

## SPECIAL TOPICS: THE POWER OF MYTH

REL 2886 09  
– 3 units  
Spring 2010  
Intensive Term 2  
Tuesdays 6pm-10:15  
Mar 16 - Apr 27  
SM 204

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Explores the great themes of historical mythology: sacred times and places; gods, heroes and saviors; life, death and rebirth; the terrible and fascinating mystery of the transcendent; and the transportation of these classical motifs into powerful contemporary images. The ideas of Joseph Campbell as articulated in the popular PBS TV series are traced through religious examples from around the world. Myth's powers to transform the self, appropriate potential, discover meaning and wholeness, and live with multi-leveled truth, rational and symbolic, analytical and imaginative. Myth's relevance to religion, community and morality.

### TEXTBOOKS

**Religion and Doubt: Toward a Faith of Your Own** ( 2nd Edition) by Richard E. Creel.  
(Prentice-Hall 1991 ISBN-0-772286-9)

### POLICY

I respect the fact that all of you, as working adults, have different levels of interest, time and energy to devote to the study of world religions. I also understand that, as Intensive Term Students, you have seven weeks in which to do your reading and writing. What follows below is a blend of *opportunities* for those who want to learn more and of *course-requirements* for becoming well educated adults. In order to set a less stressful pace for yourself, it is highly recommended that you begin working on your reading, writing and final project assignments before or as early in the semester as possible.

You should expect to earn as high a grade as your effort deserves. Earning an "A" entails that you come to class, on time, with your reading and writing assignments done beforehand. It means that you will regularly and/or frequently contribute to the discussions and lectures with relevant data, pertinent questions, informed insights and reasonable judgments.

For my part, I promise to do everything I can to ensure your success in this class. I will be in class, on time, and will try to make the lectures and discussions as interesting and engaging as possible. I will give your ideas, written and oral, the consideration and respect they deserve.

You are encouraged to use your own personal experiences and growing knowledge in your major discipline to enrich the subject matter of this course, both in the discussions and in the essays. You should also learn to evaluate and verify your own opinions by testing them against the ideas and methods being considered in the course.

## PROCEDURE

We will proceed by instructor presentations, discussions, writings and films according to the attached schedule.

### 1) “Students are required to attend all classes” (NDNU Catalog).

50% of your grade is based on your *participation* in class --- half of this is met by attendance, the other half by contribution to the discussion. Intensive students are allowed only one absence.

### 2) “Students are held accountable for all assignments in each course” (NDNU Catalog).

Written work: You are to keep a written record of all your learning experiences-- class-notes, reading-notes, personal questions and reflections, and answers to the assigned discussion questions and/or essays,—in some kind of a Folder. These documents will serve as evidence to help the instructor give a fair grade for the time and effort you spent on the course.

Oral Work: Questions and comments are welcome at any time. As they stimulate the learning process, they also aid the students overall grade.

You, as individuals or in groups, are welcome to make 10-15 minute oral presentations and lead discussions on topics which catch your interests. These can be enriched with music, graphics, texts, artifacts handouts, activities, etc., according to the different intelligences and learning styles of the presenters and engaging the rest of the class. .

## HOMEWORK

For each of the 7 class meetings, you are to keep a **separate manila Folder** in which, over the course of the semester, you scrapbook the following kinds of materials:

Before each class you are expected to read, according to the schedule, all the selected chapters in the textbook. You are to write a 4-5 page essay, reviewing, reacting to and reflecting on selected ideas presented in each chapter. This essay should be an informal “appreciative and critical inquiry”, recording which ideas and practices of Creel and Campbell you liked best and least, and why, and your own religious reflections and ideas provoked by Creel and Campbell. This written work will form the basis of the lectures and discussions each week. It will also serve as evidence to the instructor that the texts are being read in a timely fashion. It is due each week according to the Schedule.

**Please:** it is very important that you keep your Folder work up to date, otherwise the class time will make little sense and you will have no relevant or informed contribution to the discussion. It is unacceptable to hand in a pile of Folders at the end of the course.

If you *must* be absent for the one allowed class, as a make-up, you are to view the missed Campbell film in the library and write up an extra 4+ review and reflection essay on the content.

You are to keep a record of 2 questions, 2 comments and 2 images from each Campbell film viewed. During the 7 weeks of this course, include in your Folder whatever else you find relevant and interesting about religion and mythology in newspapers, magazines and on the internet. These can also be used as “Show and Tell” at the beginning of each class.

You are required to write an 10+ page Reflection Paper entitled something along the lines of “**The Mythic Journey toward a Faith of My Own**”. (This can be either a real or imaginary life, since I am not interested in knowing all your personal secrets.) The purpose of the essay is to demonstrate your familiarity with the methods, themes and ideas of Creel on Faith and Campbell on myths, symbols and rituals by applying them to a case study of your choice.

To this end, it would be good to identify and interpret the myths, symbols, rituals and sacred times and places, holidays/holydays, which punctuate your personal, family and social life. You may want to discuss how they function according to Campbell's 4 categories of cosmological, sociological, psychological and pedagogical. This is essay is due on the last day of class as your Final Project/Exam.

**NOTES**

- You are encouraged to visit and explore the learning resources of the Academic Success Center, under the direction of Dr. Peggy Koshland-Crane (x.3670).
- Students with learning disabilities or other special circumstances are encouraged to disclose these to the instructor, and/or contact Dr. Peggy Koshland-Crane, the Director of the Academic Success Center (x3670)
- The Writing Center run by the English Department is another academic resource available to students.
- You must familiarize yourselves with and make use of the Library's collection pertinent to this course, including materials from the open stacks, reference section and academic journals.
- Homework is not to be done during class times.
- You should make copies of all your work to keep for yourselves and in case something is lost.
- Please turn off all electronic devices, including laptops, ipods, cell phones, plasma TV's etc.
- Plagiarism will result in failure.

Essays and papers are judged according to the following criteria:

- ✓ Substantial – i.e. gives evidence of hard work and effort
- ✓ Creative – i.e. innovative, artistic, distinctive
- ✓ Informed – i.e. full of data, quotes, ideas, expert opinion from the textbooks
- ✓ Personal – i.e. reflective of one's own experience and ideas and expressions
- ✓ Social – i.e. applicable to issues of social justice
- ✓ Contemporary – i.e. related to world events
- ✓ Integrative – i.e. exhibits unity and coherence with other areas of study

**Mandatory:** Separate title page (Name, date, course, chapter etc.), 12 point font, New Times Roman type, double spacing even between paragraphs, stapled and numbered pages, 1 inch margins, spelling and grammar checked by computer.

**Recommended:** Final draft submitted to the Writing Center!)

<b>DATE Term 2</b>	<b>READINGS</b>	<b>TOPIC/FOLDER</b>
March 16	Ch 1 & 2	Religion as Adventure
March 23	Ch 3	Religion and Myth
March 30	Ch 4	Existentials and Stories
April 6	Ch 5	Healthy Faith = Personal Bliss
April 13	Ch 6 & 7	Beliefs and Love
April 20	Ch 8	Maturity and Eternity
April 27	Ch 9	Life's Journey of Faith