ENGLISH 450: MYTHOLOGY

Established Goals:
The course is designed to develop in the students the habits of analysis, understanding, and appreciation of myth in a disciplined and creative manner. Toward those ends, the students will investigate the patterns and archetypes of world mythology by reading a variety of ancient myths as well as plays, short stories, poems, and novels that utilize themes and characters inspired by myth and write in both expository and creative modes.

Understandings:
Students will understand that
• myths offer a window into human experience;
• myths from around the world share characters, themes, and the heroes’ pattern of experience;
• the heroic ideal has a universal appeal;
• a mythic hero’s journey is one of self-acquisition;
• people build a strong society when they adhere to the values of responsibility and loyalty;
• mythological allusion is a tool for writers and artists to explore.

Essential Questions:
• What is the relevance of myths in the world in which we live?
• Why are myths integral to cultures world-wide?
• What is man’s place in the universe?
• Does fate determine a human’s future?
• What factors inspire an individual to leave behind what is familiar and comfortable in order to experience what is new or difficult?
• By what standards is an individual judged as heroic?
• How does pride derail a hero?

Core Units:
1) Beowulf
2) Mesopotamian Gods: The Epic of Gilgamesh
3) Greek Mythology

Core Literature:
Beowulf: A New Verse Translation (Seamus Heaney)
The Epic of Gilgamesh
Metamorphoses (Mary Zimmerman)
Theogony (Hesiod)
Work and Days (Hesiod)

In addition, students will read on-line versions of plays, myths, poems, and short stories.
ENGLISH 450: Mythology
BEOWULF UNIT

Enduring Understandings:
Students will understand that...
The English language has evolved over the millennia.
Aesthetic standards evolve as a society changes, but a reader can learn to appreciate what past societies regarded as beautiful.
The heroic ideal has a universal appeal.
When people adhere to the values of responsibility and loyalty, they build a strong society.

Essential Questions:
What makes the pantheon of Norse gods different from the Greeks, Romans, and Mesopotamians?
How does the concept of the afterlife affect the way individuals live their lives?
What factors cause a language to evolve? How does the Anglo Saxon language resemble our modern language?
Has the definition of a hero remained constant over the millennia?
Is comitatus necessarily a value in present day society?

Key Knowledge:
Students will know...
Historical background and geography of the Anglo Saxons and the characters of the epic.
The characteristics of Anglo Saxon poetry including: caesura, alliteration, kennings, and elevated diction.
Value of the scop in society.
Comitatus as a ruling principle of society.
The structure and sense of the Beowulf epic.

Key Skills:
Students will be able to...
Confidently read and analyze the English translation of Beowulf (Seamus Heaney).
Discuss the Norse gods and goddesses and myths that reveal the values of the society; recognize allusions to Norse myths in the epic.
Explain the historical context of the epic.
Discuss the blending of Christian beliefs by the transcriber of Beowulf.
Discuss the role of women in the epic (hostesses, peace-weavers, and monsters).

Assessment:
Norse myth Project- research and presentation
Quizzes, tests, class discussion, small group work
Essays
Writing original kennings
Writing Beowulf’s resume starting with Beowulf’s appeal (ethos) to King Hrothgar; add after Beowulf returns to Hygelac; finish with the dragon.
Mythology Course: Mesopotamian Gods and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
Kate Denning
English 450

**STAGE ONE**

**Established Goals:** Students will study the epic as a literary form as they gain appreciation for world literature. They will apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate texts. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

**Understandings:**
Students will understand that...

- By using a wide range of strategies readers can increase comprehension, appreciation, and evaluation of ancient texts;
- A mythic hero's journey is one of self-acquisition; likewise, humans accumulate self-knowledge through experiences that challenge them;
- Myths reflect what a culture values most; therefore, the myths offer a window into the many aspects of human experience;
- Humans of all time periods grapple with the mysteries of life even though the investigation provides no definite answers

**Essential Questions:**
What factors inspire an individual to leave behind what is familiar and comfortable in order to experience what is new or difficult?
How does one evaluate true friendship?
What are the requirements of kingship (any position of authority)?
Is an individual responsible for his or her own destiny? Does fate determine a human’s future? Do the gods make or break the individual, or is individual freedom the force that brings an individual success or failure?
By what standards is an individual judged as heroic?
How does pride derail the hero?
Since all life ends in death, is life futile?

**Outcomes/Objectives**

**Students will know:**
The characteristics of an epic
The stylistic choices of the ancient writers including repetition,
A background of Mesopotamian history/culture
An overview of the pantheon of Mesopotamian gods including stories in which gods reveal their powers and foibles
The key creation myth of the Babylonians, the *Enuma elish*
The plot and themes of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
The main characters from the text (gods and humans) and their relationships
Various techniques of the storyteller in the ancient world
How to recognize visual images of gods, ziggurats, epic characters in art, architecture, and artifacts.

