Humanities 140 Honors — (World) Mythology
TTh 11:00-12:15 — HH 210

Dr. Brad Cook, office AL 630
off. hrs. MW 10:15-11:15
and by appointment

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and on Blackboard

COURSE CONTENT & GOALS: World myths, legends, and tales of heroic struggles to live life, mostly mortal, as one sees best, make up the content of this course.

1. We will **study** texts (and artifacts) from the 2nd millennium B.C. down to the 20th century, from cultures all over the world (esp. Eurasia).
2. We will **catalogue** the deities and their deeds in each myth and culture.
3. We will **analyze** the relationships, actions, and motives of the characters, divine and mortal, in the original text and in the text’s culture,
4. while **investigating** the nature of the sources and the storyteller.
5. Then we will **compare** deities, deeds, and events in different myths and cultures
6. and **synthesize** an interpretation of each myth that incorporates the origin(s), development, and function of the myth in its culture,
7. and **evaluate** the responses of other/ subsequent cultures to these myths and how we ourselves read and respond to them.


**GOALS for GE Courses in the Humanities and 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: Describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures. Goal 3: Identify 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.” (SDSU Catalogue)

**DEFINITION (= THEORY) OF MYTH TO BE APPLIED IN THIS COURSE:**

**myth** “A traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatual beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the world view of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society.” From *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd ed. © 1992 & © The American Heritage College Dictionary, 4th ed. hardcover is available (Assumed for $17.99) with a download of a computer-based version of the dictionary.


Also a Blackboard Reader of Daily Study Guides and Other Readings is posted on Blackboard as a PDF (106 pages). If you choose to print the entire document, I recommend printing it back-to-back and keeping it in a three-ring binder; that way you can integrate your notes with the study guides and readings.

The Powerpoint presentations, texts and images, will be posted after every class on Blackboard; if you have any technical difficulties please talk with me.

**DAILY STUDY** (to achieve course goals): As we study the myths, it is essential to learn the characters and plots (= **Who? does What?**) and identify and analyze passages in our texts (and images) that are pithy (= "precisely meaningful") that is, passages that hint at or tell us the **Why**, i.e., the motives of the individuals in the myth, the storyteller, and/or the culture that lies behind and is affected by the myth. So,

i. schedule a minimum of three hours to read the texts and take notes on the assigned material **before** each class.

**e.g., on the attached schedule:**

T 2/2 Mesopotamian Creation
READ: Reader 15; *Myths of Mesop.* pp. 228–274
you are to read those pages **before** the class meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 2.
ii. see the study guide for the day in the Blackboard Reader (on Blackboard) and take notes on the following:
   a. **WHO** - lists of names and terms that appear in the primary texts (the original texts),
   b. **WHAT** - outline events & actions,
   c. **WHY** - figure out and list motives & issues, as you find them in the pithy passages (and images).

iii. come to class with texts, notes, questions, and ideas. Class will consist of some introductory remarks by me and questions and discussion by all of us. Thorough, daily reading and notes made in advance of each class are essential for each class meeting to be a success.

**QUIZZES, WRITTEN WORK, & EXAMS:**

**DAILY QUIZZES:** There are daily quizzes on the readings; prepare for each class by following the recommendations in DAILY STUDY above and you will do well on the quizzes; a sample quiz or two will be given in the first week. These quizzes will normally consist of five questions, each worth one point (= five points total); the resulting total for the semester will be between 150 and 200 points from these quizzes, thus their importance in the final calculation of the grade and evidence of your work throughout the fifteen weeks of the semester.

**WRITTEN WORK:** Before each exam you will write two one-page (single-spaced) "field" reports on the cultural significance of two myths. So, before the first exam, you will pick one of the Mesopotamian myths and prepare a report on the cultural significance of that text, and another for a Greek myth; before the second exam, a report on the Greek myth of Odysseus and another on a Persian hero in the Shahnameh; before the final exam, a report on a hero from Inleda, and a hero from the legends or tales read. Each report will use the five-paragraph model: introduction stating general interpretive principle and specific cultural context; three brief paragraphs in which three specific details in the myth are used to illustrate the culture and interpretive perspective; conclusion summarizing the cultural significance.

