

**Montclair State University**  
**Department of Classics and General Humanities**

**Guidelines for Mythology (GNHU 285)**

This set of guidelines has been created for faculty instructors—particularly those who are new to Montclair State and to the department—as an introduction to the academic environment of MSU and to the nature of the course as well as an aid to creating a syllabus and teaching from it. Although we provide considerable latitude with respect to how individual faculty design their syllabi, this document contains departmental recommendations concerning the conduct of the class course-content, assignments, and academic standards within the course.

**Conduct of the Course**

In this course as in all courses the instructor has certain responsibilities toward the students. These are to:

- conduct the class in such a way that an atmosphere of mutual toleration, respect, and politeness prevails, conducive to academic discourse.
- develop an instrument of evaluation (including regular homework) sufficiently refined to give a true assessment of each student's performance and of the differences in performance among members of the class.
- provide each student with a typed syllabus on the first day of class that spells out clearly
  - the objective(s) of the course
  - required textbooks
  - daily reading assignments
  - method of evaluation (giving the precise percentage of total grade carried by each evaluation instrument)
  - policies concerning attendance, submission of late homework, making-up of quizzes and exams, extra credit, plagiarism
  - instructor's phone number, email address, office number, office hours
- clearly inform students of current homework assignments (these can be posted on a website for the course available through WebCT).
- keep a written record of each student's grades
- grade and return students' work in a timely manner and regularly enough for students to know where they stand in the class throughout the semester
- hold three office-hours per week (this is university-wide policy for full-time faculty) and 45 minutes per course taught for adjuncts

- start class punctually and finish it at the specified time

Concomitantly, in this course, as in all courses, students can be expected and asked to

- arrive punctually at the beginning of class
- stay for the duration of the class and not disrupt it by leaving early
- listen attentively to the instructor
- treat the instructor and fellow-students respectfully and politely
- \submit assigned work on time (see below under "Evaluation")
- attend all classes (for attendance policy see below under "Evaluation").

### **Content of the Course**

Every individual has his or her own teaching style. However the department recommends that this course should be conducted in the classroom through a mixture of lecture (supported when appropriate by audio-visual aids), group discussion, and individual participation (question and answer, presentations to the class).

#### Scope:

The catalog description reads: "The nature and interpretation of mythology, primarily as seen through the myths of Greece and Rome. Selected comparative study of myths of the Near East, India and other cultures. This course introduces students to the study of Greco-Roman myth as seen through ancient literature, art, religion, and philosophy, as well as later uses of classical myth. Designed both for students fulfilling their GenEd General Humanities/World Literature requirement and for concentrators in classical studies and art history who need a basic foundation in myth for their major or minor programs, it aims to convey (a) primarily, literacy in the well-known stories and figures of classical myth and (b) secondarily, an understanding of the nature of myth in general, as exemplified by Greek and Roman myth itself, by selected related traditions of myth such as the Near Eastern, and by the uses of classical myth in postclassical times.

#### Specific material: (see also under Coordinator below)

The following should be addressed, primary focus in this course being on #1:

1. Literacy in the "facts" of classical myth: Olympian and other major deities, lesser deities and heroes, heroes of legend or saga, major "cycle" narratives such as the Theban, Argonautic, Argive, Thesean, Trojan, and the story of Aeneas.
2. The historical background of Greek and Roman myth, e.g. the Mycenaean age and Homer.

3. Modern theories of the origins and functions of myth, their success or lack thereof at categorizing or "explaining" myth and their evolution over time and in response to stages or fashions of modern thought, especially from the nineteenth-century to the present. Such theories are best examined in the context of specific myths and provide a means to engage students in a critical assessment of the value of such theories and/or their relevance to particular myths.

4. Greco-Roman myth in a wider context and the study of myth comparatively and cross-culturally: Comparisons especially with Near Eastern myth, particularly Mesopotamian, Hittite, Hebrew creation and succession stories.