**Students will be able to...**
Discuss the hero’s journey pattern in relation to Gilgamesh
Explore the archetype of the Double in literature
Identify the major themes of the text and give specific details to support these statements of theme
Discuss zoomorphism
Relate the episodes in the myth with events in the lives of real life heroes
Compare and contrast the modern attitudes about death and immortality with the attitudes of this Middle Eastern tradition expressed in the epic
Use strategies for identifying mythological characters in art.
Recognize and interpret mythological allusions.
Compare and Contrast the Judeo-Christian Flood Myth and the Mesopotamian Flood Myth
Discuss the importance of dreams in the text

**Assessments**

**Performance Task:**
Write a synthesis essay on the topic of blaming women for men’s woes in at least three ancient myths (Ex. Shamhat, Pandora, and Eve) OR on the topic of God’s relationship with man in the Great Flood myths (Utnapishtim, Noah, Deucalion).

**Other Evidence:**
Quizzes and tests
Research project on a Mesopotamian god- Essay and art
Journal responses
Compare/ Contrast Essay on the Flood Story
Chart of Gilgamesh’s Journey using quotes to show wisdom gained

**Learning Plan**
Before reading *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
PowerPoint on Mesopotamian culture that relates to the text (Students complete a “Know- Want to Know- Learned” chart)
Research project on seven important Mesopotamian gods- (Written essay/ art/ and individual performance in Jigsaw activity)
Study the *Enuma elish*
Read and discuss *The Epic of Gilgamesh* by episodes
Discuss the “double” as a literary motif. Compare and contrast the “doubles” (physical description, talents, flaws) in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
Essay on friendship- opposites or similarities?
Essay: Childhood Vision of Heaven
Quote search for Gilgamesh’s solo journey—poster of G’s solo journey and what Gilgamesh learns as he encounters the various beasts and people of the epic
Mythology Course: *Greek Mythology*
Kate Denning
English 450
STAGE ONE

Established Goals: Students will study divine myths, epic myths, and legends of the great heroes of Greek mythology. They will apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate texts. Students will employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Understandings:
Students will understand that...
Greek myths have a universal and lasting significance because they deal with the basic mysteries of human life.
By using a wide range of strategies, readers can increase comprehension, appreciation, and evaluation of ancient texts;
Greek myths reflect Greek culture and values, and, by extension, Greek myths reflect the culture and values of Western Civilization;
Certain motifs dominate Greek myths Examples: Hasty Oath Motif. Succession of Power Motif, Twice Born God Motif
Allusion to Greek myths is a short-hand for writers and artists of all ages; mythological allusion is a tool for student writers and artists to explore.

Essential Questions:
What identifies the various kinds of myth?
How does mythology reflect the ageless tension between the sexes?
Does fate determine a human's future? Do the gods make or break the individual, or is individual freedom the force that brings an individual success or failure?
What is man's place in the universe?
Do the ancient myths portray women in a negative way?

Outcomes/Objectives
Students will know:
The connection between Mesopotamian myths and Greek myths
The characteristics of divine myths, legends, and folk tales
The genealogy of the gods (proto gods, Titans, Olympians, humans)
Categories of myths organized by theme such as: younger generations will inevitably succeed older generations; creation stories; etiological myths
The relationship of gods to men; rebellion
The heroes and heroines of ancient Greece
Joseph Campbell's Hero’s Journey (all steps and stages)
Specific vocabulary to discuss myths (xenia, *ate*, anthropomorphism, Moere, maenads, caduceus, etc.)

Students will be able to...
Recognize and analyze themes present in Greek Myths
Identify and discuss key information about gods (Proto- gods, Titans, Olympians, heroes, and monsters)
Differentiate Fate and free will
Use clues to identify gods, heroes, monsters in contexts other than the myths themselves (literature, art, advertisements, architectural detail, music, etc.) After students make their identifications, students will be able to interpret the allusions to access the artist’s or writer’s intended meaning.

Locate specific myths or categories of myths

Retell the most popular myths that inspire art and literature

Discuss some of the mysteries of life in light of the myths (i.e. death and the afterlife, love, friendship, redemption, etc.)

Read excerpts from ancient writers such as Euripides, Bacchae.

Assessments

Performance Task:

Hero’s Journey Project: Students must apply their knowledge of Joseph Campbell’s pattern of the journey to a work of modern literature or film; to an epic hero from world literature. Students also have a creative writing option in which they use the Campbell model to create their own myths

“Mano a Mano” Project

Pairs of student competitors thoroughly research one Olympian god. Students then compete in several rounds of questions to teach the rest of the class their knowledge of the god. Students must employ good storytelling techniques to gain additional points. Costumes and props are encouraged.

Quizzes and tests

Research project

Journal responses

Essays

Learning Plan:

Read Hesiod’s Theogony

Make graphic organizers for generations of gods

War of the Titans project

Read excerpts from Ovid’s Metamorphoses to research Prometheus cycle (trickery at Mecone, fire theft, Pandora, Deucalion)

PowerPoint: Prometheus, the Ultimate Rebel

Throughout the course: interpret slides of fine art from across the ages that are inspired by Greek myths. Students will identify gods, monsters, heroes, and themes. Students will examine the impact of mythological allusions in art.

Students will study poems that use mythological allusions such as Yeats’ “Leda and the Swan” and Sylvia Plath’s “Daddy.”

Read “The House of Asterion” by Jorge Luis Borges

Research major heroes (Theseus, Perseus, Heracles, Bellerophon)