

## **AMERICAN COLLEGE OF THESSALONIKI**

### **HUMANITIES 209: Topics in mythology and religion of the classical world**

**Instructor:** Dr. Nikolaos Dimitriadis

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#### **Texts:**

- Readings assigned by the instructor will be made available on MOODLE.

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND AIMS**

Ancient Greek cults, gods and heroes continue to captivate our interest. The course provides a systematic in-depth study of the major mythological characters, deities and myths of (mostly) the Greeks and the Romans through the use of both primary and secondary source material, visual and literary. The approach will be thematic and we will explore the nature and scope of mythology as well as its relation to religion, history and art. Comparisons with associated mythologies of the ancient Mediterranean world will be in place in order to demonstrate the broader historical and cultural framework. The myths and religion will also be studied in terms of their endurance and relevance in the western world as well as in popular culture. Finally, they will function as a setting for the discussion of matters of spirituality in the contemporary world.

#### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Students completing this course should be able to:**

- Demonstrate knowledge of classical myths and religions that will enrich their studies in the field of classics but in other disciplines as well.
- Recognize the interface between myth and religion in the ancient Greco- roman world.
- Appreciate the relevance of Greek myths in contemporary culture.
- Develop critical insights on the diverse concepts of the sacred in polytheism.

## **Projected Course Plan**

**Week 1:** Introduction. The origins of Greek religion

**Week 2:** Creation myths, religion and early texts (Homer, Hesiod, Lyric poets)

**Week 3:** Myth and history – the case of Iliad

**Week 4:** The Olympians

**Week 5:** Rituals and festivals

### **IN CLASS TEST**

**Week 6:** Cults and heroes

**Week 7:** Chthonic deities and views on the afterlife

### **MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 8:** Sacred places and times

**Week 9:** Myth and religion in Greek art

### **IN CLASS TEST**

**Week 10:** The relevance of Myth in popular culture. Cinematic Representations of Myth and Divinity.

**Week 11:** Myth endurance – Matters of spirituality in the modern world

### **IN CLASS TEST**

## **Teaching, Learning, Assessment Methods**

In the course of the semester we will utilize a variety of ways of approaching course materials, and so class meetings will take a variety of forms. Among these will be a bit of 'lecture' or orientation on my part, discussion, question and answer, group work, group presentation, individual presentation, in-class written responses to readings and other materials, some video clips, occasional quizzes, and exams.

## **Learning in Action**

A variety of methodological approaches are applicable throughout the course and many are using the area of Thessaloniki as a laboratory and an opportunity to have on-site classes in various museums where students will be able to study original objects of cult and fieldtrips to various archaeological sites with temples and sacred places such as the adjacent Olynthus and Dion sites or Athens and Delphi further on. In an effort to familiarize the students of Hum 209 with aspects of local life reminiscent of ancient rituals and festivals, we can plan short fieldtrips to nearby towns where contemporary carnivalistic celebrations of ancient (primarily Dionysian) origins are performed each spring (Sochos, Tyrnavos).

## **Your Final Grade will be based on the following:**

- **3 tests** (20%, 20%, 20%) (outcomes 1,2,3,4)
- **A research paper** (10%) further instructions to be given in class (due at the end of the eleventh week) (outcomes 2,4)
- **A midterm examination – 7<sup>th</sup> week** (20%) (outcomes 1,2,4)
- **Participation** (10%, learning outcomes 1, 2, 4)

**\*PARTICIPATION** includes the following:

--*preparedness for active participation in every class session*, meaning reading the assigned texts thoughtfully, preparing questions and comments to share in class with others, bringing assigned readings with you to class, responding to questions and comments

--*performing actively* in group work and group presentations

--Group Presentation. There will be 5 of these in the semester, so groups will consist of 3-4 students. I will assign groups and projects.

--performance on in-class writing assignments and/or quizzes

-- attendance

--generally giving your best to all we do

## **About Course Policies**

### **Regarding Academic Integrity:**

All academic divisions at ACT, both undergraduate and graduate, will apply the following policy on academic integrity:

“A student committing an act of Academic Dishonesty in a given course will receive an F (0 percentage points) in the assignment where the academic infraction took place. If a student commits an act of Academic Dishonesty for a second time in the same course, this student will receive a failing grade in that course.