5. The relationship of myth to literature, together with different treatments of a myth by different authors working in differing time periods, in differing genres, or with different aims (e.g. Hesiod's origins of the world versus Ovid's).

6. The relationships of myth to art, and iconography: The basic vocabulary of attributes of deities and heroes, and the creative use of these traditional elements by artists of successive periods.

7. Post-classical uses of classical myth

#### Written texts

The department considers the reading of primary texts of authors in translation to be a critical component of the course. To that end, all sections of the course should read selections from Hesiod's, *Theogony*, Homer's *Iliad* and/or *Odyssey*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and at least two Greek tragedies. Other primary text readings, such as selections from the Homeric Hymns, Near Eastern creation or succession narratives, and from Vergil are highly recommended.

Some faculty prefer to have the students buy only texts of authors in translation, and to present the historical, comparative, and theoretical aspects of the course by means of lectures, handouts, or web resources. Others have students purchase in addition a textbook such as those by Mark P. O. Morford & Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) or Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998) (Stephen Harris and Gloria Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* [Mountain View: Mayfield, 1998] consisting of chapters about myth as well as an extensive library of translated plays and other selections, offers a blend of the two approaches).

#### Visual "texts"

Given that so much of classical myth has been transmitted to us via visual means (vase painting, postclassical painting and sculpture etc.) it is recommended that this course should make some use of visual material as one component in its methods of instruction. The department owns a large collection of slides of ancient sites and images pertaining to mythology (vases, other artifacts) and the Fine Arts department also has a large collection of slides particularly of western art (see below under "Teaching Aids").

#### Evaluation

The best and most accurate type of evaluation will be made up a variety of different

components that test students' abilities in a variety of different ways: e.g. writing papers, answering objective questions, making presentations, participating in class discussion etc. The methods by which the students' performance is to be evaluated should be clearly spelled out on the syllabus and should state what each component of the course (participation, quizzes, mid-term, final, term paper etc.) is worth in terms of a percentage of the total grade

Under no circumstances should a student's grade be dependent on, or even partially dependent on, group-work with other students. Assigning a global grade to a joint endeavor is rarely a fair or accurate way of assessing the contribution of a single individual.

### Written assignments

General education regulations require that students write a minimum of 2000 words for the course as part of formal, edited writing assignments. Given the inexperience of many students in writing long papers, including the tendency of a number to unintentionally or intentionally plagiarize, we strongly suggest that the writing assignments in the course consist of several short essays (2-4 page comparisons or analyses of translated primary texts work well for a number of faculty, for instance) beginning early in the term, and that if a longer paper—especially one involving library research—is to be assigned, the instructor supervise the writing of it in an organized manner by looking at first drafts, requiring rewrites, or the like.

Any writing assignments should be described clearly in writing. Such assignments should make the writing goals very clear and specify: the scope of the paper (exactly what the student is required to research or discuss), length (approximate number of words, minimum and/or maximum), presentation, required style of documentation, plagiarism policy etc. It is usually a good idea to spend at least some time of one class reviewing with students some basic aspects of good writing (such as the construction of a thesis, its presentation in an introductory paragraph, its development in the body of the paper, concluding paragraph) and what constitutes plagiarism. Some professors hand out a separate sheet of general guidelines for writing papers. Presenting students with very specific oral and written instructions for written assignments (as, indeed, for any assignment) allows for the possibility of more rigorous evaluation of the finished product. Similarly, specifying clearly what constitutes plagiarism justifies rigorous handling of plagiarism. It can also be a good idea to spend at least one class on collective brain-storming in preparation for the writing of a paper. Written work should be returned to the student with the instructor's detailed comments and allowing, or encouraging, re-writes is often good policy.

### Homework

Students should be assigned homework on a regular basis. It is reasonable to assign students some homework in preparation for every class, whether in the form of reading (up to, say, 45 pages per week), writing, or reviewing. Short quizzes can be used as a method of enforcing reading requirements.

