

Classics 36-Mythology  
Spring 2010

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M W F 11.30-12.20  
Office: Trotter 113 M W 1-2,  
Th 1-2 and by app.

This course will explore Greek myths through the careful reading of ancient authors who have handed them down to us. We will use several different modern approaches to the interpretation of these traditional stories: historical, sociological and anthropological. In order to underline the connection between Greek myths and religion, we will first focus on the divine world studying narratives about the birth of the gods, their relative position to another and their interactions with human beings. Our best teachers are here Hesiod and Homer ('Homer' in the broad sense: *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, the Cycle and *Homeric Hymns*). It was these two authors who, according to Herodotus, established the figures and capacities of the gods and specified their relations (2.53).

The second part of the course will center on humans. We will study myths of origin and degeneration, ritual statements about the place of human beings in the cosmos, and the great heroic sagas that define and refine the fundamental notion of what is a hero. The background we will have acquired from Hesiod and Homer will guide us in a competent reading of later mythopoetic texts, especially the work of the classical tragedians.

#### Required Texts:

Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days*, tr. Athanassakis  
*Homeric Hymns*, tr. Athanassakis  
Homer, *Iliad*, trans. S. Lombardo. Hackett.  
Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. S. Lombardo, Hackett.  
Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, trans. Robert Fagles. Penguin.  
Aeschylus II *Prometheus Bound* etc. Chicago.  
Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, trans. and intr. Bernard Knox. Washington  
Square press for Pocket Books  
Sophocles II *Women of Trachis* etc. Chicago  
Euripides I *Medea, Hippolytus* etc. Chicago  
Euripides V, *Bacchae* etc. Chicago

#### Recommended Texts

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Melville. Oxford  
E. Tripp. *Meridian Book of Classical Mythology*. Plume

W. Burkert. *Greek Religion*. Harvard.

Outlines as an aid to organization or for supplementary reading about theory and interpretation will be periodically provided. The recommended handbook by Tripp will be useful for you to use on your own for background reference when you are reading the ancient texts and for biographical summaries about individual gods and heroes. Secondary source materials besides Burkert GR will be available on Blackboard or in photocopy. The most important part of your reading is represented by the assigned works of ancient authors. Study them carefully and critically. Learn facts and plots: these will be assumed as known in class discussions. The reading of the *Theogony*, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the first part of the semester will be particularly demanding. In some cases assignments have been staggered through several class meetings for the purpose of allowing you to absorb a large body of material that will provide the basis for discussion in a subsequent class. It is important that you do not let assignments accumulate. **READ EACH ASSIGNMENT BEFORE ATTENDING THE CORRESPONDING CLASS.**

Requirements for the course:

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| Presence in class  | 10% |
| Preparation in class, including when called at random and possibly including one or more oral reports    | 10% |
| One midterm examination (Friday March 5)   | 20% |
| Two 6-8 page papers, each written in two drafts<br>(First Paper due March 29, Second paper due April 30) | 30% |
| Final examination (cumulative)   | 30% |

The following is a minimalist schedule of topics and assignments. You should expect additions and changes, especially of secondary sources.

### CLASS TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 Monday, January 18

Topics for the next two classes: Introduction and definitions. Strategies for the interpretation of myth. Greek Bronze Age culture and the origin of Greek myths.

Wednesday, January 20

Assignments: Kirk, *Nature of Greek Myths* pp. 30-91 ('The Relation of Myth to Folktales', 'Five Monolithic Theories', 'Myths as Products of the Psyche').

Start the *Theogony*, i.e. carefully read twice and outline for yourself Hesiod, *Theogony* lines 1-506.

Friday, January 22

Topics

for the next three classes: cosmogonies and theogonies. The comparative approach: myths of the Ancient Near-East. The succession myth in Hesiod. The Olympic order.

Assignments: Carefully read twice (and outline for yourself) *Theogony* lines 507-1020; N. O. Brown 'Introduction to Hesiod's *Theogony*'.

Week 2

Monday, January 25

Assignments: Start reading the *Iliad*, i.e. read *Iliad* Books 1-4.

Wednesday, January 27

Assignments: *Iliad* Books 5-6. Vernant, 'The Society of the gods', in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, 101-119. Burkert, *GR VI*, 'Polis and Polytheism'.

