

Syllabus
English 323.001
Spring 2014
Mythology

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Class Hours: MWF 2:00 – 2:50
Office Hours: MWF 11:00 – 12:00, 6:50 – 7:20, or by appt.

January 13	Introduction
January 15	<i>The Iliad</i>
January 27	<i>The Iliad</i>
January 20	MLK Day
January 22	<i>The Iliad</i>
January 24	<i>The Iliad</i>
January 27	<i>The Iliad</i>
January 29	<i>The Iliad</i>
January 31	<i>The Iliad</i>
February 3	<i>The Iliad</i>
February 5	<i>The Iliad</i>
February 7	EXAM
February 10	<i>The Odyssey</i>
February 12	<i>The Odyssey</i>
February 14	<i>The Odyssey</i>
February 17	<i>The Odyssey</i>

February 19	<i>The Odyssey</i>
February 21	<i>The Odyssey</i>
February 24	<i>The Odyssey</i>
February 26	<i>The Odyssey</i>
February 28	EXAM
March 3	<i>Norse Myths</i>
March 5	<i>Norse Myths</i>
March 7	<i>Norse Myths</i>
March 10	Spring Break
March 12	Spring Break
March 14	Spring Break
March 17	<i>Njal's Saga</i>
March 19	<i>Njal's Saga</i>
March 21	<i>Njal's Saga</i>
March 24	<i>Njal's Saga</i>
March 26	<i>Njal's Saga</i>
March 28	<i>Njal's Saga</i>
March 31	Exam
April 2	<i>American Gods</i>
April 4	<i>American Gods</i>
April 7	<i>American Gods</i>
April 9	<i>American Gods</i>
April 11	<i>American Gods</i>
April 14	<i>American Gods</i>
April 16	<i>American Gods</i>

Bibliographies due

April 18	<i>American Gods</i>
April 21	Oral Reports
April 23	Oral Reports
April 25	Oral Reports
April 28	Oral Reports
April 30	Oral Reports
May 2	Oral Reports

Course Description

Material Covered:

Homer's *Iliad* by Robert Fagles, Penguin Classics 1997. ISBN #067083510-2 or 01402.7536 (paperback)

Homer's *Odyssey* by Robert Fagles, Penguin Classics 1997 ISBN #067082162-4 or 01402.6886 (paperback)

The Norse Myths, by Kevin Crossley-Holland ISBN#039450048-2 or 039474846-8 (paperback)

Njal's Saga Wordsworth Classics, 1998 ISBN#1-85326-785-6

Neil Gaiman *The American Gods* Harper Collins, 2001. ISBN# 0-06-055812-1 or 978-0-055812-3

Course Objectives

Probably no one here needs to be told how often references to Greek and Roman mythology appear in British and American literature; anyone who passed an Introduction to literature class has experienced this, first-hand. In fact, even people who rarely crack a book run into it surprisingly often.

Psychologists talk of Oedipal and Electra Syndromes, painters paint Icarus falling into the sea, movies like *Troy* are loosely (and I stress, loosely) based on Homer, and fantasy books draw on mythology in all shapes and forms. In short, mythology is “useful,” whether you are reading literature or just bumping about the culture generally. But mythology is also fun for its own sake, as I hope you will all discover.

Americans sometimes forget however, that classical mythology is only one of many. Readers of Yeats know how important Irish mythology is to his poems, while the Norse gods and goddesses have appeared everywhere from literature to computer games. Ideally then, we would explore *all* the mythologies you are likely to meet, and the cultures that produced them. On a practical level however this is impossible – and you really wouldn't like the results if I tried. But the alternative – to teach classical mythology as if it were the only one in existence – seems equally unacceptable. I have therefore decided to divide this class into three parts.

The first part of this course is the “traditional” part: Homer in his entirety, with all the myths that he includes along the way spilling out regardless. This is the mythology that Western literature has privileged throughout history.

The second part of the course focuses on Norse Mythology. Why Norse, you may ask? The most important reason is literary: mythologies may all be equal (cultural bias aside), but very few of them leave the literary legacy of the Greeks and the Norse. Egyptian mythology for instance (though rich and complicated) is recorded almost entirely in art and on the walls of temples, pyramids, etc; what little that has survived was written after the fact, in an effort to preserve a vanishing culture (what would have happened if the Library of Alexandria had survived, we will never know). Sometimes even less is known. The Norse however left a rich literature, first of stories collected by Snorri Sturleson, and then through a series of Sagas: (*Njal's Saga*, *Egil's Saga*, *Grettir the Strong*, etc etc). In Europe it would be difficult to graduate from high school without having read at least one or two sagas. In America however this splendid literary resource has hardly been heard of – yet another reason to focus on Norse Mythology.