### Quizzes and examinations

It is appropriate to give at least two full-scale in-class (not take-home or open-book) examinations during the course, one of which should be a final exam. A final exam might typically consist of some essay questions, some short answer questions, possibly some multiple choice questions, and some activity such as identification of slides.

Note that both university and departmental regulations require that the final must be given in the scheduled two-hour final examination period during examination week—for the schedule see

the opening material in the Course Schedule Book—and not during the last week of classes. The final examination must be held at the officially scheduled time in order not to create conflicts with finals in other courses.

Some faculty prefer to replace the midterm with two hour-exams spaced approximately one-third and two-thirds of the way through the semester. Some faculty also give daily short quizzes as a way of encouraging students to keep up with the reading assignments or with mastery of material (names, dates, places, cultural terms, and concepts) presented in class.

With respect to test formats and types of questions, the practice in the department is that most midterm, final, or hour-examinations in courses of this kind include substantial essay questions. Typically such exams also include a mixture of more detailed, objective-oriented questions. Brief quizzes, of course, lend themselves better to objective questions.

### Grading

Note that the final grades which may be assigned are A, A- (90-100), B+, B, B- (80-89), C+, C, C- (70-79), D+, D, D- (60-69) and F (59 and below). There is considerable concern about grade inflation, and consequently in most classes of this type one should be wary of giving a very large number of A's (for example, A or A- to over one-third of the students). A large number of one type of grade may be a sign that the methods of evaluation in place are not sufficiently rigorous to reveal disparities between students. A typical spread of grades in a class of 30 could be 10 A-range grades, 12 B-range grades, 4 C-range grades, 2 D-range grades, 2 F grades, although obviously classes vary in terms of student performance and ability and this is just an example.

A grade of IN (Incomplete) should be assigned only if the student can show good reason why he or she was prevented by illness or other unavoidable problems from finishing the work of the course on time. Incomplete grades must be accompanied by a "Contract for an Incomplete Grade" form submitted with the grade sheet. When work is finally completed a "Student Grade Change" form must be submitted to the chair and thence to the dean and registrar.

Plagiarism (see the opening material in the undergraduate catalogue) is grounds for an F on the particular assignment or in the course as a whole. The same holds for cheating on a quiz or exam. Some professors follow the practice of asking students to sign a plagiarism pledge on the first day of classes which states that plagiarism will be grounds for an F in the course. It is helpful at this point to clearly explain, both orally and in writing, what plagiarism is.

### Attendance

The undergraduate catalogue states that faculty may promulgate an attendance policy and enforce it. It would be reasonable, for example, to make the policy that the overall course grade will be reduced by one point for every absence over 4 (in a course that meets twice a week) but that absences will be considered "excused" if a note is provided from a physician or the Dean of Student Affairs. If an attendance policy is in effect the instructor should keep meticulous records of attendance and state the terms of the policy in writing on the syllabus. Some faculty prefer to make attendance the responsibility of students alone, not keeping attendance records as such but in effect monitoring and rewarding attendance by means of daily quizzes or in-class writing assignments.

## **Teaching Resources**

### Audiovisual resources

The departmental slide is collection is kept in the Institute for the Humanities Office (DI 401). Slide projectors, carts, carousels, extension cords etc. are to be found in the same room.

Nearly all classrooms on campus are now equipped with VCR's. The Non-print Media Center in Sprague Library has a very extensive collection of videos that can be borrowed by faculty and shown in class or which can be put on reserve for students to view in facilities in the Media Center (either as a group or individually). The department also owns some videos which can be borrowed to show in classes (please sign the sign-out sheet). They are kept in the cabinet in the small room behind the department secretary's office.

