

# PACIFICA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

Mythological Studies Program  
EI & GI Fall 2007

Greek & Roman Mythologies I MS505:  
Instructor: Dr. Christine Downing

Office Hours: By appointment

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## COURSE SYLLABUS

### A. Course Description

The course begins with an exploration of the most important contemporary approaches to the study of classical mythology. It does so by focusing on a variety of interpretations of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos*. It then proceeds to look at how the poets of ancient Greece reworked inherited mythic themes and plots. It will engage in close readings of the cultic and bardic poems known as The Homeric Hymns and of the lyric poetry of Sappho. Finally it will turn to the dramatic poetry, both tragic and comic, of 5th c. Athens. Attention will be given both to the role these myths played in their original historical context and to their ongoing archetypal significance.

Most of the required reading is in primary texts. I have asked the bookstore to order translations I particularly like. However, our discussions will be enriched by our being able to take account of alternate versions of the same literature, so if you have editions you prefer, feel free to rely on them--better yet, bring them along to class!

#### Course Objectives

1. To be introduced to the most important contemporary approaches to the study of classical mythology
2. To be introduced (or-re-introduced) to some of the great mythically-inspired literature of a tradition centrally formative of Western culture
3. To explore how myths are revisioned in response to changing cultural and political circumstances.
4. To look at Greek mythology not only in relation to its original contexts but also to its enduring meanings, particularly as these are made visible by adopting a depth psychological perspective.

### B. Class Schedule and Readings Session I

APPROACHES TO CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

**REQUIRED READING**

Fagles, Robert, trans. *The Three Theban Plays*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.

(Read *Oedipus the King*)

Hillman, James. "Oedipus Revisited." In Kerényi, Carl, and James Hillman. *Oedipus Variations*. Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications, 1991. 87-169.

**Digital Course Reserve Reader:**

Dodds, E. R. "On Misunderstanding the *Oedipus Rex*." in Erich Segal, ed., *Greek Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism*, Harper & Row, 1983. 177-188.

Downing, Christine, "Another Oedipus," *Gleanings*. New York: iUniverse, 2006, ch. 24.

Freud, Sigmund. "Typical Dreams." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. IV. Ed. James Strachey. London: Hogarth P, 1953-1974. 260-266.

Downing, Christine. "Sigmund Freud and the Greek Mythological Tradition." *Preludes: Essays on the Ludic Imagination, 1961-1981*. New York: iUniverse, 2005. 155-169.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. "The Structural Study of Myth." *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 1963. 206-217.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre and Pierre Vidal-Naquet. "Oedipus Without the Complex." *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. New York: Zone Books, 1988. 85-111.

**Session II:**

ARCHAIC CULTIC AND LYRIC POETRY

**REQUIRED READING:**

Boer, Charles, trans. *The Homeric Hymns*. Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications, 1987.

(Especially the Hymns to Hermes, Aphrodite, and Demeter)

Bernard, Mary, trans. *Sappho: A New Translation*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1999.

Downing, Christine, ed. *The Long Journey Home: Re-Visioning the Myth of Demeter and Persephone For Our Time*. Boston: Shambhala, 1994.

**Digital Course Reserve Reader:**

Snell, Bruno. "The Rise of the Individual in the Early Greek Lyric." *The Discovery of the Mind*. New York: Dover, 1982. 43-70.

Downing, Christine. "Sappho." *Myths and Mysteries of Same-Sex Love*. New York: Continuum, 1996. 216-236.

**Session III:**  
CLASSICAL GREEK DRAMATIC POETRY

**REQUIRED READING:**

Greene, David and Richmond Lattimore, eds. *Greek Tragedies*, Volume 2. University of Chicago Press, 1960  
(Read *The Libation Bearers* by Aeschylus, *Electra* by Sophocles, *Electra* by Euripides.)

Henderson, Jeffrey. *Three Plays by Aristophanes*. New York: Routledge, 1996.  
(Read *Lysistrata*)

**Digital Course Reserve Reader:**

Downing, Christine. "Greek Tragedy in Its Historical Hour—and in Ours." *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004, 93-106.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Cater, Nancy. *Electra: Tracing a Feminine Myth Through the Western Imagination*. New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2003.

Segal, Charles. *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth Poetry, Text*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986.

Foley, Helene P. *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.

**C. Course Requirement and Evaluation**

A short 3 to 4 page paper that will be described during the first class session- to be turned in at the beginning of Session 2.

A well-written 8 - 12 page paper on a topic related to themes explored in the second and third sessions of the course due on the dates specified below. You may want to discuss your proposed topic with the instructor on campus or by e-mail.

Please include the course and group number on the paper *and* on the outside of the envelope (MS 505 EI or GI).

•E student papers (or Incomplete Forms) must be postmarked on or before January 3, 2007

•G student papers (or Incomplete Forms) must be postmarked on or before January 10, 2007

**Incompletes:**

Students are allowed four Incompletes per academic year. Should you choose to take an Incomplete in this class, the completed paper would need to be postmarked by March 8, 2007 for E students and March 15, 2007 for G students. When you complete the paper send it directly to the faculty *and include a Grade Change Form*. All assignments are due on the dates specified. No credit will be given for late papers.

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