

COURSE OUTLINE

1. Course number and title: Lit102: Myths of Ancient Greece and Rome

Prerequisites:

Credits: 3 hours

2. Course Description: Classical mythology is a unique subject. Its primary texts are ancient, poetic accounts that are essentially fictional. Yet, these accounts are based on an earlier oral tradition that preserve some historical truths. Hence the classical myths occupy a borderland between history and fiction. Over the centuries, thinkers and artists have treated them with a seriousness usually reserved for historical events. They have taken on a life of their own. This course surveys these myths with the intent of building a picture of the Greek mindset about what constitutes human responsibility. This mindset is briefly compared to the Roman one that derives from the Greek panoply of gods.

At the course's conclusion, students will find themselves illustrating their ideas by citing incidents from the lives of the ancient heroes and the course of the Trojan War. They will find that they have gained many new insights into the human condition on the basis of stories that took shape more than two thousand years ago.

3. Course Goals: The goal of this course is for students to gain a thorough familiarity with the characters and events described in the most important classical (ancient Greek and Roman) myths as a necessary part of their knowledge of Western civilization as well as to engage them in reflective discussions of their meanings.

4. Course Outcomes: At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to

1. Describe the historical context of classical myths and evaluate the qualities of the ancient Greeks as seen in their depiction of their gods, the ambivalent nature of ancient Greeks to their gods and the moral lessons of their myths.
2. Compare and contrast the positive and negative aspects of the Greek gods and the good and bad aspects of men given to them by the Olympian gods.
3. Explain what made a hero in ancient Greece and compare to the modern concept of a hero.
4. Examine the Greek's belief in their gods and whether the ancient Greeks truly believed the myths that explained the origins of their cities
5. Analyze the meaning of tragedy for the Greeks as seen in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Aristotle's principles of "pity and fear" in the *Oedipus Rex*.

6. Analyze Homer's story of the Trojan War and the role played by the gods in Achilles' strengths and his human weaknesses
7. Describe the role of justice, physical strength, cleverness, and a kind of moral ambiguity in the lives of Greek heroes.
8. Compare and contrast Aeneas' myth and Homer's Odyssey.

5. Course Concepts:

1. Bronze, Mycenaean, Dark and Archaic, classic, and Hellenistic ages Oral poetry; Homer; Hesiod; Aeschylus; Prometheus; Prometheus Bound; Ovid; Io; Phaeton; Deucalion; oracle.
2. Aphrodite and Anchises; Aeneas.
3. Apollo and Daphne; King Midas; Actaeon and Diana; Latonal Orpheus and Eurydice; Perseus; Heracles; the Golden Fleece; Jason and the Argonauts; Medea; Pelias.
4. Medea; Cecrops, Erichthonius; Procne and Philomela,.
5. Cadmus, Thebes; Amphion and Zethus; Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Jocasta, Creon, Antigone.
6. *The Cypria*; the judgment of Paris; *The Achilleid*; Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*;

6. Required Texts: The principal readings for the course were translated by the instructor and have been published in a volume titled, *75 Classical Myths Condensed from Their Primary Sources*. You will also read your instructor's translation of Sophocles Oedipus Rex.

Mulroy, David, *75 Classical Myths Condensed from Their Primary Sources*, Cognella, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-60927-034-6. \$29.95

Fagle, Robert, trans. *Sophocles The Three Theban Plays*, Penguin Classics, 1984. ISBN: 014 944 4254. \$10.40.

7. Recommended:

Homer, *The Iliad*. Robert Fagle, Trans. Penguin, 1998. ISBN-13: 978-0140275360.

Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*. Robert Fagle, Trans. Penguin, 2000. ISBN-13: 978-0140444254

Virgil, *The Aeneid*. Robert Fagle, Trans. Penguin 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0143105138

See also "Recommended Works in Translation" in Lectures/Texts