

MYTH, PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

RELI 065 (Spring 2013)
Global Center 3024 12:30-1:45 TR

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W 2:00-3:00 or by appointment
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This interdisciplinary course explores various, often conflicting ways of shaping reality in the ancient world – religious, scientific, and philosophical. The course is organized around a series of case studies: (1) the formation and makeup of the cosmos; (2) the origin of mankind and its sexual differentiation; (3) the invention of the ‘self’; (4) the origin and nature of dreams; (5) foundations of law, justice, and culture. Short papers, in-class discussions, and oral presentations will be used to reconstruct the complex intellectual world of natural scientists, philosophers, oral story-tellers, ethnographers, and cultural historians throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. Readings include Near Eastern mythical narratives and Homeric poems and hymns; selections from the earliest Greek philosophers and from Plato’s dialogues; works from the famous Hippocratic corpus and Galen’s medical treatises; and a number of religious texts from ancient Greece and Rome, early Christianity, and late antiquity.

1. This is an introductory course: **no previous knowledge** of the subject is required. Regular attendance is **mandatory**. The course will be conducted as a discussion-oriented seminar. Each participant is expected to come to class **fully prepared** in order to respond critically to the assigned reading and relate it to broader theoretical issues discussed in this course (*myth vs. philosophy, nature vs. culture, ‘primitive’ vs. rational way of thinking, scientific innovation vs. religious traditionalism*).
2. Each student will be asked to choose one class session and introduce us into its subject matter (for example, by reading her/his reading response statement; see below, no. 3). In addition, each student should prepare an oral report on the term paper topic (ca. 20 minutes), to be delivered in any format deemed most appropriate (traditional lecture, informal question-and-answer discussion, etc.). Most of our time in each class will be dedicated to an in-depth and, hopefully, lively discussion of the weekly readings. To spark discussion, I will identify the focus reading and provide study questions to be addressed while reading and preparing for the class. Various forms of collaboration between students will be strongly encouraged.
3. The course also hopes to improve students’ writing skills. Each student will be required to record her or his reflections on the assigned reading in a daily reading response journal. Other requirements include one short paper (3 pages), due before Spring break, and a longer term paper (6-7 pages), to be delivered electronically no later than April 19.

BREAKDOWN OF THE COURSE GRADE:

Class participation (in-class discussions, class facilitation, oral presentations)	50%
One short paper (2-3 pages), daily reading response diary (ca. 250 words)	25%
Term paper (7-8 pages)	25%

TEXTS:

The Epic of Gilgamesh, trans. A. George
Hesiod, *Theogony, Works and Days*, trans. M.L. West
Early Greek Philosophy, ed. trans. J. Barnes
Hippocratic Writings, ed. G.E.R. Lloyd
Sophocles, *Three Theban Plays: Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone*, transl. R. Fagles
Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. H. D. Lee
Plato, *Symposium*
Plato, *Trial and Death of Socrates (Apology and Phaedo)*, trans. B. Jowett
Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. R.B. Rutherford
A. Gregory, *Eureka! The Birth of Science* (OPTIONAL)

In addition, you will find a number of various primary sources and modern scholarly articles on Sakai.

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. COURSE INTRODUCTION

Weeks One: Preliminary Remarks

- Jan 10 **Defining Terms: Myth, Science, and Reason in the Ancient World and Today**
Read: K. Popper, "Science as Falsification," 1-4 (Sakai); G. S. Kirk, "On Defining Myths," 53-61 (Sakai)

II. CASE STUDY ONE: THE UNIVERSE—ITS CREATION AND STRUCTURE

Week Two: "Metaphors We Live By"

- Jan 15 **Mesopotamian and Egyptian Creation Stories**
Read: The Babylonian Poem 'Enuma Elish' ("When on High") 31-39 (Sakai); Akkadian Myths and Epics: *The Creation Epic* (Sakai); J. Assman, "Cosmotheism as a Form of Knowledge," 204-213 (Sakai); "The Memphite Theology of Creation," 1-5 (Sakai)
- Jan 17 **Biblical Accounts of Creation: From God's Creative Word to Dame Wisdom**
Read: *Genesis* 1-6; *Wisdom of Solomon* 7-9; *Sirach* 24; *Proverbs* 1-8; *Gospel of John* 1:1-18; E. Leach, "Genesis as Myth," 7-23 (Sakai)

Week Three: From Myth to Philosophy?