Friday, January 29

Topics: Homeric religion. Olympians among heroes.

Assignments: *Iliad* Books 7-9.

Week 3

Monday, February 1

Topics for the next three classes: Zeus, father of gods and men. Hera, Poseidon. The taming of the mother. Kingship, patriarchal order and patriarchalism. Myth, history and society. Zeus' and Hera's sons.

Assignments: *Iliad* Books 10-12; Burkert, *GR III.2.1* ('Zeus').

Wednesday, February 3

Assignments: *Iliad* Books 13-15; Ovid, *Met.* 1, Io (pp. 18-23 in Melville trans.); Burkert, *GR III 2.2* (Hera).

Friday, February 5

Assignments: *Iliad* Books 16-18.

Week 4

Monday, February 8

Topics for the next three classes: Apollo the son. The semiotics of orderliness. Purifying and healing. Asclepius. The notion of miasma and the role of prophecy. Antagonism with the mother.

Assignments: *Iliad* Books 19-22; Ovid *Metam.* 6 (Marsyas, p. 133 in Melville trans) and 1 (Daphne, pp. 14-18 in Melville trans).

Wednesday, February 10

Assignments: *Iliad* Books 23-24; *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*; Ovid, *Met.* 10, Hyacinth (pp. 230-32 in Melville trans); Slater, 'Masculine Antisepsis', in *The Glory of Hera*, 137-170.

Friday, February 12

Assignments: same as for Wednesday, February 10.

Week 5

Monday, February 15

Topics: The Mistress of Wild Animals and the impact of the hunt. The seductive virginity of Artemis.

Assignments: re-read *Iliad* 21.481-527 (in Lombardo's translation); Callimachus, *Hymn to Artemis* (HO); Begin reading the *Odyssey*, i.e. read *Odyssey* Books 1-4; Ovid, *Metam.* 3, Actaeon (pp. 55-58 in Melville trans.).

Wednesday, February 17

Topics: Aphrodite and the splitting of sexuality and fertility. Adonis, from myrrh to lettuce: a look at Detienne's structuralist approach to myth.

Assignments: *Odyssey* Books 5-8 (see esp. 8.287-398, in Lombardo's translation); *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*; Ovid, *Metam.* 10, Myrrha, Adonis (pp. 234-242 and bottom of 247-248 in Melville trans); Vernant, 'Between the Beasts and the Gods: From the Gardens of Adonis to the Mythology of Spices', in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, 143-182.

Friday, February 19

Topics for the next two classes. The friend of heroes. When the female is better than the male: Athena vs. Ares and Hephaestus. The Greek concept of *mêtis*. Athena reversed: the Amazons.

Assignments: *Odyssey* Books 9-13.

Week 6

Monday, February 22

Assignments: *Odyssey*, Books 14-18.

Wednesday, February 24

Topics: Reassessing the components of myth. Religion, saga and folktale in the *Odyssey*.

Assignments: *Odyssey*, Books 19-22.

Friday, February 26

Topics: Hermes and tricksterism.

Assignments: *Odyssey*, Books 23-24; *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*.

Week 7

Monday, March 1

Topics: Greek views of the underworld.

Assignments: re-read *Odyssey*, Books 11 and 24; *Iliad* 23.40-119 (in Lombardo's translation).

FIRST DRAFT OF FIRST PAPER DUE TO WA

Wednesday, March 3

Topics for the next two classes: Demeter, Kore, and Eleusis. Jung's archetypes. Myth and ritual. Women in cult. Other mystery religions. Orpheus and orphism.

Assignments: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*; Zeitlin, 'Cultic Models of the Female', in *Arethusa* 15 (1982) 1/2.129-57; 'Kore', in Jung and Kerényi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis*, 101-55.

Friday, March 5

MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Week 8, March 8-14 SPRING BREAK

N.B. The syllabus is from now on very provisional, especially as we get toward the end of the semester. What follows is just designed to give you an idea of the likely topics and readings. I will distribute revised sections of the schedule with modifications and additions, as needed.

