

Spring 1-15-2001

ENG 3009-007-008

William J. Searle
Eastern Illinois University

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3009-007
- 008

Dr. William J. Searle

English 3009C—sec. 007—13:00 to 13:50 MWF—CH 311

English 3009C—sec. 008—14:00 to 14:50 MWF—CH 318

Office Number: 314B Coleman Hall

Office Phone: 581-6375; e-mail: cfwjs@eiu.edu

Office Hours: 11:00 to 11:30 MWF; 3:00 to 4:00 P.M. MW. and by appointment

The following texts are used for English 3009C:

William Buck. Trans. *Mahabharata*. New York, New York: Penguin/Meridian, 1987.

Alan Dundes. Editor. *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Berkeley, California: U. of Cal. Press, 1984.

Richard Erdoes and Alfonse Ortiz. Editors. *American Indian Myths and Legends*. New York, New York: Random House/Pantheon, 1984.

Herman Hesse. *Siddhartha*. Trans. by Gilda Rosner. New York, New York: Bantam, 1951, rpt. 1971.

John Neihardt. *Black Elk Speaks*. Lincoln, Nebraska: U. of Nebraska Press, 1932, rpt. 1979.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. by Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana U. Press, 1953, rpt. 1983.

Lobsang P. Lhalungpa. Trans. *The Life of Milarepa*. New York, New York: Penguin/Arkana, 1977, rpt. 1984.

Nancy K. Sandars, Trans. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. New York, New York: Penguin, 1960, rpt. 1972.

Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein*. New York, New York: Signet, 1831, rpt. 1963.

Barbara C. Sproul. *Primal Myths: Creation Myths Around the World*. San Francisco, California: Harper Collins, 1991.

Attendance: Plan to attend every class. You might glance at page 43 of the 1999-2000 catalog concerning this matter. Obviously, a student seldom does well in a course when he or she cuts class frequently. For that reason, I have established the following attendance policy. For every five unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered one letter grade. If you have ten unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered two letter grades, etc. Late papers (exams, quizzes, etc.) will be accepted only in cases of extreme emergency -- severe illness, official university activity, or other urgent reasons.

Departmental statement on plagiarism: “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*) -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

Grading: Approximately 20 percent of your grade will consist of class participation (class discussion, group work, perhaps a group project or two) and writing exercises (exclusive of out of class papers -- as frequent reading check quizzes, constructing exam questions, etc.). More important, the classroom exercises, discussions, etc. will help you with exams and papers, the other eighty percent of your grade. There will be two one-hour exams, each worth 10 percent, and two short essays of a minimum of 1,000 words (approximately 4 typewritten pages) each worth 20 percent, and a final also worth 20 percent. Of course, you are responsible for keeping up with reading and writing assignments, even if you are unable to attend class. In other words, a missed class is not an excuse for not being prepared on your return. Learn the assignment from a classmate or from your instructor. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Course Description: “Myth is a past with a future, exercising itself in the present,” writes contemporary Mexican author Carlos Fuentes. A constant among all peoples, a shared legacy of ancestral memories, perhaps a part of our very fiber, myth is, in part, the thread that binds a society (and societies) together, that which informs national identities and codes of moral conduct. So crucial are they, in fact, that people, even today, are willing to die for their myths.

Of course, we won’t go to that extent in our class. Our focus will be on the intersection between myth and culture as it is illustrated in some darn good reads. Anthropologists, psychologists, theologians, philosophers, literary theorists, etc. have all grappled with the term myth. So expect some treatment of theory and where appropriate (and accessible) application to Mediterranean, Eastern, and American mythologies. Our quest (just couldn’t resist that word) should reveal the essential beliefs of other cultures and at times their similarities with our own.

Class procedure will consist of very informal lecture and discussion periods, group work, and, when relevant, video. Grades will be based on class participation, occasional surprise reading check quizzes, two short papers, two hourlies, and a final.

Doodle Space

A Very Tentative Outline for English 3009C

“The way to become truly human is to learn to recognize the lineaments of God in all the wonderful modulations in the face of man.”

--Joseph Campbell, American scholar of myth

- Wk#1 – Mon. Jan. 8—introduction of course and assignment of texts
Wed. “ 10—video; either *The Hero's Journey*, or, more probably, An episode from the *X-Files*
Fri. “ 12—grappling with the definition of myth, from *Sacred Narrative* Laurie Honko's “The Problem of Defining Myth,” pp. 41-52; J.W. Rogerson's “Slippery Words, Myth,” pp. 62-71.

Unit #1: Mediterranean Mythologies

“A myth contains the story that is preserved in popular memory and that helps to bring to life some deep stratum buried in the depths of the human spirit.” -- Nikolai Berdyayev, Russian Philosopher

- Wk#2—Mon. Jan. 15—NO CLASS—MARTIN LUTHER KING'S BIRTHDAY
Wed. “ 17—Near Eastern Mythology: “The Enuma Elish,” pp. 91-113 In *Primal Myths*, quiz?
Fri. “ 19—*Epic of Gilgamesh*, pp. 61-96.

“It's curious, and should be humbling, that ‘evolution myths’ often foreshadow the dry ‘scientific findings’ of today.”

