

REL 419.001 Advanced Studies in Myth and Ritual

Fall 2021

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

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Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30pm-1:30pm via zoom (link available on Blackboard)

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Course Website

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-419-001-adv-studies-in-myth-and-ritual/>

I. Description

Core writing course examining the theories and methods used to study the relations between narrative and behavioral systems, with a focus on those known as myths and rituals.

II. Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe some of the narratives and practices that define the forms of myths and rituals covered by the course.
- Discuss and explain key concepts and theories in the academic study of myth and ritual.
- Apply the above knowledge to analyze myths and rituals, including those narratives and actions presumed not to be myths or rituals.
- Implement the above knowledge in writing assignments.
- Develop public presentation skills by presenting in class and responding to feedback.

III. Readings and Blackboard Modules

This course has not required books but PDF readings. The schedule below provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day. Those readings will be available through the blackboard course site's weekly modules-which will also include your weekly assignment. Doing all your assigned readings well in advance of class is important because our lectures, discussions and writing assignments all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings.

IV. 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.

V. 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 (30%)

You will be required to write 10 abstracts summarizing the readings of the day (see tentative schedule below), describing the argument of the readings, avoiding all assessment, commentary, or quotation. Each abstract has to be **followed by one question (worth 0.5% out of 3%)**; each abstract should be a paragraph long (between 150-200 words), typed, double spaced, and with a 12 point Times Roman or Times New Roman font. Each abstract is worth 3% of your course grade for a total of 30%. 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) involving leading the discussion of the readings. Presenters are expected to introduce the author of the readings and summarize its arguments and conclusion. Each presentation will worth 10% of your course grade for a total of 20%.

3. Project Presentation (20%)

You will be required to make two power point presentations one on a myth and the other on a ritual (ancient or modern) applying things taught in the course. Both presentations must be accompanied by a bibliography. The bibliography should include at least 1 or more academic books and 4 or more academic articles related to the topic.

4. Final Writing Assignment (30%)

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 Project Presentation).

VI. 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

VII. General Comments

1. 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 studentaccounts.ua.edu and financialaid.ua.edu.

2. UA students, faculty and staff are required to comply with [UA System Comprehensive Health and Safety Task Force](#) guidance regarding social distancing, face coverings and other measures. Face coverings shall be required indoors on all System campuses where social distancing cannot be maintained. **Face coverings are required at all times while in classroom settings**, medical facilities, and medical clinical settings, until otherwise instructed by the University.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to [protect yourself and our herd](#). COVID-19 vaccines are being administered by the [University Medical Center, the Student Health Center](#) and various businesses and healthcare providers. Students who [report proof of their vaccination status](#) will receive Bama Cash as a thank you gift for doing their part.

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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>.
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.

VIII. Tentative Schedule

Aug. 18 Intro to the Course

Myth and Ritual

Aug. 25 McCutcheon's "Myth" and Grimes's "Ritual"

Theories of Myth

Sep. 1 Lincoln's "The History of Myth from the Renaissance to the Second World War" and Lincoln's "From the 2nd World War to the Present" From *Theorizing Myth* (1999).

Sep. 8 Lincoln's "Myth, Sentiment, and the Construction of Social Forms" and Lincoln's "The Politics of Myth" from *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (1989)

Sep. 15 Movie "Avalon"

Sep. 22 Lincoln's "Avalon"
Touna "Gloria Patri" from *Fabrications of the Greek Past* (2017)

Sep. 29 Barthes's *Mythologies* (pages 109-159)

From the same book you should read the following two page chapters (no abstract required):

"The Romans in Films" pages 26-28

"Wine and Milk" pages 58-59

"Soap-powders and Detergents" pages 36-38

Oct. 6 **Project Presentations I**

Theories of Ritual

Oct. 13 Van Gennep "The Classification of Rites" from *The Rites of Passage* (2019 [1908])
and Lincoln "On the Nature of Women's initiation" from *Emerging from the Chrysalis* (1991)

Oct. 20 Marcel Mauss *The Gift* (1990 [1950])

Oct. 27 Lincoln's "Ritual, Rebellion, Resistance: Rethinking the Swazi Ncwala" from *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (1989)

Nov. 3 Smith "The Bare facts of Ritual" and "A Pearl of Great Price and a Cargo of Yams: A Study in Situational Incongruity" from *Imagining Religion* (1982)

Nov. 10 Touna "The Political Utility of the Past: The Case of Greek Fire-Walking Rituals" from *Hijacked: A Critical Treatment of the Public Rhetoric of Good and Bad Religion* (2020)

Nov. 17 Myth and Ritual reconsidered

Nov. 24 **No Class**

Dec. 1 **Project Presentations II**

Final Papers Due: Wednesday December 8 by the end of the day.