C205 Classical Mythology

Assignments

Microthemes and Informal Writing Assignments

There will be 3 Microthemes and 9 informal papers during the semester. All three Microthemes will count towards your final grade. However, only 8 of the 9 Informal Writing assignments will count: if you hand in all 9, we will count your best 8; this means, of course, that you may skip one with no penalty. You may not, however, skip Assignment # 10, because you will need it to complete the third microtheme! Instructions for each assignment are below and they are numbered by the week of the semester in which each is due.

All due dates are provided in the reading schedule on the syllabus. No late work will be accepted for any reason. Informal writing assignments are due on Friday in Section, with one exception: the Museum Visit is due on the following Monday, 13 November in lecture. Microthemes are also due on Friday in Section, again with one exception: the third microtheme may be turned in on the following Monday, 20 November, in lecture IF you attended section on Friday.

Please KEEP all your assignments once they are handed back to you.

What is an informal writing assignment?

Informal writing assignments must be typed and turned in-they are "write to learn" assignments. Think of these as 'your first try at understanding the reading on your own" and as preparation for class discussion and for further exploration of our texts.

Informal Writing Assignments will be graded on a five point scale, as follows:

5 = WOW! You’ve done everything the assignment required and added that special something!
4 = Good Work! You’ve completed all required parts of the assignment; your work was well done and neatly presented.
3 = Good Work, but needs a little more attention to the criteria below.
2 = Probably not your best effort. Did you have a bad day? Or is there something that you need help with? Please see your instructor!
1 = Significant problems completing the assignment.

To get a 4 your informal writing must:

• Answer the question posed in the assignment
• Have correct information about mythological figures and episodes
• Show an understanding of the poems/sources it discusses
• Be clear and neat enough to read easily
What is a microtheme?

The graded assignments in this course take the form of microthemes. A microtheme is a brief essay that answers a specific question. Microthemes must be typed and single-spaced on a single sheet of paper. Write your name, your instructor's name, and the date on the back of the paper. Typeface should be 12-point pitch. Your paper will be graded for style clarity, and lack of errors as well as for the strength of your argument. Keep in mind that a sloppy, rushed microtheme will almost certainly earn a lower grade than a polished, well-presented one. The “Guide to Writing Assignments” sets out the expectations for microthemes and is the basis for grading criteria (see below). Each microtheme is worth 10 % of your total grade for the course.

Microthemes will be graded on ten point scale, as follows:

10 = WOW! You’ve done everything the assignment required in outstanding fashion and added that special something!
9 = Excellent! You’ve completed all required parts of the assignment very well with one excellent feature.
8 = Good Work! You’ve completed all required parts of the assignment; your work was well done and neatly presented.
7 = Good Work, but needs a little more attention to the criteria below.
6 = Probably not your best effort. Did you have a bad day? Or is there something that you need help with? Please see your instructor!
5 = Significant problems completing the assignment, see the criteria below and please see your instructor!

To get an 8 your microtheme must:

- Answer the question posed in the assignment
- Have correct information about mythological figures and episodes
- Show an understanding of the poems/sources it discusses
- Have a thesis that is clearly stated (For a 9, your thesis must make a point with which a reasonable person might disagree.)
- Quote from poems to support each point and explain how quotations support your point
- Analyze rather than summarize or describe
- Be clearly organized and written in correct grammar and usage

Microthemes must be submitted to Turnitin.com before your section meeting AND you must also bring a hard copy of your microtheme to section to hand in to your instructor.

What is Turnitin?

Turnitin.com is a software tool that helps determine whether or not a writer is relying too heavily upon sources. Students (or instructors) submit electronic versions of papers to Turnitin.com, which in turn produces and ‘originality report.’ This report shows the results of Turnitin.com’s comparison of the paper to content on the Web, to Turnitin.com’s database of student writing, and to some databases of common full-text journals. To read more about Turnitin.com, go to their website: [http://turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com).
How do I use Turnitin?
We will have a demonstration of the software in class, before you submit your first microtheme. What this process requires of you as a member of this class:
1) for all microthemes you are required to submit to Turnitin.com: all microthemes must be submitted by the date and time specified in the syllabus.
2) No microtheme will be acceptable without a record of its draft having been submitted to Turnitin.com on time.
3) You may submit each assignment ONE time to Turnitin.com.

The assignments . . .

1. Intellectual Autobiography
Submit a 1-3 page typed description of yourself: where you’re from, what makes you tick, why you’re here, where you’re going, why you’re taking this class and what you hope to learn from it.

2. Collection of Poetic Images
Review the modern poems about Demeter and Persephone. Choose any four poems and make a list of the poetic images each poet uses to describe Demeter and Persephone, respectively. Next to each word or phrase, write a brief interpretation of the image. Your list may take any form you like, but it must be typed, readable, and neatly presented.

3. Microtheme (10 points): Perspectives on Demeter/Persephone
Compare and contrast any two modern poems about Demeter and Persephone. Your thesis statement should answer the following question:

How and why do these two poems differ in their revision of the ancient stories of Demeter and Persephone?