In addition, all classrooms are supposed to have a functioning overhead projector. If your classroom does not have an overhead projector or if it has one that is not working you can contact Information Technology (Teaching and Learning Resources, ext. 4242) to ask them to rectify the problem. Note that you should also contact this same number if you have problems getting the VCR to work in the classroom. If you are teaching in Dickson Hall you may also call the CHSS Tech Team (ext. 7835) which will often send someone right away.

Problems with non-functional projection screens or window blinds should be reported to Maintenance using a work-order form obtained from the department secretary.

Other more sophisticated types of audio-visual equipment, such as digital projectors etc., can be borrowed from Information Technology (see above).

### Photocopying

All instructors will be provided with one control card per semester which enables 625 copies. Photocopying machines are available on all floors of Dickson Hall. Please note that for any copying job over 20 copies you should use the Ricoh machine. There is no upper-limit on the amount of copying that instructors can do on this machine and it is cheaper to produce copies by this method. You are therefore requested to use the Ricoh machine in preference to the photocopier whenever possible. In order to operate the Ricoh machine you will need to enter a user ID number and code number that can be obtained from the departmental secretary.

### Supplies

Examination books, paper, pencils, scantron sheets, and other supplies may be obtained from the departmental secretary.

### WebCT/Blackboard

All instructors are entitled to apply for a WebCT (<http://webct.montclair.edu:8900>) or Blackboard version of their course (call Shunfa Li, ext. ext. 5458, to set this up). This enables an instructor to post useful information about his or her course on the web where it can be easily accessed by students at all times (syllabus, daily homework assignments). It also provides facilities for setting up a discussion forum whereby topics relating to material presented in class can be discussed beyond the four walls of the classroom and conversations begun in class can be continued outside it.

Susan Hussein maintains a WebCT Mythology Demo (<http://webct.montclair.edu:8900>) listed under Classics as GNHU285: Classical Mythology Demo. You can sign into it as classics (lower case) with a password of classics (lower case). This will let you in as a designer rather

than a student. That means you can get into the file area to get files and/or share them -- or make changes in the course if you so desire. It is also possible to make a backup of the whole course, download it to your computer, and then upload it to a new WebCT module in order to have a course to play around with, or make permanent changes, and use.

### Coordinator

Vickie Larson, (larsonv@mail.montclair.edu, ext. 7509) is currently coordinator of the multiple sections of Mythology. She will try to answer any questions or resolve any problems you may have. As time goes by we plan to start organizing regular meetings of faculty who teach Mythology so that we can exchange ideas about teaching the course and develop a more coordinated and unified model for the content of the course. We are aware that some instructors teach this course (GNHU 285) with classical mythology as only one component among other units on other mythologies. Our long-term plan is to gain approval for a course (tentatively) named World Mythology which will allow for such comparative approaches while GNHU 285 will continue as a primarily classically-oriented approach to Mythology.

### **Evaluation of teaching**

#### (a) Faculty in-class observations

University and department regulations require that adjunct or other part-time faculty, be observed in class at least once per semester by a full-time tenured faculty member. Full-time faculty who are untenured must be observed twice per academic year. Each classroom observation should be preceded by a conference between observer and observee in which the nature and objectives of the upcoming class, together with how it fits into the course as a whole, should be discussed. The observation should be followed by a conference soon afterwards in which both faculty members attempt to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the class session and how it might be improved. In the case of full-time faculty, the observer must write a written evaluation of the class session; this must be signed by both observer and observee, and the observee according to university and union regulations may attach comments to it.

#### (b) Student evaluation questionnaires

All adjunct, part-time, and full-time untenured faculty should have each class they teach evaluated by this means each semester. The department secretary has sample copies of the evaluation form for perusal and in approximately the twelfth week of the term will provide each faculty member needing evaluation with a packet of evaluation sheets together with instructions on how to hand out the sheets to the students and arrange for them to be filled out anonymously as well as delivered back to the department office by a student. Both the quantitative results of the multiple-choice evaluation questions and the written evaluative comments of students will be provided to the faculty member within one month of the date on which the evaluations were administered to the class.