--Alexander Eliot, American Art Historian

- Wk#3—Mon. “ 22—*Epic of Gilgamesh*, pp. 97-117.
Wed. “ 24—Judeo-Christian Mythology: Creation from *Primal Myths*, pp. 123-26, Chapters 1 and 2.
Fri. “ 26—excerpts from Genesis, Handout, and from *Sacred Narrative*, James G. Fraser's “The Fall of Man,” pp. 72-97.

“ Myth, especially as codified in religion, has been the basis for the morality of a society.”

--J.F. Bierlien, American Scholar of Myth

- Wk#4—Mon. Jan. 29—excerpts from Genesis handout
Wed. “ 31—excerpts from Genesis handout
Fri. Feb. 2—loose ends

“In its fullest expression, the case for myth is universal: myth has a life of its own, and with its own spiritual resources, keeps finding clever ways of using every kind of human making to spread its potency.”

—Sean Kane, American scholar of myth

Wk#5—Mon. Feb. 5—Graeco-Roman Mythology: Hesiod’s *Theogony* on Handout; paper #1 assigned.

Wed. “ 7—Hesiod’s *Theogony* on handout

Fri. “ 9—Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Book I

“... we need myths to determine and then evaluate the various facts presented to us. We need myths to answer the questions, ‘Who am I? How do I fit into the worlds of society and nature? How should I live?’”

—Barbara C. Sproul, American scholar of myth

Wk#6—Mon. “ 12—Ovid’s Book I, group work or quiz.

Wed. “ 14—Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, selections from Book II, Student conferences on paper #1—late afternoons MWF and early afternoons Tues and Thurs.

Fri. “ 16—NO CLASS—LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY

“and the pervading purposes of our mythmaking ancestors, all down the centuries, has been to awaken us.”

--Alexander Eliot, American art historian

Wk#7—Mon. “ 19—excerpts from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*

Wed. “ 21—excerpts from Ovid – loose ends

Fri. “ 23—Hourly Exam #1 (Mediterranean Mythologies)

Unit #2: Eastern Mythologies—Hinduism, Buddhism

“Myth embodies the nearest approach to truth that can be stated in words.” —a.K. Coomarswamy, Indian Philosopher

Wk#8—Mon Feb. 26—Introduction to Hinduism: selected myths from *Primal Myths*, pp. 179-92.

Wed. “ 28—excerpts from the *Mahabharata* (MBH), Part I, video

Fri. Mar. 2—excerpts from MBH, paper #2 due

“Myth, whether Christian or other, is an exposition of truth in the form of a story.”

--*Encyclopedia Britannica*

- Wk#9—Mon. Mar. 5—exerpts from Part II of MBH, quiz or group work
Wed. “ 7—excerpts from Part III of MBH
Fri. “ 9—excerpts from MBH

“Myths reveal the structure of reality, and the multiple modalities of being in the world; that is why they are exemplary models of ‘human behavior.’”

--Mircea Eliade, American scholar of myth

March 10 through 18—NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

- Wk#10—Mon.Mar.19—Introduction to Buddhism; handout; if time
Permits, excerpts from *The Life of Milarepa*
Wed. “ 21—excerpts from *The Life of Milarepa*
Fri. “ 23—excerpts from *The Life of Milarepa*

“A myth is a symbolic story which demonstrates, in Alan Watts’s words, ‘the inner meaning of the universe and of human life.’”

--Andrew Greeley, priest and novelist

- Wk#11—Mon. “ 26—Hesse’s *Siddhartha*
Wed. “ 28—Hesse’s *Siddhartha*
Fri. “ 30—Hesse’s *Siddhartha*

Unit #3: Modern and American Mythologies

“Certainly science, like so many of the earlier myths, appears to explain the natural world around us. But science can only answer how things happen; it is unable to tell us why.”

--J. F. Bierlein, American scholar of myth

- Wk#12—Mon. Apr. 2—loose ends, review, paper #2 assigned.
Wed. “ 4—Hourly Exam #2 (Eastern Mythologies: Hindu and Buddhist); student conferences on paper #2, MTWThF
Fri. “ 6—introductory video on Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

“You are my creator, but I am your master; obey.”

--from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

- Wk#13—Mon. “ 9—exam #2 returned and discussed
Wed. “ 11—NO CLASS—PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE
Fri. “ 13—NO CLASS—PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE

“There is so much to teach you. What I know was given to me for men and it is true and it is beautiful. Soon I shall be under the grass and it will be lost. You were sent to save it, and you must come back so I can teach you.” –from *Black Elk Speaks*

Wk#14—Mon. Apr. 16—excerpts from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, graded
Group work.

Wed. “ 18—excerpts from *Frankenstein*

Fri. “ 20—*Frankenstein*, paper #2 due

“So we got more lies than cattle, and we could not eat lies.” –from *Black Elk Speaks*

Wk#15—Mon. “ 23—if time permits, excerpts from *Black Elk Speaks*

Wed. “ 25—*Black Elk Speaks*

Fri. “ 27—review

FINAL EXAMS—MAY 30 THRU JUNE 3—emphasis on Modern and American Mythologies.