In formulating your answer, ask yourself the following questions (please note that these questions are intended to stimulate your thinking, not to provide an outline for your paper):

• Whose perspective is presented in each poem? Persephone’s? Demeter’s? Both? Someone else’s? How do differences in point of view affect the reader’s understanding of the situation?
• Which ancient version of the myth is foremost in each modern poem? Can you tell? If so, what details give it away?
What kinds of imagery does each poet use to describe Persephone and Demeter? How does each poet’s use of different kinds of imagery (light/dark, passive/violent etc.) affect your understanding of the situation?

Why do you think the poets describe the situation the way they do? What is the overall message (about relationships between men and women, about the encounter of human and divine forces etc.) that each poet is trying to convey?

Be sure to review the “Hints for writing . . .” as you work on your microtheme—they really will help you to produce a better paper!

If you have questions as you work, do not hesitate to consult with an instructor!

4. Oppositions in the Oresteia

Instructions: The three plays of Aeschylus’ Oresteia are woven together with complex imagery that relies in part on oppositions which can be analyzed through a structuralist approach to the myth. This exercise asks you collect examples of these oppositional images (using the list below) and to chart patterns in them. Pick 2 of the following choral odes to work on:

- Agamemnon 218-324
- Agamemnon 452-505
- Agamemnon 632-75
- Libation Bearers 281-310
- Eumenides 215-71
- Eumenides 353-86.

After you have found examples, write a couple of paragraphs answering the following questions:

- Which characters or actions or ideas are associated with these oppositions?

- What patterns do you observe in Aeschylus’ use of these oppositions?

- To what extent are these opposite images used consistently, for example, is Apollo always associated with light and control?

- Where does Aeschylus break the pattern of opposites? How can we account for Aeschylus’ use of images that break the pattern?

Oppositions in Imagery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity/plain speaking</td>
<td>Obscurity/riddles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td>Senses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apollo</td>
<td>Erinyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olympian</td>
<td>Chthonic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unbinding(will, salvation)</td>
<td>Binding (Fate, spell)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage (in-laws)</td>
<td>Kinship (birth family)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law (court)</td>
<td>Ritual (altar)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>Act</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odd (3)</td>
<td>Even (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>Limit/Boundary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Barbarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Household</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future/Young</td>
<td>Past/Old</td>
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<tr>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above</td>
<td>Below</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head/Phallos</td>
<td>Belly/Womb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Study Guide and Questions for the Midterm Exam

Your study guide should include:

- a list of mythological figures we have studied so far
- a list of key terms and concepts that we have used in our analysis of myth
- a list of myths we have studied so far with a brief summary of each.
- a list of modern poets and the titles of the poems we have read with a brief description of their perspective on the mythological figure that they address.
- a selection of at least 3 important passages from the poetry, ancient and modern, that we have read so far. When you select passages, think about which ones would work well on an exam that asks you to identify the mythological figure presented in the poem. So, the passages should not name the mythological figure, but they should provide key details that allow someone to recognize the figure and the myth.

Your study guide must be typed, readable, and neatly presented.


7. Collection of Poetic Images

Review the modern poems about Daphne and Apollo. Choose any four poems and make a list of the poetic images each poet uses to describe Daphne and Apollo, respectively. Next to each word or phrase, write a brief interpretation of the image. Your list may take any form you like, but it must be typed, readable, and neatly presented.

8. Microtheme (10 points): Analysis of a Commercial Appropriation of Myth

Find a print advertisement or a commercial website (that is, a site explicitly devoted to making money) that explicitly names any mythological figure(s) we have read about this semester.
Next, follow these steps:
1. Print out or photocopy the image or any relevant web pages. In the case of a magazine ad, cut it out to turn in with the rest of the assignment.
2. On the back of the image or on a separate sheet of paper, write as much information as you can about the source where you found it. If you found it in a magazine, describe the type of magazine and its intended readership. If you found it on the Web, include the complete URL (web address) and also a brief account of how you found the site and what its commercial aims are--include as much information and analysis as you can!
3. Find and read the passage in Ovid’s Metamorphoses (or in other texts from this class) where the story of this figure is told.
4. Write a one-page microtheme in which you analyze the website or advertisement and its relationship to earlier accounts of the myth. (Please keep in mind, however, that there is no such thing as an “original” version of any myth---Ovid, too, is updating old stories to suit his own times). Ask yourself the following questions:
   - What perspectives on the myth does the site or ad convey?
   - Does use of the mythological figure(s) correspond fairly closely with Classical representations, or has the myth been retold or imagined in some completely different way?
   - Which Classical sources informed the use of mythology on this website? Which details point to the classical source?
   - For what commercial aims has this myth been appropriated, and why?
   - What specific visual details (color, composition, representations of various figures) does the creator of the site or ad employ, and why?
   - Does the ad or site achieve its aim of using mythology to sell a product? Why or why not?

