

CLST 205Z: MYTHS, MONSTERS, MISOGYNY



Summer 2022

MTRF 1:10-3:15pm, In Person (location TBA)

This course is an introduction to the myths of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the stories about gods, goddesses, heroes, and heroines that were told, written down, adapted, and re-told over generations. We will explore the significance of these stories in the wider context of ancient Greek, Roman, and Near East civilizations. The goal is not simply to become familiar with the stories themselves, but to address some larger questions about their meaning and significance to the ancient civilizations that produced them. What functions did these myths have in their original context? What can we learn from them about the way that the ancient Greeks and Romans understood their world? How was myth used to create and frame civic and cultural identities? How do Greek myths interact with myths from nearby civilizations?

But what WE think of as “classical” myth is also self-consciously created: it is received, developed, cultivated, reinforced, and adapted by our own cultures. What value judgments are we making? Why do we keep retelling these stories? What do we highlight? What do we censor? How is myth deployed for political purposes? How can ancient myth help us work through modern problems?

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Office Hours
by appointment

CONTENT: Students will read selections from Greek and Roman literary texts (in translation) in conjunction with secondary readings drawn from ancient and contemporary criticism and theory. In class students will analyze these readings, parse images, participate in discussion exercises.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: By the end of the course you will be able to...

- 1) Recall and analyze the basics of ancient Greek and Roman mythology.
- 2) Critically examine individual works of literature (such as epic, tragedy, and poetry).
- 3) Synthesize material from lectures, works of literature, and your own close study of primary sources to produce well-informed arguments about the nature, social role, and cultural significance of Greek and Roman myth in its historical context.
- 4) Analyze the mythology through lenses like narratology, psychoanalysis, feminist theory, and others.
- 5) Identify and understand classical mythology in modern popular culture.
- 6) Re-examine your understanding of ancient material in light of modern interpretations.
- 7) Identify and analyze political appropriations of ancient mythologies for new purposes.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

(2) Lecture/Reading Tests	40%
(1) Book review	30%
Class Participation	10%
Perusall	20%

PARTICIPATION: Because this class is a discussion-based course, you must complete the readings before class and come prepared to talk about them. Only part of the day's class will be taken up by my lecturing, and you will be expected to engage in thoughtful discussion with me and your classmates on the contents of those lectures and the readings assigned.

PERUSALL: Students will participate in asynchronous online reading and conversation about posted texts. Students must post a specified number of relevant and substantial comments on each reading.

BOOK REVIEW: Students will choose a work of modern fiction based on an ancient source and prepare a comparative review and presentation. See Book Review file for details.

LECTURE AND READING TESTS: There will be **TWO** (2) tests on the content of the lectures, primary sources, secondary sources, class discussion, and images. These tests will evaluate both your knowledge of factual information as well as your comprehension of more complex themes, allusions, and analysis.

A detail from Raphael's fresco 'The School of Athens'. It shows Plato on the left, pointing upwards with his right hand, and Aristotle on the right, gesturing downwards with his right hand. They are surrounded by lush green foliage and flowers. The background is a soft, hazy landscape.

POLICIES

1. All students are expected to respect and follow the Student Honor Code: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/StudentHandbook.pdf>
2. Late work (except Perusall, for which there are no exceptions) **MUST** be turned in within one week of the due date (with a penalty), otherwise it will not be accepted. Students must contact me in writing before missed tests to reschedule testing.
3. All reasonable accommodation will be given to students with disabilities. If you have a condition that may require accommodation, please contact the Accessibility Services (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/>) as soon as possible.
4. The policy on grades, incompletes, withdrawals etc. is in strict accordance with official university policy (for which see the Registrar's website).
5. See me as soon as possible if you are having trouble. I will be happy to schedule a meeting time that works for you.

CONTENT WARNING: Many of these readings and images include physical violence, sexual acts, sexual violence, suicidal ideation, abuse, and potentially offensive language. All topics will be handled with sensitivity and trauma-informed instruction. If you are concerned about the content, please review the topics listed on the syllabus and determine if this course is right for you.

NOTE ON READINGS: The readings will be posted each week on Moodle with links to Perusall. The intent is to make the class accessible to all students, regardless of income. Readings will consist of primary sources from antiquity (selections, or shorter works in their entirety) paired with secondary sources, news articles, journals, blogs, etc. Students **MUST** complete the reading before the class in which it will be discussed.



Day	Topic	Reading/Test DUE
M/June 27	Introduction: What Mythology?	
T/June 28	Creation and Recreation The Pantheon: Zeus and Hera	Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i> Homer <i>Iliad</i> 1 Ovid <i>Met.</i> 1
R/June 30	Myth and Ritual: Demeter, Persephone, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the Underworld	<i>Homeric Hymn to Demeter</i> Vergil, <i>Aeneid</i> 6 Homer <i>Odyssey</i> 11
F/July 1	Love and War: Aphrodite, Ares, and Hephaestus	Homer <i>Odyssey</i> 8 (selection) <i>Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite</i> Ovid <i>Met.</i> 10 (selections)
M/July 4	The Pantheon: Athena and Poseidon Myth and Ritual: Apollo and Artemis	Homer <i>Odyssey</i> 13 Ovid <i>Met.</i> 2, 3, 6 (selections) <i>Homeric Hymn to Artemis</i>
T/July 5	Agony and Ecstasy: Dionysus and Cybele	Catullus 63 Euripides <i>Bacchae</i>
R/July 7	Heroes: Achilles and Theseus	Homer <i>Iliad</i> 18, 22
F/July 8	Quest Heroes: Odysseus <i>et al.</i> Quest Heroes: Aeneas	Homer <i>Odyssey</i> 9-12 Vergil <i>Aeneid</i> 2-4

M/July 11	The Life of Hercules	Ovid <i>Met.</i> 8-9 (selections) Test #1
T/July 12	The Monstrous Feminine Types of Heroines	review <i>Odyssey</i> 9-12 Apollonius <i>Argonautica</i> 3
R/July 14	Heroines: Medea vs. Psyche Great Tales: The Trojan War	Euripides <i>Medea</i> Apuleius <i>Met.</i> 4-5 Vergil, <i>Aeneid</i> 2 (review)
F/July 15	Tragic Families: House of Atreus	Aeschylus <i>Agamemnon</i>
M/July 18	Fate and Hubris: House of Laius	Sophocles <i>Oedipus Tyrannos</i>
T/July 19	Mythology and Politics	"The Original Nasty Woman" (article)
R/July 21	Mythology in Film Mythology and Modern Religion	"How Epic is Star Wars?" (article) "Greece's Old Gods Are Ready for Your Sacrifice" (article)
F/July 22	Children's Literature	"Classics for Cool Kids" (article)
M/July 25	Rape and #MeToo TransMythology	Ovid, <i>Met.</i> 1 & selected articles Ovid, <i>Met.</i> (selections)
T/July 26	Whiteness, Blackness, & "The Classics"	"Whitewashing Ancient Statues" (article) Test #2