Week 9 Monday, March 15

Assignments: Ovid, *Metam.* 10 and 11, Orpheus (pp. 225-28, 249-52 in Melville trans.); Detienne, 'The Violence of Well-Born Ladies: Women in the Thesmophoria', in M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (edd.) *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, 129-147.

Wednesday, March 17

Topics for the next two classes: Dionysus and liminality.

Assignments: Re-read *Iliad* 6.124-46 (in Lombardo's translation); *Homeric Hymns to Dionysus* (I, VII, XXVI)

Friday, March 19

Assignments: Euripides, *Bacchae*; Ch. Segal, 'The Menace of Dionysus: Sex Roles and Reversals in Euripides' *Bacchae*', in *Women in the Ancient World. The Arethusa Papers*, edited by J. Peradotto and J.P. Sullivan, 159-194.

Week 10 Monday, March 22

Topics for the next three classes: The origin of man and the origin of human misery. Pandora and Eve. The first sacrifice Prometheus, fire, and the survival of man.

Assignments: Hesiod, *Works and Days* 1-201; re-read *Theogony* 510-616; *Genesis* 1-10.

Wednesday, March 24

Assignments: Burkert, *GR III* ('Working sacred things: Animal sacrifice'); Vernant, 'The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod', in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, 183-201.

Friday, March 26

Assignments: Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*.

Week 11 Monday, March 29

Topics for the next two classes: The heroic sagas. Myths of quest and return. The return of Agamemnon and Orestes' ordeal.

Assignments: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*; Bamberger, 'The Myth of Matriarchy', in Rosaldo and Lamphere (eds.) *Woman, Culture, and Society*, 263-80. FIRST PAPER DUE.

Wednesday, March 31

Assignments: Aeschylus, *Eumenides*; F. Zeitlin, 'The Dynamics of Misogyny in the *Oresteia*', in *Women in the Ancient World. The Arethusa Papers*, edited by J. Peradotto and P. Sullivan, 159-194.

Friday, April 2

Topics for the next two classes: The Theban Cycle. Oedipus and the *pharmakos*. Pollution and sacredness. Lévi-Strauss and his 'peddler's choice'.

Assignments: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*; Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*; Re-read *Odyssey* 11. 275-85; Dodds, 'On Misunderstanding the Oedipus Rex'. *G&R* 13 (1966) 37-49.

Week 12

Monday, April 5

Assignments: Lesch, *Claude Lévi Strauss*, 57-91; Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', in *Structural Anthropology* 296-219.

Wednesday, April 7

Topics: 'Autochthony and other charter myths. The Political Theseus. Theseus, Minos, and the Minotaur. The Minotaur's revenge.

Assignments: Bacchylides 3 (HO); Connor, 'Theseus in Classical Athens', in A. Ward et al. (edd.), *The Quest for Theseus*, 143-74.

Friday, April 9

Assignments: Euripides, *Hippolytos*. Segal, 'Pentheus and Hippolytus on the Couch and on the Grid', in *CW* 72 (1978), 129-48.

Week 13

Monday, April 12

FIRST DRAFT OF SECOND PAPER DUE TO WA

Wednesday, April 14

Topics: The Argonauts and Medea. The ultimate bad mother.

Assignments: Euripides, *Medea*.

Friday, April 16

Topics for the next three classes: Myth and cult of Heracles, hero, benefactor, civilizer, madman, and god. Heracles in Homer, Hesiod and beyond. The political uses of the Heracles myth. The Indo-European hero pattern.

Assignments: Euripides, *Alcestis*; Pindar *Nemean 7*, etc.; Bacchylides's Odes 5 and 16. Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.184-305 (HO). Burkert *GR IV* 5.5.1, pp. 108-211.

Week 14

Monday, April 19

Assignments: Sophocles, *Women of Trachis*.

Wednesday, April 21

Assignments: Euripides, *Heracles*

Friday, April 23

Topics: Back to the heroes of the *Iliad*

Assignments: Sophocles, *Ajax*.

Week 15, April 26-30.

Topics: A retrospective look at Achilles, Hector and Odysseus. Modern definitions of 'hero'. Perhaps discussion of some of the student papers, if we have time. Catching up with past topics.

**YOUR SECOND PAPER IS DUE THIS WEEK**