

◆THE HERO'S QUEST◆
Religion, Mythology, and Harry Potter

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Instructor: Sandy Russell Jones
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TTH 3:20 – 4:40pm
Beck 251

*But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There arises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us – to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.
- Matthew Arnold, from The Buried Life*

This course will focus on a major theme found in the mythologies of nearly every major (and minor) world religious tradition: the hero's quest. This common theme appears in the narratives of religions as different as the animism of the Trobriand islanders to the strict monotheism of Islam. While the details differ, representations of the hero's quest follow a remarkably similar pattern across time and distance. We will examine this pattern step by step as it appears in various religious narratives. We will also see how people are still today telling this story, in new ways, with new characters and new adventures, adapting it to contemporary life. In movies, fiction writing, and TV, we humans continue to travel the path of the hero.

Through comparing these popular versions of the hero's quest to those found in formal religious traditions, we will explore the role that this theme plays in human society, both past and present, local and universal. As well as finding commonalities, we will also discover what differs among versions of this story, and think about and discuss what these differences might mean. At a general level, we will explore three types of belief systems: Western (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), Eastern (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism), and Native North American.

Required Books:

The Sacred and the Profane by Mircea Eliade, ISBN-13: 978-0-15-679201-1 ; ISBN-10: 0-15-679201-X

The Neverending Story by Michael Ende, ISBN-10: 0140386335 ISBN-13: 978-0140386332

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle, ISBN-10: 0312367546 ISBN-13: 978-0312367541

The Bhagavad Gita, trans. Stephen Mitchell

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling, ISBN

Learning Goals

Upon successful completion of the course, students will:

- have a comparative understanding of the basic characteristics of major world religions'
- have a firm grasp of the genre of the hero myth, and be able to analyze its role in communicating religious ideals and creating meaning out of a chaotic world
- be able to identify contemporary manifestations of the hero myth, especially in fantasy novels and films, and evaluate their role in contemporary society

Course Requirements and Grading:

Students are required to keep a nearly-weekly blog on the course Sakai site. There will be a new question most weeks about that week's material, and will ask students to consider various conceptual themes presented in class or in course texts. Blog questions and dates will be given in class and posted on Sakai. There will also be a series of three short tests that will consist of short essay questions, and a final short paper that will ask students to choose one or more of the theoretical concepts presented in the course and apply it to one hero myth of a formal religion, and one example of a contemporary interpretation of the hero myth in literature, film or TV.

Weekly blogs	10%
Quiz	5%
Test 1	20%
Test 2	20%
Test 3	15%
Attendance & Participation	10%
Final short paper	20%

Absences for religious observance and medical emergencies are fully excusable, but must be documented.

Student-Wellness Services:

Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

RUSA – The Rutgers University Student Assembly urges that this information be included at the end of every syllabus.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

UPDATED 2016-01-11

COURSE SCHEDULE

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
DEFINITIONS	
1/19 The Hero Myth, and what it can tell us	1/21 <i>Finding Joe</i> prepare -Blog, Week 1: Introductions (SAKAI) -Acquire your books
1/26 What is Religion? prepare -Ring Ch 1 (SAKAI in "Resources") - <i>Harry Potter</i> , Chs 1-4	1/28 What is Myth? prepare -Thury Ch 1 & 2 (SAKAI) - <i>Harry Potter</i> , Ch 5
2/2 TOOL: Campbell's Monomyth prepare -Thury Ch 15 (SAKAI) -Campbell I (SAKAI) - <i>Harry Potter</i> , Chs 6-8	2/4 MYTH HERO: Gilgamesh prepare -Thury Ch 16 (SAKAI) - <i>Harry Potter</i> , Ch 9
The WESTERN (Abrahamic) TRADITIONS	
2/9 QUIZ / Lecture: Western Traditions prepare -review	2/11 FILM HERO: <i>Rise of the Guardians</i> prepare -Harry Potter, Ch 12

-Harry Potter, Chs 10-11	-Campbell II
<p>2/16 LIT HERO: Harry Potter (Active Learning Groups)</p> <p>prepare - finish Harry Potter - Eliade, Intro</p>	<p>2/18 TOOL: Sacred Space</p> <p>prepare - Eliade Ch 1</p>
<p>2/23 MYTH HERO: Moses (ALG)</p> <p>prepare -Torah (SAKAI) -Gospel (SAKAI) -Qur'an (SAKAI)</p>	<p>2/25 TEST I</p> <p>prepare -review</p>
EASTERN TRADITION	
<p>3/1 Lecture: A Glimpse at Hinduism</p> <p>prepare -Easwaran (SAKAI) -Bhagavad Gita, Chs -Wrinkle in Time, Chs</p>	<p>3/3 MYTH HERO: Rama (ALG)</p> <p>prepare -Thury Ch 18 (SAKAI) -Bhagavad Gita, Chs -Wrinkle in Time, Chs</p>
<p>3/8 TOOL: Time</p> <p>prepare -Eliade Ch 2 -L'Engle (SAKAI) -Wrinkle in Time, Chs -Bhagavad Gita, Chs</p>	<p>3/10 MYTH HERO: Arjuna (ALG) LIT HERO: Meg</p> <p>prepare -finish Bhagavad Gita -finish <i>Wrinkle in Time</i></p>
<p>3/15 ~ ~ ~ SPRING BREAK ~ ~ ~</p> <p>prepare -<i>Neverending Story</i>, Chs</p>	<p>3/17 ~ ~ ~ SPRING BREAK ~ ~ ~</p> <p>prepare -<i>Neverending Story</i>, Chs</p>
<p>3/22 Lecture: A Glimpse at Taoism</p> <p>prepare -Tao de Ching (SAKAI) -<i>Neverending Story</i>, Chs</p>	<p>3/24 FILM HERO: Groundhog Day</p> <p>prepare -Campbell III (SAKAI) -<i>Neverending Story</i>, Chs</p>
<p>3/29 ANALYSIS: Phil (ALG)</p> <p>prepare -TBD -<i>Neverending Story</i>, Chs</p>	<p>3/31 LIT HERO: Bastian Balthazar Bux (ALG)</p> <p>prepare -finish <i>Neverending Story</i></p>
NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS	
<p>4/5 TEST II</p> <p>prepare -review</p>	<p>4/7 Lecture: Native American traditions</p> <p>prepare -TBD (SAKAI)</p>

4/12 TOOL: Ritual prepare -Eliade Ch 3 -Ring Ch 4	4/14 MYTH HERO: the Trickster (ALG) prepare -Thury Chs 8, 23 (SAKAI)
Test Cases for Analysis	
4/19 FILM HERO: The Lego Movie prepare - <i>Illusions</i> , Ch 1-5	4/21 ANALYSIS: Emmet, “the Special” prepare -Campbell IV (SAKAI) - <i>Illusions</i> , Chs 6-7
4/26 LIT HERO: Richard (ALG) prepare - <i>Illusions</i> , Ch 8 -end	4/28 <u>TEST III</u> prepare -review
5/9 PAPER DUE by 5pm – submit via SAKAI in “Assignments”	

* * * Have a great summer! May you always find your Center... * * *