9. Greek v. Roman

Review the mythological figures, gods and goddesses that we have discussed so far, with special attention to the figures from this week, Jupiter and Neptune, and write a page or so that considers the following questions:
   - How is Greek and Roman mythology the same?
   - How do they differ? Beyond the names of the deities, what difference do you find in the sources, attitudes, and modern responses to, respectively, Greek and Roman representations of the same mythological figure?
   - How are these factors related, that is, how does the nature of the sources (e.g. Ovid versus Homeric Hymn) affect our view of myth in each culture? How can we ‘correct’ for the bias of our sources?
   - What can we learn from the modern poems about our own assumptions about the differences between Greek and Roman myth?

10. Personalizing Myth

Rita Dove used the Demeter myth to explore her own experience of mother-daughter relations. Several decades earlier, D. H. Lawrence used the same myth to demonize the women who wanted
the vote in Britannia. Rainer Maria Rilke used the figures of Orpheus and Eurydice as a key to his poems about life, art, and transformation, whereas Margaret Atwood used the same myth in her reflections on men and women, their autonomy and dependence on each other.

Write a poem, short story, or prose paragraph in which you explore the relevance of a figure from Classical Mythology for some event in your own life or in the life of someone you know. You may select any figure that we have studied this semester so long as the figure is treated in a poem or in a significant section of a longer poem such as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. (See also assignment 13—you will be using this poem for a microtheme!)

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11. Museum Visit

Instead of meeting for discussion section this week, please spend an hour at the Indiana University Art Museum looking at depictions of classical myths in Greek and Roman art and write a response to two pieces, one vase and one sculpture, from the lists below. Use the glossary and index to *Classical Myth. Image and Insight* to fill in any background information you need.

**Greek Vases**

- Black Figure Amphora 73.6 Herakles and Nessus
- Black Figure Amphora 62.201 Apollo and Muses
- Black Figure Hydra 77.33 Herakles and Triton
- Black Figure Krater 85.35 Achilles and Penthesilea
- Red Figure Hydra 64.68 Eos and Tithonus
- Red Figure Situla 70.97.1 Actaeon
- Red Figure Wedding Bowl 75.104 Eros
- Red Figure Dinos with stand 80.27.2 Europa

**Sculpture**

- Marble, 81.59.4, Artemis of Ephesus
- Marble, Sarcophagus panel, 66.27, Aphrodite
- Bronze Mirror, 74.23, Judgement of Paris
- Gold Pendant, Siren 17.50.1, Siren

Each of your two responses should answer the following questions:

- Which episode from Greek mythology is depicted?
- How did you recognize the story and/or the characters?
- What part/s of the story are depicted?
- How is this visual representation of the myth similar to the literary versions we have read? How does it differ?
- Why do you like this piece? (or not, as the case may be!)

***Be sure to include a description of the piece, with accession number.

You may visit the Museum any time during regular hours, Tuesday through Saturday 10-5, Sunday 12-5, and admission is free. Ancient Greek and Roman art is located in the second floor
gallery of the Museum. It is not permitted to carry large bags or coats into the gallery, so the Museum has lockers on the first floor behind the information desk. The lockers take a quarter (and give it back to you when you're done); if you get to the Museum without a quarter, the guard at the information desk usually has a supply. You will also need to bring a pencil to take notes; pens are not allowed in the gallery (there are also pencils at the front desk if you forget).

This assignment is due in lecture on Monday 13 November 2006.

12. Microtheme (10 points): New Perspectives on a Mythological Figure

Instructions: First, re-read your own poem on a mythological figure (Assignment 10) with the following questions in mind:

• Do you use plenty of concrete imagery to convey abstract emotion?
• Does your poem present a new and clearly expressed perspective on the myth?
• Do you revise, respond to, or otherwise take into account other literary retellings of the story?

If you answer any of these questions in the negative, take some time to revise your poem accordingly.

Next, write a microtheme (one page, single-spaced) in which you explicitly compare and contrast your poem to one poem we have read in the class that treats the same mythological figure. Follow the same structure and ask yourself the same questions as you did for your first microtheme (Assignment 3). Analyze your own poem just as carefully as you would the work of any other writer. In order to earn full points for this assignment, you must discuss similarities and differences in imagery, diction, and historical context as well as point of view.

With Assignment #12, please hand in a copy of your poem (Assignment #10) and a copy of the poem to which you compare it.

You may hand in Assignment #12 in lecture on Monday 20 November IF you attend section on Friday 13 November.


14. Why is Roman mythology so hard to revise?

• Pick two figures or episodes from Ovid’s Fasti that show why Roman mythology seems so foreign to us, and explain why.
• Pick two more that seem to connect with contemporary issues, that is, figures or episodes that would be easy to express modern concerns, and explain which modern issues and why the figures are suitable.
• For all four figures, give the reference for the passage in the Fasti (book.lines).
Be sure to refer to specific details that support your explanation.

15. No Section. No Assignment.

You may, of course, prepare a study guide for the Final Exam as you did for the Midterm Exam.