**EXAMS:** There will be two exams (Thursday, February 25 and Thursday, March 25) and a final exam (Thursday, May 20, 10:30–12:30) for which you will need to: 1) answer multiple choice questions like those on the quizzes; 2) complete brief sentences with proper names of figures, places, etc.; 3) identify, describe, and briefly discuss images from class; 4) identify, describe, and briefly discuss pithy (= key, essential, "in a nutshell") passages from class. In accordance with University policy, no final exam may be given early under any circumstances—mark your calendars now.

Students who have authorization forms from the DSS office should meet with me as early as possible to discuss any test accommodations and/or support services.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Civil, conscious (of yourself and others—many of the myths that we will study are all about relationships and interactions with others) attendance is expected; if you need to leave early, please sit near an exit and exit quietly. A multitude of details, topics, and images will be presented in this class: be in class (and awake) and "what's important" (i.e., what's on the exam) will become clear (if you have prepared your readings with the help of the study guides). All electronic devices are to be turned off and stowed unless you have a documented need for such a device and you sit in the front row. If you miss class, come see me during an office hour or schedule an appointment immediately to discuss the missed material. Absences can be excused for documented medical and/or family emergencies; in such cases the missed quiz will be excused. You are given two "personal" days for the semester, that is two days when a missed quiz will not affect your grade.

**GRADE:** Quizzes 20% + Written Reports 20% + Exams 20% & 20% + Final Exam 20% = 100%.

Grading follows the standard scale:

100-93 = A  89-90 = A-  86-88 = B+  84-86 = B  82-84 = B-  79-80 = C+  76-79 = C  72-70 = C-  69-67 = D+  66-63 = D  62-60 = D-  59- = F

N.B. all work is to be your own; cheating and/or plagiarism will result in an F for the assignment, test, or the course.

My overarching goal for this class is to create a time and place for us all to learn in an intellectually and culturally objective way, with respect for the subject matter, the learning experience, and for each other.

—Read about the Shared Vision of the University in the General Catalog and on the President’s website—

(link on Blackboard, in Course Documents, in Various Course Links)
Week 1: Syllabus
Th 1/21 Introduction & Syllabus (on Blackboard)

Week 2: Mythic Terms & Sources—Greek Creation
T 1/26 Terms & Sources: Narcissus and The Soldier & Death
READ: (Blackboard) Reader pp. 1–8 and (Blackboard) Scholarly Reading 1
(Eliade & Detienne 1981 on terms)

Th 1/28 Greek Creation
READ: Reader pp. 9–14

Week 3: Mesopotamian Creation—Destroy & Do Over
T 2/2 Mesopotamian Creation
READ: Reader 15; Myths of Mesop. pp. 228–274

Th 2/4 Floods & Re-creation (and Gods vs. Humans)
READ: Reader 16; Myths of Mesop. pp. 9–35 & Blackboard Reader pp. 17–19

Week 4: Gilgamesh: The King-Hero par excellence
T 2/9 Gilgamesh, part 1
READ: Reader 20; Myths of Mesop. pp. 39–83

Th 2/11 Gilgamesh, part 2
READ: Reader 21; Myths of Mesop. pp. 83–125

Week 5: Earth-Mothers—Greek Heroes
T 2/16 Demeter (Greek) & Ishtar (Mesopotamian)

Th 2/18 Greek Heroes: Perseus & Achilles
READ: Blackboard Reader pp. 28–43

Week 6: Human Destruction (War)—Exam #1
T 2/23—The Trojan War FURLough DAY

Th 2/25 Exam #1

Week 7: The Clever Hero: Odysseus
T 3/2 Homer’s Odyssey
READ: Reader 44–46; Odys. Bk 1, 5, 6
and start working on Scholarly Reading 2
(Stanford 1962, “The Untypical Hero”)

Th 3/4 Homer’s Odyssey
READ: Reader 47, Odys. Bk 8, 9, 10

Week 8: Homer’s Odyssey (cont.)
T 3/9 Homer’s Odyssey & the Greek Underworld
READ: Reader 48–51; Odys. Bk 11 & 24

Th 3/11 Homer’s Odyssey
READ: Reader 52; Odys. Bk 12-14, 16, 22, 24

Week 9: The Persian Epic of Kings
T 3/16 Early Kings to Feraydun—Sam, Zal, …
READ: Reader 53–55; Shah. pp. 1-46, 61-103

Th 3/18 Rostam’s birth to the Seven Trials
READ: Reader 56, Shah. pp. 104–109, 131-173

