Dr. G. Davies-Morris  
Office: AL-669  
Phone: (619) 644-7608 (voicemail)

dmorris@mail.sdsu.edu  
Office hour: MWF 12-1 pm  
(619) 594-5177 (during office hours only)

HUM 140, Fall 2011: Introduction to Mythology  

Course Description: In the words of our textbook’s author, this class provides an interpretive survey of our mythic heritage, investigating the meaning and function of myth in the context of Western civilization and attempting, by a comparison of mythic themes and structures, to discover some of the intellectual and spiritual values of the past. Class format will be lecture, with occasional forays into film and other media.

If this class is a voyage of mythical and cultural exploration, then the textbook is our atlas and should always accompany you here.

E-mail / Internet: I make regular use of e-mail and the Internet in this class. Program changes, announcements, and class materials are distributed via e-mail or are placed on Blackboard for you to download. Therefore, it is necessary -- as necessary as your buying the textbook -- that you have a current e-mail address and check it at least once a week. I’ll go over materials in class as well, of course, but you may well miss them or receive them late if you’re not routinely on-line. It’s not a bad idea to check for last-minute announcements before coming to class, either. Also, don’t be concerned if you don’t always receive a reply to any e-mail that you may send to me; I simply might deem it worth a collective response rather than an individual one, as the issue you’ve raised might concern the whole class. Note: I do not e-mail grades or use the Blackboard gradebook. The only way to find out how you did on a particular assignment is to come to class and collect your paper.

Workload: Three exams; one required paper; several pop quizzes, given randomly and usually at the very start of class (to encourage prompt attendance). Typically, exams are multiple-choice, with some lecture slides to identify. One make-up session for a missed exam is offered the last week of term, with different content and method, so think carefully if you have to miss a regularly scheduled exam.

Grades: 25% of term grade for each exam, 25% total for the quizzes and the paper. Your required essay is the first one you deliver and will be letter-graded; any later papers will be eligible for extra credit, earning you an additional grade step on a letter-graded assignment such as an exam. In other words, you can write as many of these reflection essays as are offered, but you must write at least one (following my guidelines). If you feel unable to watch a film that I’m presenting to the class, let me know and, providing you have a valid case, I’ll arrange an alternate assignment for you, though this may require some legwork on your part.

Attendance: In a class of this size, taking daily roll by voice would be difficult and time-consuming, hence I don’t. Instead, I’ll give periodic pop quizzes at the start of class. These will be an easy way to get some points; I may also send around a random sign-in sheet. At term’s end, I’ll give one additional grade step (C- to C, C to C+, etc.) to those who’ve routinely signed in and are passing the class.
**Study guides:** These are luxuries that no instructor is obliged to provide. If you want to do well on exams, you need to pay attention, take good notes, read the material, and review diligently all that accumulated knowledge. Right before a test I provide a brief list of points that you should know — but that is a gift to you and is delivered when convenient for me. It is certainly not an entitlement, nor is reviewing it a substitute for the kind of hard work expected of college students. I do not post my lecture notes on Blackboard.

Furthermore, you can only do better by attending regularly and taking good notes. Much of my lecture material corresponds to the textbook, but I do introduce other ideas as well, so be aware that anything touched upon in my lectures or in the reading is fair game for an exam question. Before each exam, I’ll briefly go over essential material. For all those reasons, you’re encouraged to exchange e-mails and phone numbers with a few peers; you’ll have a way to catch up if you miss class, and -- who knows? -- you may make a few new friends.

**Class participation:** While in class, you’re expected to conduct yourselves as professionals. Informed questions and polite attention make for good participation; eating lunch, talking to your neighbor, checking e-mail, or chatting on the phone distracts both your colleagues and myself and will not be tolerated. Late arrivals or those who have to leave early, please sit at the back or sides and enter or exit quietly. Drinks and snacks are fine, but no full-scale meals -- and if you spill anything, clean it up.

**Mobiles off!** No texting or phone use once class is in session; doing so may result in disciplinary action. Please keep your laptop use discreet; you’re expected to be taking notes, not checking Facebook, etc.

**Student health, etc.** Please let me know as early as possible if you need special accommodation for exams or have any other private concerns regarding the course.

**Advice on the readings:** To help ground yourself in the various areas covered, you should first read the summary at the end of any chapter; then read all material within the assigned pages. Also, the page numbers refer to blocks of information that may fall slightly outside them, so if the discussion appears to start or stop *in medias res*, look back or forward to find where the paragraph actually begins or ends.
Please read the following statements, which explain standard univerity policies on GE classes such as ours.

FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING

Foundations of Learning courses follow and build upon Communication and Critical Thinking courses and are offered by individual departments and interdisciplinary areas in the Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Humanities and Fine Arts. Foundations of Learning courses in the Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning are divided into four categories: 1. Physical Sciences, 2. Life Sciences, 3. Laboratory, and 4. Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning. Those in the Humanities and Fine Arts are divided into five categories: 1. Literature, 2. Art, Classics, Dance, Drama, Humanities, and Music, 3. History, 4. Philosophy and Religious Studies, and 5. Foreign Language. Foundations of Learning courses introduce students to the basic concepts, theories, and approaches offered by disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas of study. They provide the foundation to understand and approach problems in the academy, and in local and global real-world environments. Consistent with class size and learning goals, they cultivate skills in reading, writing, communication, computation, information-gathering, and use of technology. Where appropriate, courses intended as preparation for a major may also be designated as Foundations courses. Only lower division courses are designated as Foundations of Learning courses.

HUMANITIES & FINE ARTS

The Humanities and Fine Arts encompass works of the imagination, such as art, literature, film, drama, dance, and music, and related scholarship. Students better understand human problems, responsibilities, and possibilities in changing historical contexts and diverse cultures, and in relation to the natural environment. Students acquire new languages and familiarize themselves with related cultures. They gain the ability to recognize and assess various aesthetic principles, belief systems, and constructions of identity. Students acquire capacities for reflection, critique, communication, cultural understanding, creativity, and problem solving in an increasingly globalized world.

GOALS FOR GE COURSES IN THE HUMANITIES & FINE ARTS

- Goal 1: Analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments.
- Goal 2: Develop a familiarity with various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures.
- Goal 3: Argue from multiple perspectives about issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance.
- Goal 4: Demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.
Course plan by week. Readings are typically divided across Mondays and Wednesdays, with Fridays as a catch-up day. All assignments are subject to change (modification / addition / deletion) if we get behind or find new topics to consider.

I  (8-29) Course outline and policies.

II (9-5) Labor Day – no class.
(9-7/9) ANCIENT MYTHOLOGIES. Meso-America and the Tale of Quetzalcoatl.
Ch. 1 (1-7, 12-end).

III (9-12/14/16) Film: *Apocalypto* (dir. Mel Gibson, 2006).

IV (9-19) *Apocalypto* (conc.) *Apocalypto* prompt discussed; see syllabus for essay policies.
(9-21/23) Documentary: *Mayas, Aztecs, & Incas*. Mesopotamia and the *Enuma Elish*
(the story of Marduk). Ch. 3 (25-27).
Friday (28-end). *Apocalypto* essay due if you choose to write it.

V (9-26/28/30) Egyptian culture & mythology. Ch. 2 (15-19); Ptah & the Four Theologies

Friday: *Mummy* paper prompt discussed. Exam review.

VII (10-10) Exam #1. Bring pencil & scantron; review exam guidelines beforehand.
(10-12) OLD TESTAMENT TALES. Eden (ch. 4, 39-43), the Fall (ch. 7, 82-84),
Cain & Abel (handout), Babel (ch. 5: 51-54; stop at "Hellenic Zeus"), Lot (hand-out;
also see link on Blackboard). *Mummy* essay due if you choose to write it.

VIII (10-17/19) Epic of *Gilgamesh* (ch. 14, 182-89).
Video: Ricky Gervais, Noah sketch.

The Tale of Mot (ch. 15: bottom of 201 + handout).
(10-26/28) Film: *Metropolis* (dir. Fritz Lang, 1927). Friday: *Metropolis* prompt
discussed.

X (10-31) GRECO-ROMAN MYTHOLOGY. Hesiod (ch. 6: 64-71), Aeschylus: the Tale
of Prometheus (ch. 11, 139-143). *Metropolis* essay due if you choose to write it.
(11-2) Homer, the *Iliad* (ch.16, 214-19, 221-24).
(11-4) Homer, the *Iliad* (ch.17, 228-34).

XII (11-7) Homer, the *Odyssey* (ch.17, 234-41). Exam review.
(11-9) **Exam #2.** Bring pencil & scantron; review exam guidelines beforehand.

(11-11) **Veteran’s Day – no class.**

Friday: IE Sky Dragon Myths: Greece, Persia, & India (Ch. 5, 54-58). Ovid & Romanization (ch. 6: 72-end). *Oedipus* essay prompts discussed.

**XIV (11-21) NORSE & SAXON MYTHOLOGY.** The Vikings (ch. 5: 59-end).
*Oedipus* essay due if you choose to write it.

(11-23) Ch 16 (219-21).

**XV (11-24/25) Thanksgiving Break – no class.**

Fri: *Beowulf*; dragon episode (ch. 18: 250-end). Final exam review.

Friday: *Beowulf* essay prompts discussed.

(12-12) **Final exam, 10:30 am.** Bring pencil & scantron; review exam guidelines beforehand.
*Beowulf* essay due if you choose to write it. This is your last chance to write the required essay. Be sure to confirm all your final exams times, which often differ from your regular class times.