The individual faculty is responsible for enforcing the policy in a conscientious manner, for reporting all cases to the Academic Standards & Performance Committee (AS&PC) for record-keeping and for informing the affected students of their right to appeal the faculty's decision to the AS&PC. Faculty must also insert the college's policy on Academic Integrity in their course syllabi."

### **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:**

If you have specific physical, psychological, or any other learning disabilities that you believe may require accommodations for this course, you should visit the Dean's office by bringing the appropriate documentation.

#### **Regarding Attendance:**

##### **Maximum Allowed Number of Absences**

The maximum allowed number of absences for all ACT courses stands at 6 (six) hours per course, which corresponds to 6 one- hour classes.

##### **Excusing Absences**

To excuse absences for good cause (such as medical reasons or personal crises), the student should contact the Registrar's office and, ahead of time or at the latest within a week from the time the absences took place, provide written proof of the cause of the absences. The documents submitted are then evaluated by the Assistant Dean, who decides whether there are valid grounds for excusing the absences.

##### **Successful Attendance**

A student is considered to have successfully attended a course if he/she has attended 75% of the course lectures. Thus, the maximum number of absences (excused or not) stands at 11 hours (11 classes) for courses. In case of an unsuccessful attendance, the student is administratively withdrawn from the course. The student has the right to appeal the decision to be administratively withdrawn from a course due to excessive absences and seek reinstatement. In this case, the student, within three working days, must fill in a 'mitigating circumstances' form in the Registrar's office, where the reasons of the appeal should be explained. Following this, a formal hearing of the Academic Standards and Performance Committee (ASPC) takes place. The decision of the Committee is final.

#### **Regarding Presentations:**

If you are assigned to present material in class and you do not come to that class or you come not prepared for your presentation, you will fail that portion of the course and will not be asked again to present to the class.

**Regarding the Overall Plan:**

I will make adjustments to reading assignments as seems appropriate as the semester unfolds, so be sure to take note at the end of each class regarding assignments for the following class.

**Office Hours:** Monday & Wednesday 10:00 – 11:00 or by appointment. Location: My office

**US GRADING SYSTEM/SCALE**

Grade Description	% points	US Letter Grade	US point grade
Excellent	95-100	A	4.0
Very Good (high)	90-94	A-	3.67
Very Good (low)	85-89	B+	3.33
Good (high)	80-84	B	3.0
Good (low)	75-79	B-	2.67
Satisfactory (high)	70-74	C+	2.33
Satisfactory (low)	65-69	C	2.0
Fail	0-64	F	0

**Bibliography (in Bissell Library)**

- Burkert, Walter, *Greek Religion* ( Blackwell, 1987).
- Buxton, Richard, *The complete world of Greek Mythology* (Thames and Hudson, 2004) (Eleftheriades library)

- Calame, Claude, *Myth and History in Ancient Greece* (Princeton University Press, 2003) (Eleftheriades library)
- Carpenter, Thomas H., *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (Thames and Hudson, 1991).
- Cole, S. G., *Landscapes, gender, and ritual space: the ancient Greek experience* (University of California Press, 2004).
- Dodds E.R., *The Greeks and the irrational*, University California Press, 2004.
- Dowden, Ken, *The uses of Greek mythology* (Routledge, 1992).
- Hack, Roy Kenneth, *God in Greek philosophy to the time of Socrates* (Princeton University Press for the University of Cincinnati, 1931).
- Leontis, Artemis, *Topographies of Hellenism* (Cornell University Press, 1995).
- Manguel, Alberto, *Homer's the Iliad and the Odyssey* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007).
- Mikalson, J. D., *Ancient Greek religion* (Blackwell, 2005).
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- Ogden D. (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Religion*, Blackwell, Oxford 2007.
- Olalla, Pedro, *Mythological Atlas of Greece* (Road Publications, 2002) (in Eleftheriades library).
- Price, S. R. F., *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).
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- Woodard R. D., *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology*, Cambridge University Press 2009.