Week 10: Faridouzi’s Shajnnameh (cont.)
T 3/23 Rostam’s Son, Esfandiar, Death
READ: Reader 57; Shah. 187-214, 299-305, 369-439

Th 3/25 Exam #2
—Spring Break: March 29–April 2—

Week 11: An African Epic: Ancient & Modern
T 4/6 Mutwa’s Indaba: Creations & Invasions
READ: Reader 58; Indaba xv–41; 69–97, 121–125; 129–158

Th 4/8 The Hero & Co. Arise
READ: Reader 59, 159–203; 227–277

Week 12: Mutwa’s Indaba (cont.)—An Irish Hero
T 4/13 Internal Strife & Lumukanda Returns
READ: Reader 60; 278–373
and optional Scholarly Reading on Mutwa
(Chidester 2004 on Mutwa)

Th 4/15 An Irish Hero: Cuchulain
READ: Reader 61–79

Week 13: Folk- and Fairytale Tales
T 4/20 Fairytales: Donkey Skin
READ: Reader 80–86
and start working on Scholarly Reading 3
(Zipes 1991, Introduction to Spells of Enchantment)

Th 4/22 Fairytales: Cinderella Stories
READ: Reader 87–95

Week 14: Fairytales (cont.)
T 4/27 (Old) Beauties and Beasts
READ: Reader 96–104

Th 4/29 The Mysterious Unknown FURLough DAY

Week 15: Fairytales: Beauties and Beasts
T 5/4 —The Mysterious— (cont.) FURLough DAY

Th 5/6 New Beauties & Beasts: Baum’s WWOOFZ
READ: Reader 105–106 and online 1st edition

Week 16: Are Myth & Fairytales Doomed?
T 5/11 The Future of Fairytales …
READ: (Blackboard) Scholarly Reading 4
(Zipes 1994, “Breaking the Disney Spell”)

FINAL EXAM Thursday, May 20, 10:30-12:30
(Finals times are set by the Registrar & are not alterable.)
Version on Syllabus
WRITTEN WORK: Before each exam you will write two one-page (single-spaced) “field” reports on the cultural significance of two myths. So, before the first exam, you will pick one of the Mesopotamian myths and prepare a report on the cultural significance of that text, and another for a Greek myth; before the second exam, a report on the Greek myth of Odysseus and another on a Persian hero in the Shāhnāmeh; before the final exam, a report on a hero from Ḥulayba, and a hero from the legends or tales read. Each report will use the five-paragraph model: introduction stating general interpretive principle and specific cultural context; three brief paragraphs in which three specific details in the myth are used to illustrate the culture and interpretive perspective; conclusion summarizing the cultural significance.

More Detailed Guidelines

1. Introductory Paragraph:
   a. Introduce the author, the text, the culture = the who, what, where, when.
   b. Introduce the hero and a brief summary of his/her accomplishments that you want to present in this “field report”—your summary must be concise and should not be exhaustive.
   c. Introduce a cultural message or three related cultural messages that you want to present in three episodes from the text that you find especially revealing of said cultural message(s). To identify a cultural message, think in terms of our definition of myth as a story in which can be found “the world view of a people, as by ... delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society.”

2. First Episode:
   a. Introduce the episode from the myth that reveals the cultural message.
   b. Describe the episode, quoting any key phrase or term in the text.
   c. Explain how the deed or utterance in the episode reveals the cultural message that you are presenting in this “field report.”

3. Second Example:
   Repeat the three steps above—remember the two part process: describe & explain.

4. Third Example:
   Repeat the three steps above—remember the two part process: describe & explain.

5. Conclusion:
   Explain briefly how the three episodes that you have chosen fit together to reveal cultural message(s) that you present in the introduction as the goal of this paper. Feel free to add a final thought about the broader human significance of what you have present and/or add your own personal response to the cultural message(s) that you have presented.

Please keep this to one page, single-spaced (no extra spacing between paragraphs—such formatting is not used when you indent paragraphs; such spacing between paragraphs is normally used only with memo/business formatting where you do not indent paragraph [= wastes paper!—as in this very paragraph!? Oops!]). If you have to use a smaller font to fit your “field report” on one page, you can go down to 9 “point.” (I can read 7, but that is a bit small.) Also just put your essential info at the very top of the page similar to the top of this page = maximize the blank space on the page (= you an also descrease the size of your margins, all of them).