The third part of this course is a little different. Instead of throwing yet another mythology at you, we will spend the last part of this course examining what mythology can mean to us now – first through Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, and then through your own critical evaluations. According to Gaiman, America is "a bad place for gods." Why he thinks so, and what happens to the old mythologies once they settle down here, is part of why we are reading *American Gods*. Equally important however is Gaiman's examination of the myth-making process in general: how we create new Gods, and how they stack up against the old. Finally, having met Gods of all sorts of times and countries in the course of Gaiman's explorations, I will ask you to pick a mythic element touched upon by Gaiman, and to write a brief paper on it – presenting the results of your researches to the class as a whole.

By the end of the class, then, all students who read, study and actively participate in this course should gain the following skills:

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to analyze the cultural assumptions inherent in mythological texts – assumptions no longer current today.
2. Students will be able to produce a research paper with a focused argument, a comprehensive review of the relevant scholarship, and conclusions based on close literary analysis of the text.

Grading Criteria

Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	20%
Exam #3	20%
Exam #4	20%

Research Paper	15%
Oral Presentation	5%

Participation **-3% for each absence after the first four.**

Grading Criteria, Expanded

There are **four exams** in this course. Of these, the first three will cover only the material since the last exam – i.e. they will not be cumulative. And because we take them in class, they will also be limited to less than an hour. There will be no full-scale essay questions on these exams therefore. Expect anything from short answer to identification to “mini-essays” (shorter, narrowly focused essays).

The last one however – the one covering *American Gods* – is a free for all: anything that might naturally come up via Gaiman's novel is fair game. This exam in other words will be a general “mythology” exam, using Gaiman's novel as a jumping-off point. And because there are two hours available for this exam, I may well choose to include a full-scale essay.

The **Research Paper** has two elements in it: the **oral presentation** and the **written paper**.

The **oral presentation will** be scheduled via a sign up sheet. All oral presentations will be given during the last two weeks, and attendance is mandatory. Those people who do not sign up will be assigned a day randomly; those who do not appear will be given a 0 worth 5% of their grade.

Oral presentations should begin with conclusions that you have developed after researching your assignment. After presenting your conclusions, please expand, giving at least a brief mention (via author's last name) of your sources. Remember however that while your classmates have definitely read Gaiman, they are not experts, and direct your presentation accordingly.

PLEASE NOTE that while you are welcome to read Wikipedia, all oral reports that do not go considerably beyond Wikipedia will be given an F (yes, I always check Wikipedia in advance, so I will definitely notice). Research can take far longer than people expect; be sure to leave time for it.

Written Papers should be 5-7 pages long, excluding the bibliography. The bibliography is also mandatory however; please use MLA format (you can easily look up MLA format online). Do not forget to alphabetize your sources by author's last name. These are not long papers. And given the focus, you are not confined exclusively to peer-reviewed sources. Nevertheless, all papers **must** include at least three **peer-reviewed sources from professional journals** (that is, articles taken from literary, historical or other relevant journals). This is a junior level course, so some of you may be new to this. Feel free therefore to ask me questions. Note however that I am much more likely to be helpful and cooperative with students who have put manifest effort into the assignment **before** contacting me.

Written Papers are Due April 28th for all students who present in the first week. Papers are due May 2 for students who present in the 2nd week. No student will be scheduled for the final day except for make-up purposes – and all papers will be due by May 2nd, no matter when the oral presentation occurs. As a practical matter then, people who present during the first week have more time to take class critique into account; let this be a motivation to get it over with!

Research papers must make **Arguments**. It is perfectly acceptable to include material from other disciplines, but the chief interest of the argument must be literary.

All quotes and references to research material must be referenced in accordance to MLA bibliographical requirements. This means (among other things) that you will include not only a source but a page number (in parenthesis) for each reference.

All papers will be submitted to Turnitin, in accordance with instructions to be given later.

Finally, re **Participation**: please note that participation is a **negative grade**. You are allowed four unexcused absences in this course. After that, all unexcused absences will reduce your grade by 3%. If you come late, you are responsible for making sure I give you credit for attendance: once I am involved in teaching I may or may not notice.

Plagiarism

Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty (including collusion and selling academic products). Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Students guilty of plagiarism may be failed for the course.

Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3]).

Courtesy Statement:

"All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct).

Americans w/Disabilities Act Statement:

Americans w/Disabilities Act Statement: Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must go through the Academic Support Committee. For more information, please contact the Director of Disability Resources & Services, Halladay Student Services Bldg., Room 303D, (903) 886-5835.

