

# REL 341.001 THEORIES OF MYTH FALL 2022

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

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Course Website

<https://religion.ua.edu/courses/rel-341-001-theories-of-myth-4/>

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## 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. **You must always come to class having a hard copy of the reading.**

## IV. Attendance and Requirements for missed Assignments

Attendance and participation are key to succeed in the course. You are responsible for doing the required readings and assignments in a timely manner. **Late work will only be accepted with permission from the professor and only within reasonable time after the due date.** There is no guarantee that late assignments will be accepted—that is up to the professor's discretion on a case-by-case basis and points may be deducted for late submissions. If an emergency arises, and you foresee having to miss multiple assignments, you must make arrangements with the professor.

## 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 (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 between 250-300 words. 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%.

- **Reading 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.
- **Project 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 of minimum 1500 words (about 5 double spaced pages with Time New Roman 12) applying things taught in the course at the piece of data/myth you presented in class (see *Presentation II*).

## 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. 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. UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at [www.ua.edu](http://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](http://www.prepare.ua.edu)

6. The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website ([www.ua.edu/uact](http://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. 17 Intro to the Course—"What is Myth?"

Readings: 1. "Myth" from *HarperCollins's Dictionary of Religion*.

2. "Myth" from *Religion in 50 More Words*.

Aug. 24 **Theories of Myth I:**

**McCutcheon's "Myth" (Abstract 1) and Cohen "Theories of Myth"**

Reading Presentation:

Reading Presentation:

Aug. 31 **Theories of Myth II:**

**Lincoln's "The Prehistory of Mythos and Logos" (Abstract 2)**

Reading Presentation:

Project Presentation:

Project Presentation:

Sept. 7 **Theories of Myth III:**

**Lincoln's "From Homer through Plato" (Abstract 3)**

Reading Presentation:

Project Presentation:

Sept. 14 **Theories of Myth IV:**

**Lincoln's "The History of Myth from the Renaissance to the WWII" (Abstract 4)**

Reading Presentation:

Project Presentation:

Project Presentation:

- Sept. 21      **Theories of Myth V:**  
**Lincoln's "From the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War to the Present"** (Abstract 5)  
**Lincoln's "Epilogue: Scholarship as Myth"**  
Reading Presentation:  
Project Presentation:
- Sept. 28      **Theories of Myth VI:**  
**Strenski "Owing 'Myth': Conceptual Considerations"** (Abstract 6)  
Reading Presentation:  
Project Presentation:
- Oct. 5        **Redescribing Myth I: Movie**  
**Lincoln's "Mythic Narrative and Cultural Diversity in American Society"**  
Reading Presentation:
- Oct. 12      **Redescribing Myth II:**  
**Lincoln's "Myth, Sentiment, and the Construction of Social Borders"** (Abstract 7)  
**Lincoln's "The Politics of Myth"**  
Reading Presentation:  
Reading Presentation:  
Project Presentation:
- Oct. 19      **Redescribing Myth III:**  
**Lincoln's "Competing Uses of the Future in the Present"** (Abstract 8)  
Reading Presentation:  
Project Presentation:
- Oct. 26      **Complicating Myth I:**  
**Touna "Gloria Patri"** (Abstract 9)  
Reading Presentation:  
Project Presentation:  
Project Presentation:

- Nov. 2      **Complicating Myth II:**  
**Smith “A Pearl of Great Price” (Abstract 10)**  
Reading Presentation:  
Project Presentation:  
Project Presentation:
- Nov. 9      **Complicating Myth III:**  
**Lincoln’s “Between History and Myth” (Abstract 11)**  
Reading Presentation:  
Project Presentation:  
Project Presentation:
- Nov. 16     **Complicating Myth IV:**  
**MacKendrick “What is a Superhero? How Myth can be a Metacode” (Abstract 12)**  
Reading Presentation:
- Nov. 23     **No Classes-Thanksgiving Week**  
**Hand in First Draft of your Final Paper by November 27**
- Nov. 30     Individual meetings

**Final Paper due December 5**