- Jan 22 **Earliest Greek Cosmogonies, from Hesiod to the Presocratics**
Read: Hesiod, *Theogony*, trans. M.L. West; J. Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophers* 9-17, 48-73, 111-50 (this last section is optional), 185-200; Gregory, *Eureka*, pp. 1-28 (optional)
- Jan 24 **Plato's Universe: The Craftsman and His Model**
Read: Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. H. D. Lee, 29-82; Gregory, *Eureka*, pp. 47-73 (optional)
- Week Four: **Chance vs. Providence, Freedom vs. Necessity**
- Jan 29 **Atoms, Void, and the Swerve: Democritus and Epicurus**
Read: J. Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophers* 203-253; "Epicurus: Atomic Motion" 46-52 (Sakai)
- Jan 31 **Providential Universe of the Stoics: Marcus Aurelius**
Read: Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. R. B. Rutherford; Gregory, *Eureka*, pp. 98-114 (optional)

III. CASE STUDY TWO: THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF HUMAN BEINGS

Week Five: "Male and Female He Created Them (It?)"

- Feb 5 **The Story of Adam and Eve and Its Near Eastern Parallels**
Read: *Genesis* 1-3; *Atrabasis* (excerpt) in: J. O'Brien and W. Major, *In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Ancient Mesopotamia, Israel and Greece*, 70-86 (Sakai); Apollodorus, *The Library* 1.7 ("The Deucalionids"), pp. 36-37 (Sakai)
- Feb 7 **Jewish and Christian Views on Sex and Gender: Philo and Paul**
Read: Paul, *1 Corinthians*; Philo, *A Treatise on the Account of the Creation of the World as Given by Moses* (abridged, with an interview with Peder Borgen) (Sakai)

Weeks Six: Sexual Differentiation

- Feb 12 **Pandora’s Jar and the Myth of the Original Androgyny**
Read: Hesiod, *Works and Days*, trans. M.L. West; J.-P. Vernant, “Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod,” pp. 183-199 (Sakai)
- Feb 14 **“Females Created from Thinner Seeds”—Ancient Greek Science and Sex-Determination**
Read: Presocratic Philosophers on the origins of male and female (Sakai); Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 1.1-3, 17-23; 2.1-6 (Sakai); *Hippocratic Writings*, ed. G.E.R. Lloyd, 317-45 (*The Seed* and *The Nature of the Child*); Gregory, *Eureka*, pp. 115-135 (optional)

IV. CASE STUDY THREE: “KNOW THYSELF”

Week Seven: What to Make of Oneself: Gilgamesh and Achilles

- Feb 19 **Gilgamesh and the Human Search for Immortality**
Read: *The Epics of Gilgamesh*, trans. A. George, 1-100
- Feb 21 **Achilles, the Mortal Hero—“He Whom the God Loves Dies Young”**
Read: *Iliad*, excerpts from books 9, 18, 22, 24; S. Schein, “War, Death, and Heroism,” 67-88 (Sakai); R. Janko, “The gods in Homer,” 1-7 (Sakai)

Week Eight: ‘Know Thyself’ in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy

- Feb 26 **Human Condition: “Know Thy Limits”**
Read: Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. R. Fagles (*Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*)
- Feb 28 **Discussing Term Papers**

