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MICHAEL LEDDY / ENGLISH 3009C / SUMMER 1998

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We often use the word myth casually to denigrate an assertion or story as false ("That's just a myth!"). But in another sense, myth is a matter of fundamental and powerful (though not objective) truth, a narrative of the world and one's place in it. Myth, after all, is what someone believes. We'll begin with some consideration of the terms myth and culture and move to a close examination of a small number of mythic texts. As we read, think, write, and talk, we'll learn much about the past and--I hope--about ourselves. Principal question: What roles does myth play in shaping human cultures and individual lives?

TEXTS

Gilgamesh, ed. N. K. Sandars

Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald

The Life of Milarepa, trans. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa

Leslie Silko, Ceremony

REQUIREMENTS

Dedicated participation in the daily work of the course (reading, thinking, talking), quizzes, a number of short writing assignments, a final examination.

POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance is essential: you should attend class at least as often as I do. You will be lost otherwise.

You are responsible for all assignments, whether or not you are in class when they are announced. If you must miss a class, you should get in touch with me right away to find out what you will miss. This is not a class in which to fall behind.

Late Work and Make-Up Work

Late writing assignments are acceptable only if you have my approval in advance. Because the purpose of a quiz is to determine whether you have done the work



for that day's class, missed quizzes due to lateness or absence cannot be made up. If you have a properly verified absence (illness, emergency, participation in an official University activity), I will record a blank rather than a zero.

Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, contact the coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Office Hours

Feel free to come in to talk--about a question that you didn't get to ask in class, an idea that you want to talk about, a writing problem, an assignment, a grade, etc. Oftentimes it is very easy to clear up questions and dissolve anxieties by talking about them.

Decorum

Our purposes here are serious--not grim or morbid, but genuinely intellectual. No hats, food, talking, doing work for other classes, or other private business. No sitting in the back row unless necessary due to limited space.

Grading

Your grade will be based on your short writing assignments (40%), final examination (20%), quizzes (30%), and participation (10%).

Short writing assignments receive letter grades. Quizzes receive numerical grades. A quiz average of, say, 100% counts as a 100 and not as an A (95); a quiz average of, say, 40% counts as a 40 and not as an F (55). Participation in the course receives one of four grades: 100 (consistent well-informed participation), 85 (frequent well-informed participation), 75 (less frequent participation or less well-informed participation), 50 (only occasional participation), 0 (little or no participation). You may check on quizzes and participation at any time. If you have qualms about participating in class discussion, please talk to me as soon as possible.

To calculate semester grades, I use the following numerical equivalents for letter grades:

A 95 A- 92 B+ 87 B 85 B- 82 C+ 77 C 75 C- 72 D+ 67 D 65 D- 62 F 55

For semester grades, 90 or above is an A; 80 or above, a B; 70 or above, a C; 60 or above, a D; below 60, an F.

English Department 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 the representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English

Language)--has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course.

Academic Integrity

Any breach of academic integrity--from cheating on a quiz to "getting ideas" from Cliffs Notes to working with another student on an essay--is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course. You will also get a file in the Judicial Affairs office and be required to participate in an ethics workshop organized by Judicial Affairs. You should be familiar with Eastern's statement on academic integrity (posted in classrooms) and should ask if you have any questions about quoting from and/or documenting sources. But since the work of the course is to be an expression of your own ideas in your own words (aside from words and ideas derived from the works we're reading), questions of plagiarism and collusion should never arise. Do not "borrow" work or have someone "go over" your work or give your work to anyone (allowing someone else to make use of your work is also a breach of academic integrity and will also get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course).

PROVISIONAL OUTLINE (by class meetings)

Introduction to the course (1)

Gilgamesh (2)

Homer, The Odyssey (10)

The Life of Milarepa (3)

Silko, Ceremony (4)