Myths as Images from the Ancient World to Shakespeare

IDSEM UG-1562
The Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University
Spring 2014
M & W, 12:30-1:45 PM
7 East 12th Street, Room 134

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The mythological stories of the classical gods and heroes are perhaps the best known and most widely appealing of the legacies left from the ancient world. Myths offered morals and explanations in addition to entertainment, and, although they are familiar in large part because they are preserved in literary sources, the episodes and characters from the mythic world supplied a vast and compelling body of subjects for ancient artists. This course investigates the ways in which episodes from mythology appear in the visual tradition, and focuses on the ways in which the visual tradition complicates and enhances what we think we know from written sources. We also expand our study to later traditions from the Renaissance and modern periods. We consider what ancient sources are influential in transmitting myths and how these myths are reinterpreted both in literature and in visual media. Readings may include Homer, Iliad and Odyssey; Ovid, Metamorphosis; Pseudo-Apollodorus Library; Apollonius Rhodius, Argonautica; Shakespeare, Midsummer Night’s Dream; Kurt Weitzmann, Illustrations in Roll and Codex. We will also make use of objects in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

LEARNING GOALS (COURSE OBJECTIVES)
- Depth of knowledge of the pre-modern world
- Reading and use of visual material as sources
- Nuanced approaches to the study of unfamiliar cultures
- Writing skills, particularly the use of primary and secondary sources to build persuasive argumentation

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Office hours:
Mondays 2-3:00, Tuesdays 9:00-noon
**GRADING**
Grading of assignments will be based on the following criteria:

- **Content** (direct and focused engagement with the assigned topic; delineation of a coherent thesis; relevant engagement of primary material and, where relevant, secondary scholarship in support of your thesis)
- **Structure** (presentation of argument and supporting discussion in a clear and logical way)
- **Grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice**

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**READINGS**
... are available via the course site under the “Resources” folder or digitally through BobCat.

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class written assignments</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Intro. Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Paper 1</td>
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<td>Paper 2</td>
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<td>Paper 4</td>
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**EXPECTION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Such behaviors are subject to sanction regardless of intent; in other words, accidental violations are still violations, and will be treated as such. For a full description of the academic integrity policy, please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html].

If you have any questions about how to cite properly or about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me!

**In addition, please know that the internet is not a reliable source for papers written for this class: there is a great deal of misinformation that circulates about the ancient world. Websites ending in .com, .net, or .org are not acceptable sources for your papers, and it is in your interest to check with me before citing any information found online for your research in this class. You will be held responsible for the integrity of any information gleaned from internet sources.** If you are having trouble locating information in other media, please let me know and I’ll be happy to help you.
YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

**Attend class.** The core of this class is our discussion in the classroom, and so your presence is essential to the success of the class and to your success in the class. More than two unexcused absences or persistent late arrivals to class will severely affect your final grade; excused absences are limited to *documented* medical and family emergencies and religious holidays.

**Come to every class prepared and ready to participate.** When class begins, you should have completed the assigned readings, and you should have in front of you a hard copy of the text(s) under discussion that day. You should also come with the expectation that you will fully engage in class discussion: Attendance does not constitute participation, and participation should be informed by the readings. Further, you are expected to stay awake during class, to give the discussion your full attention, and to refrain from the use of electronics.

**Turn in your assignments completed, proofread, and on time.** This means budgeting your time carefully, starting on the first day of class, and giving yourself time to reflect upon and proofread everything that you turn in. This also means that your assignments should be completed in accordance with NYU/Gallatin’s policy on academic integrity (see Course Policies).

**Be respectful.** Everyone comes to this class from a different background, with different kinds of knowledge, and with different questions. Because of this, it is especially important that every student be responsible for helping to create and maintain a classroom environment in which everyone else feels comfortable asking questions and contributing to discussion. Any behavior that diminishes the contribution of another student—including comments, gestures, and attitudes in class, as well as any comments about class, class discussion, or other students in a public forum or online—is unacceptable and will be severely sanctioned.
Week 1. Introductions
M. Jan. 27. Introduction.
W. Jan. 29. Overview of Greek and Roman history, chronology, and art.

Week 2. Structures
M. Feb. 3. Mythic chronologies
In class: Discussion of readings; written sources for myth (genres, chronologies, challenges)
W. Feb. 5. Modern approaches to myths in ancient art
In class: Discussion of readings; problematizing the text-image relationship; Intro. to the Trojan War (lead-up); Intro. to the Trojan War (*Iliad* and end)
F. Feb. 7. Trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There are two options for times (11:00 am and 5:30 pm); these tours will be identical and will last about 1 hour.

