

REL 341.001 THEORIES OF MYTH

Spring 2021

Lectures: Thursdays 3:30 – 5:50 at PRH210

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Office Hours: In person on Thursdays 2:30pm-3:30pm (or via zoom)

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Course Website

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-341-001-theories-of-myth-3/>

I. Description

From Hercules to Achilles, to Odysseus, and from Oedipus Rex to Medea, myths of the ancient Greek world are as popular today as they were thousands of years ago. Why do we re-tell those ancient myths today? What makes something a myth? What's the difference between a myth and a story? Is it the great deeds of the supernatural characters? How did scholars try to explain the origin and function of myths? Do we produce myths today? The course will address those questions by looking at several myths of the ancient Greco-Roman world but also will look at the theories scholars developed in order to understand those stories.

II. Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe myths of the ancient Greek world.
- Describe and discuss theories of myth.
- Summarize and analyze assigned reading material.
- Implement the above knowledge in writing assignments and oral presentations.

III. Readings

This course has no required books but PDF readings that will be available through the course's Blackboard site. The schedule below provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day. Doing all of your assigned readings well in advance of class is important because our seminar and the discussions all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings.

IV. Class Meetings

COVID-19 Adjustments and Style of Instruction

Given the numbers of infections in the state and elsewhere in the country, along with UA's response (e.g., mandated social distancing in all classrooms, thereby significantly reducing each room's capacity) as well as concerns student have expressed regarding the risks associated with in-person meetings, we will at least begin this hybrid course in a remote fashion, then meeting masked and in-person (if possible) for subsequent classes, always prepared to use weekly Zoom videoconference sessions, during our regularly scheduled time, if necessary. **All students are therefore required to have masks for in-person meetings—whether in our classroom or some other venue, e.g., outside—and also sufficient technological resources and competencies to participate fully in any remote class.** When doing so, cameras are expected to be on, so please select your Zoom location wisely—the University provides safe

spaces throughout campus where you can log in to your virtual class (find more info here: <https://cit.ua.edu/virtual-learning-spaces/>).

V. Excused absences

Evidence of your legitimate absence must be presented to the professor in a timely fashion if you wish it not to count against you in the seminar. If you miss a presentation, that you were responsible for, you must contact the professor immediately to explain and document your legitimate absence, and you will be required to hand in your presentation as a writing assignment, the next class.

VI. Requirements and Assignments

Regular attendance, adequate preparation for each day's readings, and active participation will be necessary requirements for this class as well as the following assignments

1. Abstracts (60%)

You will be required to write 12 abstracts on the reading of the day (see tentative schedule below), that accurately describe the argument of the reading for that week, avoiding all assessment, commentary, or quotation, and which has to be **followed by one question (worth 1% out of 5%)**; each abstract should be a paragraph long (no more than one page), typed, double spaced, and with a 12 point Times Roman or Times New Roman font. Each abstract is worth 5% of your course grade for a total of 60%. Abstracts should be uploaded on blackboard before our scheduled class time **no late abstracts will be accepted.**

2. Presentations (20%)

Throughout the course each student will have to make 2 presentations (assigned during the first day of class). Each presentation will worth 10% of your course grade for a total of 20%.

- *Presentation I:* Each student will choose one reading (to be assigned on the first day of class) and be prepared to lead a discussion. Presenters are expected to introduce the author of the article and summarize its arguments and conclusion.
- *Presentation II:* You will be required to make a power point presentation of a myth (whether ancient or modern)

3. Final Writing Assignment (20%)

At the end of the course you will be required to write a paper (between 2000 and 2500 words) applying things taught in the course at the piece of data you presented in class (see *Presentation II*).

VII. Grading Scale

A+	95-100%	C	70-74
A	90-94	D+	65-69
B+	85-89	D	60-64
B	80-84	D-	50-59
C+	75-79	F	below 50

VIII. General Comments

1. Plagiarism is a serious scholarly offence and amounts to using the intellectual labor of another author without proper quotation, citation, and acknowledgment. If the instructor suspects that a student has copied the work of another author (whether that author is a peer, classmate, or published author), the case will immediately be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

2. No grades of "I" (incomplete) will be assigned in this course. In my experience, when awarded at the 100-level a grade of "I" rarely leads to the completion of course requirements. Please speak with me well in advance if you are having difficulties satisfactorily completing the course's requirements on time or if you anticipate your absence from class becoming routine. Although I cannot guarantee that reasonable accommodations can be made for all occasion that may arise, speaking with me before a problem arises

will greatly enhance our ability to address the situation in a way that is both fair to your classmates and beneficial to you.

3. Students with documented physical and/or learning disabilities should contact the professor outside of class time as soon as possible to review documentation and discuss accommodations. Also, students should familiarize themselves with the Office of Disability Services at <http://www.ods.ua.edu>.

4. All University faculty, staff, and students are expected to maintain a commitment to the health and safety of our campus community. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, specific health and safety standards are in place to minimize exposure and community spread on campus. In the interest of your health and safety and that of all UA students, faculty and staff, the University reserves the right to change the mode of instruction or schedule of instruction at any time, based upon prevailing public health and other guidance. While the method of delivery may change, educational instruction and opportunities will continue. As such, the University will not provide a refund of tuition, in whole or in-part, based on any such changes. Detailed information on changes in format or schedule can be found at:

<https://studentaccounts.ua.edu/> and <https://financialaid.ua.edu/>.

5. All students must be familiar with and abide by the requirements outlined in the UA Return Plan | UA System Comprehensive Health and Safety Plan. Students must (1) wear a mask or face covering at all times while participating in face-to-face class; (2) adhere to social distancing standards; and (3) comply with all other health and safety restrictions. If a student refuses to comply with the requirements, the student will be asked to leave the class and reported for a conduct violation.

Unless a student has an exemption from the requirement to wear a face covering, (more information can be found at <http://ods.ua.edu/covid-19-disability/>), the student will be reported to Student Life for further disciplinary action. More information on these requirements and UA Healthcheck system and screening can be found at healthinfo.ua.edu/returnplan. You are expected to visit the site and comply with all noted requirements related to in-person class attendance.

6. UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at www.ua.edu. In the event of an emergency, students consult this site for further directions. Also familiarize yourselves with UA's Severe Weather Protocol at www.prepare.ua.edu

7. The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides a list of reporting channels that can be used to report incidences of illegal discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, sexual violence, retaliation, threat assessment or fraud.

IX. Tentative Schedule

Jan. 14 Intro to the Course

Jan. 21 **Historical Theory**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Jan. 28 **Symbolic Theory**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Feb. 4 **Psychoanalytical Theory**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Feb. 11 **Structuralist Theory**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Feb. 18 **Functionalist Theory**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Feb. 25 **Redescribing Myth I**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Mar. 4 **Redescribing Myth II**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Mar. 11 **Redescribing Myth III**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Mar. 18 **Redescribing Myth IV**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Mar. 25 **Complicating Myth I**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Apr. 1 **Complicating Myth II**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Apr. 8 **Complicating Myth III**

Presentation I: _____

Presentation II: _____

Apr. 15 Movie Avalon

Hand in First Draft of your Final Paper

Apr. 22 Individual meetings

Final Paper Due April 29