Notice for Future Teachers

Teacher Certification Requirements

If you plan to teach in the public schools, the following information is important. As of Fall 1999, only the Department of Literature and Languages can generate the bar code approval forms for students taking certification exams in English, ESL, and Spanish. Students **MUST** meet with the appropriate Advisors to begin the process of gaining bar code approval. This process includes an evaluation (whether or not students are at risk for failing the certification exam) and workshops or tutorials. Department Advisors are:

ENGLISH Dr. Susan Stewart, HL 314, 903-886-5272
Susan.Stewart@tamuc.edu

ESL Dr. Hunter Hayes, HL 229, 886-5254
Hunter.Hayes@tamuc.edu

SPANISH Ms. Inma Lyons, HL 317, 886-5273
Inma.Lyons@tamuc.edu

Secondary TExES 8-12:

This course has assignments that cover three competencies from Domain I: Integrated Language Arts, Diverse Learners, And The Study Of English (#1-3); four competencies from Domain II: Literature, Reading Processes And Skills For Reading Literary And Nonliterary Texts (#4-7); and two competencies from Domain III: Written Communication (#8-9).

Students who have taken this course will:

1. understand and apply knowledge of relationships among the language arts and between the language arts and other aspects of their lives and learning; Understand the continuum of language arts skills and expectations for students in grades 8-12, as specified in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS); Understand relationships among reading, writing, speaking, listening, and complex thinking; understand how the expressive uses of language (speaking, representing, writing) and the receptive uses of language (listening, reading, viewing) influence one another.
2. understand the structure and development of the English language; know rules of grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization in standard English and are able to identify and edit nonstandard usage in his or her own discourse and the discourse of others; know how purpose, audience, and register affect discourse.
3. understand reading processes and how to apply those processes; understand and promote reading as an active process of constructing meaning; understand reader response; know how text characteristics and purposes for reading determine the selection of reading strategies and teaches students to apply skills and strategies; understand comprehension strategies to use before reading (for example, predicting, recalling prior knowledge), during reading (for example, note taking,

mapping, paired reading), and after reading (for example, retelling, summarizing, responding); understand the role of social interaction in reading; know how reading experiences can enhance the understanding of and respect for diversity and increase knowledge of cultures.

4. understand reading skills and strategies for various types of nonliterary texts; demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics and uses of various types of research tools and information sources; understand steps and procedures for engaging in inquiry and research.
5. understand literary elements, genres, and movements and can demonstrate knowledge of a substantial body of literature; demonstrate knowledge of genres and their characteristics through analysis of literary texts; demonstrate knowledge of literary elements and devices, including ways in which they contribute to meaning and style, through analysis of literary texts; demonstrate knowledge of a substantial area of literature.
6. understand strategies for reading literary texts; demonstrate knowledge of various types of responses to literary texts (for example, experiential, aesthetic, pragmatic); know how to draw from wide reading in American literature; use technology to promote engagement in and comprehension of literature; know strategies for creating communities of readers and for promoting conversations about literature and ideas; understand strategies to use for analyzing and evaluating a variety of literary texts, both classic and contemporary; apply strategies to view literature as a source for exploring and interpreting human experience; apply effective strategies in exploring and discovering the personal and societal relevance of literature; understand relationships among literary works from various times and cultures; analyze how literary elements and devices contribute to meaning and synthesize and evaluate interpretations of literary texts.
7. understand writing as a recursive, developmental, integrative, and ongoing process; understand recursive stages in the writing process (for example, prewriting, drafting, conferencing, revising, editing, publishing, and how to provide effective feedback in all phases of the writing process; understand writing as a process that allows people to construct meaning, examine thinking, reflect, develop perspective, acquire new learning, and influence the world around them; apply writing conventions, including sentence and paragraph construction, spelling, punctuation, usage, and grammatical expression; apply criteria for evaluating their own written work and the writing of others; understand and promote the use of technology in all phases of the writing process and in various types of writing, including writing for research and publication.
8. understand effective writing and how to write effectively in a variety of forms and for various audiences, purposes, and contexts; understand the distinguishing features of various forms of writing (for example, reflective essay, autobiographical narrative, editorial, report, memorandum, summary/abstract, resume, play, short story, poem); apply skills and strategies for writing effectively in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts; understand and teaches how a writer's purpose and audience define appropriate language, writing style, and text organization; analyze the use of literary devices (for example, imagery, tone, dialogue, characterization, irony, figurative language) in writing; understand writing as a tool for inquiry, research, and learning; understand how to evaluate critically the sources they use for their writing; understands about plagiarism, academic honesty, and integrity as applied to written work and the presentation of information from different sources, including electronic sources; understand the importance of using acceptable formats for communicating research results and documenting sources (for example, manuals of style such as *Modern Language Association Handbook* [MLA style]).