Week 3. Talking about visual sources
M. Feb. 10. The Trojan Cycle
Read: G. Hedreen, “The Rape of Cassandra, the Recovery of Helen, and the Sanctuaries of Troy” and “The Death of Priam, the Sanctuary of Zeus, and the Building of Troy” in *Capturing Troy* (2001), pp. 22-90 [available digitally through BobCat].
In class: Discussion of readings; the epic cycle
W. Feb. 12. Formal analysis
Read: S. Barnet, “Formal Analysis,” in *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, pp. 95-104.
In class: Formal analysis practice; Intro. to Odysseus (pre-*Odyssey*); Intro. to *The Odyssey*

Week 4. Scary Women #1
M. Feb. 17. NO CLASS: PRESIDENTS’ DAY
W. Feb. 19. Odysseus and Skylla
In class: Discussion of readings; Intro. to the monster Polyphemus and the Cyclopes
F. Feb. 21. DUE: Paper 1. Submit to Prof. Franks electronically or in hard copy by 5:00 pm.
Week 5. The Cyclops
M. Feb. 24. Odysseus and Polyphemus
In class: Discussion of readings

W. Feb. 26. Odysseus and Polyphemus (Sperlonga)
In class: Discussion of readings; Intro. to Theseus

Week 6. Heroes behaving well
M. Mar. 3. Theseus and the Labyrinth
In class: Discussion of readings; Intro. to Herakles (Dodekathlon = 12 Labors)

W. Mar. 5. Herakles, the athlete
In class: Discussion of readings + Athenian Treasury, Delphi; Intro. to Herakles (various wives)

Week 7. Heroes behaving badly
M. Mar. 10. Herakles, the problem
Read: Aristophanes, *Frogs*
In class: Discussion of readings; Intro. to Perseus
DUE: Paper 2. Submit to Prof. Franks electronically or in hard copy by 12:30 pm.

W. Mar. 12. Perseus and Medusa
In class: Discussion of readings; Intro. to Amazons

Week 8
NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

Week 9. Scary Women #2
M. Mar. 24. NO CLASS TODAY (Trip to the Met on Feb. 7 held in lieu of this class period)

W. Mar 26. Amazons
In class: Discussion of readings; Intro. to Jason and the Golden Fleece
Week 10. Scary Women #3
M. Mar. 31. Jason and Medea
Read: Apollonius, Argonautica, Book 3
In class: Discussion of readings; alternative versions in visual evidence; Intro. to Medea

W. Apr. 2. Jason and Medea
Read: Euripides, Medea
In class: Discussion of Greek tragedy using Medea: How is performance visualized?; Intro. to the Parthenon

F. Apr. 4. DUE: Paper 3. Submit to Prof. Franks electronically or in hard copy by 5:00 pm.

Week 11. Images in architecture
M. Apr. 7. The Parthenon
In class: Discussion of readings; Intro. to the Gigantomachy

W. Apr. 9. Pergamon
In class: Discussion of readings; Intro. to Alexander the Great

Week 12. When history becomes myth
In class: Discussion of Alexander’s legacy; Intro. to Cleopatra

Read: (1) Plutarch, Life of Antony (excerpt). (2) Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra (excerpt)
In class: Discussion of Cleopatra’s legacy; Intro. to Aeneas

Week 13. Roman mytho-history
M. Apr. 21. Shield of Aeneas
Read: (1) Homer, Iliad, Book 18 (Shield of Achilles); (2) Virgil, Aeneid, Book 8 (Shield of Aeneas)
In class: Discussion of readings, relationship of Greek and Roman history; Intro. to Romulus and Remus

W. Apr. 23. The Ara Pacis

F. Apr. 25. Trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There are two options for times (11:00 am and 5:30 pm); these tours will be identical and will last about 1 hour.
Week 14. Briefly: Myths in Renaissance Art

M. Apr. 28. Botticelli’s *Primavera*
In class: Discussion of readings

W. Apr. 30. Renaissance trends
In class: Discussion of readings

**Week 15**

M. May 5. Modern imagery (catching up)

W. May 7. Modern imagery (catching up)
DUE: Paper 4. Submit to Prof. Franks electronically or in hard copy by 12:30 pm.

**Week 16**

M. May 12. Conclusions