

# PACIFICA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

Mythological Studies Program  
PhD III Fall 2005

Mythologies of the Monotheistic Traditions. MS 701  
Instructor: Dr. Christine Downing

Office Hours: By appointment

chris@pacifica.edu

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### A. Course Description

An examination of Hebrew, Jewish, and Christian monotheisms from a mythological perspective

#### Books to Purchase:

Some edition of the Bible which includes both Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament and which you would feel as comfortable marking as you do any other textbook. My own favorite is the Oxford Annotated New Revised Standard Version because of its excellent explanatory material. However, as always, it will be useful to have a variety of translations at hand.

Miles, Jack. *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 1996.

Downing, Christine. *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004.

Downing, Christine. *Preludes: Essays on the Ludic Imagination*. New York: iUniverse, 2005. (We will be using several more of these essays in the summer course, "Myths of the Self.")

#### Digital Course Reserve Reader

In place of a Xeroxed and bound Reader we will be using a Digital Course Reserve Reader. You can read these materials online or print them.

To access these readings:

Login to the website: <http://www.online.pacifica.edu/dor>.

On the Digital Reserve Page, enter: Email Address: pacifica  
Password: lumen.

Then click the link for 701

(If you have trouble accessing this site or downloading materials, please contact Mark Kelly or Richard Buchen at

[reference@pacifica.edu](mailto:reference@pacifica.edu) or 805 969 3626 x 144

#### Course Objectives

1. To explore what is involved in looking at biblical monotheism as a mythological tradition and at its singular god as a mythic figure.

2. To explore the differences between monotheistic and polytheistic perspectives and thus to discover the distinctive features of this mythology.
3. To become familiar with some of the most important figures, tales and images in the Hebrew Bible and early Christian literature.
4. To see how the central images are continually reworked in response to changing historical and cultural circumstances.

## B. Class Schedule and Readings

### Session 1:

#### GENESIS AND EXODUS: FOUNDATIONAL STORIES

#### REQUIRED READING:

Read all of the first book of the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1-50, and some of the second, Exodus 1-15, 19-24, 32-34.

Miles, Jack. *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 1996. 3-149.

Downing, Christine. *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004, chs. 3, 4, 6.

Downing, Christine. *Preludes: Essays on the Ludic Imagination*. New York: iUniverse, 2005, chs 5, 9, 23.

#### Digital Course Reserve Reader:

Buber, Martin. "Myth in Judaism." *On Judaism*. New York: Schocken, 1972. 95-107.

Buber, Martin. "Saga and History." *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958. 13-19.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Moses of Michelangelo." *Collected Papers*. London: The Hogarth P, 1948. 257-287.

#### BACKGROUND READING:

Alter, Robert. *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: Norton, 1996.

Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism*. New York: Knopf, 1939

Graves, Robert, and Raphael Patai. *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*. New York: Anchor Books, 1989.

Assmann, Jan. *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*.  
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Teubal, Savina. *Sarah the Priestess*. Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 1984.

Marabella, Lynne. "Women and God Dialogues: Hermeneutical Interpretations of  
Conversations in the Book of Genesis." Diss. Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2001.

**Session 2:**

**KINGS AND PROPHETS**

**REQUIRED READING:**

From the Bible read: Ruth, I and II Samuel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah 1-11, 40- 55,  
Jeremiah 4-25, Job.

Miles, Jack. *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 1996. 150-194.

Downing, Christine. *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004, ch.  
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**BACKGROUND READING:**

Alter, Robert. *The David Story*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

Heschel, A. J. *The Prophets*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

Finkelstein, Israel and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed*. New York: Free  
Press, 2001.

Jung, C.G. *Answer to Job*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973

Gottlieb, Mel. "King David's Journey Towards Wholeness: An Archetypal Study."  
Diss. Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2000.

**Session 3:**

**DE-MYTHING AND RE-MYTHING: PARABLE AND GOSPEL**

**REQUIRED READING:**

From the Bible read: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

**Digital Course Reserve Reader:**

Miller, D. L. "Introduction: The Idea of a Polytheistic Archetypal Theology."  
*Christs: Meditations on Archetypal Images in Christian Theology*. NY: Seabury,  
1981. xv-xxv.

**BACKGROUND READING:**

Mack, Burton L. *The Christian Myth*. New York: Continuum, 2003.

Fredriksen, Paula. *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Christ*. New Haven Yale UP, 2000.

Jaspers, Karl and Rudolf Bultmann, *Myth and Christianity: An Inquiry into the Possibility of Religion without Myth*. New York: Noonday, 1958.

Pagels, Elaine. *The Gnostic Gospels*. New York: Random House, 1979.

Miles, Jack. *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God*. New York: Knopf, 2001.

Schaberg, Jane. *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*. New York: Continuum, 2003.

**C. Course Requirements:**

A well-written 10-15 page paper relating to a theme relevant to the focus of the course. You may discuss your proposed topic with the instructor on campus or by e-mail (chris@pacifica.edu.)

Please include the course and group number on the paper *and* on the outside of the envelope (MS 701 PhD EIII/GIII).

• **E student papers (or Incomplete Forms) must be postmarked on or before January 5, 2006**

• **G student papers (or Incomplete Forms) must be postmarked on or before January 12, 2006**

Mail to:  
Christine Downing  
11 Discovery Way  
Eastsound WA 98245

**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 18, 2006 for E students and March 25, 2006 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.

**Mail Incompletes to:**  
Christine Downing  
11 Discovery Way,  
Eastsound, WA 98245