Week Nine: Care of the Self in Medicine, Philosophy and Religion

- Mar 5 **Socrates and His “Demon” – Immortality of the Soul**
Read: Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, trans. Jowett, 55-115 (*Phaedo*)
- Mar 7 **Hippocratic Medicine on the Nature and Constitution of Human Being**
Read: *Hippocratic Writings*, ed. G.E.R. Lloyd, 237-71 (*The Sacred Disease* and *The Nature of Man*)

Mar 8-17 Spring Break (Short Papers Due by March 8)

V. CASE STUDY FOUR: THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF DREAMS

Week Ten: The ‘Self’ in Philosophy and Christianity; Freud and Jung on Dreams

- Mar 19 **Philosophy (“Every Day We Die”) vs. Christianity (“How Do the Dead Rise Again?”)**
Read: Epicurus on Death, selections (Sakai); Seneca, *Letter 24* (Sakai); Paul, *1 Corinthians* 15
- Mar 21 **Modern (Non-Falsifiable) Theories of Dreams and Dreaming**
S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 255-267 (Sakai); C. G. Jung, “On the Nature of Dreams,” 67-83 (Sakai)

Week Eleven: Dreams, Memory and Desires

- Mar 26 **'Liminal' Status of Dreams in Greek Mythology, Literature, and Religion**
Read: Homer, *Odyssey*, Books 19-20, selections (Sakai); "The cult of Asclepius," ed. E. and L. Edelstein (Sakai); M. Foucault, "Dreaming of One's Pleasure," 1-36 (Sakai)
- Mar 28 **Philosophical Interpretations of Dreams**
Read: Aristotle, *On Dreams, On Divination in Sleep* (Sakai)

VI. CASE STUDY FIVE: NATURE vs. CULTURE

Week Twelve: Utopian Imagination

- Apr 2 **Myths of the Golden Age**
Read: Hesiod, *Works and Days*, verses 109-201; Seneca, *Letter XC* (Sakai); Dicaearchus of Messana, "Cultural History" (Sakai); L. T. Sargent, "Utopian Traditions: Themes and Variations," pp. 8-17 (Sakai) T. J. Saunders, "Dicaearchus' Historical Anthropology," pp. 237-254 (Sakai, OPTIONAL)
- Apr 4 **History of Mankind: Progress, Regress, or Reiteration?**
Read: "Epicurus on Society," eds. Long-Sedley, 125-39 (Sakai); "Stoic Ethics: Political Theory," eds. Long-Sedley, 429-437 (Sakai)

Week Thirteen: Beginnings of Political Life

- Apr 9 **In Search of the Perfect Constitution—Plato's *Laws***
Read: Plato, *The Laws*, trans. B. Jowett, Books 1, 3-5 (Sakai); T. Cole, "Cultural Development in Antiquity," 1-9 (Sakai, OPTIONAL)
- Apr 11 **Between Natural Law and Social Contract**
Read: Cicero, *The Laws*, trans. N. Rudd, xxiii-xxxi, 97-149 (Sakai)

VII. COURSE SYNTHESIS

Week Fourteen: Ancient Debates on Myth, Science, and Philosophy

- Apr 16 **Myth, Science, and Philosophy on Prophetic Inspiration**
Read: Plutarch, "Oracles in Decline," trans. D. Russell, pp. 13-56 (Sakai); J. Hale, J. de Boer, J. P. Chanton, and H. A. Spiller, *Questioning the Delphic Oracle* (Scientific American Magazine, July 15, 2003), pp. 1-6 (Sakai)
- Apr 18 **Myth, Science, and Philosophy on the Nature of Love (1)**
Read: Plato's *Symposium* (part 1)

Apr 19 **TERM PAPERS DUE**

Week Fifteen: Epilogue

- Apr 23 **Myth, Science, and Philosophy on the Nature of Love (2)**
Read: Plato's *Symposium* (part 2)
- Apr 25 **Back to the Beginning: Myth, Science and Philosophy, Then and Now**
Read: Plato, *Symposium* (continued); G. Fauconnier and M. Turner, *The Way We Think*, 3-38 (Sakai, OPTIONAL)