), 478-481 (Daedalus & Icarus).

DAY EIGHTEEN (10/26) FILM

Reading: TBA

DAY NINETEEN (10/31) JASON

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 604-605 (Jason & the Argonauts), 606-607 (Jason & Pelias), 608-617 (Jason & Medea)

DAY TWENTY (11/2) OEDIPUS

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 528-529 (Cadmus), 530-533 (Oedipus).

DAY TWENTY-ONE (11/7) TROJAN WAR

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 620-641 (The Trojan War)

DAY TWENTY-TWO (11/9) FILM

Reading: TBA

DAY TWENTY-THREE (11/14) HOMER
Reading: *Myths*, pp. 641-705 (The Trojan War)

**DAY TWENTY-FOUR (11/16) EXAM #2**

**DAY TWENTY-FIVE (11/21) MYTHS OF DEATH--ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UNDERWORLD (I)**

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 586-593 (Orpheus & Eurydice).

**DAY TWENTY-SIX (11/23) MYTHS OF DEATH--ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UNDERWORLD (II)**

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 736-765 (Aeneas).

**DAY TWENTY-SEVEN (11/28) FILM**

Reading: TBA

**DAY TWENTY-EIGHT (11/30) FALL OF TROY AND THE AFTERMATH**

Reading: *Myths*, pp. 708-735 (Odysseus/Ulysses)

**DAY TWENTY-NINE (12/5) CONCLUSION: EIGHT PILLARS OF GREEK WISDOM**

Reading: TBA

**DAY THIRTY (12/7) FILM**

Reading: TBA

**FINAL ON 12/14 (1-3 PM/AL-105)**