



Prof. Dr. Almut-Barbara Renger

Ancient Mythology in Modern Intellectual History

Second Semester 2012–2013

Course Manual

Time and place: Monday, 10.00–12.00 h, Room 123

Course code: THB3GBAM10

Credit points: 10 ECTS

Part of: Degree Program “Religion, Ritual, and Mythology”

Course contents:

With the rediscovery of Greco-Roman culture in the Renaissance, pagan narratives on gods and heroes and the nature of the world came to have a major impact on modern intellectual history as they interacted with more conventional Jewish and Christian themes. Since then Greek, Roman, and Egyptian mythology in particular have remained a fundamental source of inspiration, generating instances of reception in subsequent centuries. In this seminar, through a sustained engagement with selected texts, images, and films, we will examine how elements and structures of ancient mythic narratives have been combined and conflated with new content and signification. The main focus will be on the reception of selected passages of Hesiod’s *Theogony* (above all the myths of Prometheus and Pandora) and Attic tragedy (in particular Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*). Using these texts (in translation) as a starting point, we will look closely at how specific narratives are employed, changed, and reinvented throughout the 20th century in literature and psychoanalysis as well as in paintings, theatre, and film. Theoretical writings on myth and its reception as developed e.g. in the fields of philosophy, anthropology, and comparative religion will provide us with essential background knowledge.

Literature:

A list of texts to be read is to be found below.

Learning goals:

The objective of this seminar is to provide students with a general theoretical framework that is relevant for the academic study of the reception of ancient mythology in modernity. Furthermore, in this course, students will improve their presentation and writing skills.

Specific learning goals:

- Knowledge of ancient mythologies and understanding of the ways they live on and develop in modern thought
- Knowledge of the discussions and methodological approaches related to myth, religion and modernity
- Skills in discussing and presenting own ideas, oral presentation, book review, and writing a short essay

Format:

This course will consist of both lecture and seminar. This means that active participation by students is essential. Although the instructor will give detailed information by means of lectures, work will also be done in collaboration with students who will introduce the readings for the respective week and discuss and present their own ideas. Readings serve as basis for lectures, class discussion, and essay writing.

Assignments and grade breakdown:

Preparation for and active participation in class is compulsory.

Workload: lectures / seminar (14 x 2 hours): 28 hours; discussion on Nestor: 10 hours (20% of the final grade); preparation of presentations: 18 hours (2 x 20% of the final grade); paper: 28 hours (40% of the final grade); expected self-study: 196 hours.

The lectures will take about one hour, the discussions about 30 minutes. A presentation (of a selection of preparatory literature) by a student will take 10-15 minutes. It is essential not just to repeat the content of the reading, but (a) to highlight the crucial argument/ modes of narrative or discourse, (b) provide more information about the context (e.g., the author, the rest of the book, debates that underlie the text, reviews of the book/article, etc.), and (c) to extract a couple of questions or critical remarks that should be discussed in class. The use of handouts is required; Power-Point presentations including images are strongly encouraged. The presentations (even if in preliminary form) have to be sent to the instructor at least five days before the session, otherwise 1.0 will be subtracted from the grade of this assignment. Each student will be responsible for 2 presentations. These will account for 40% (2 x 20%) of the final grade.

Re-examination:

The weighed final grade has to be satisfactory (5.5). If the final grade is unsatisfactory, students can repeat one of the assignments that were unsatisfactory. All material has to be handed in by 7 June 2013.

Program4 February 1. Introduction

Introduction to the course's topic, explanation of assignments, distribution of presentations

11 February 2. What is Myth?

Reading:

– Eva M. Thury & Margaret K. Devinney, "What is Myth," in: Thury & Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology: Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012 [2005], Chapter 1, 1–15.

– Robert A. Segal, "Myth," in: Segal (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, Malden/MA: Blackwell 2006, 337–355.

Additional material:

– Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in: Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957), selected and translated from the French by Annette Lavers, New York: The Noonday Press, 1991, 107–164.

Presentation:
3-5 students

18 February 3. Introduction into Greek Mythology

Reading:

– Timothy Gantz, “The Early Gods,” in: Gantz, *Early Greek Myth. A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993, 1–56.

Additional material:

– *The History Channel: Gods & Goddesses*, 100 min., A&E Home Video, 2006; published also partly on youtube, e.g. 08-29-2012 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN_tZKacw6o.

Presentation/ critique:
2-3 students

25 February 4. The Myths of Prometheus and Pandora: Divine vs. Mortal, Man vs. Woman, Sacrifice and Betrayal

Reading:

– Hesiod, *Theogony. Works and Days*, transl. with an introduction and notes by M. L. West, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988: *Theogony* 507–616 (Prometheus); 560–612 (Pandora); *Works and Days* 42–105 (Prometheus); 60–105 (Pandora).

– Jean-Pierre Vernant, “The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod,” in: Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, New York: Zone Books, 1980, 183–201.

– Froma I. Zeitlin, “Signifying Difference: The Myth of Pandora,” in: Richard Hawley & Barbara Levick (ed.), *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, London/New York: Routledge, 1995, 58–74.

Additional material:

– Jean-Pierre Vernant, “At Man’s Table: Hesiod’s Foundation Myth of Sacrifice,” in: Marcel Detienne & Vernant (eds.), *The Cui-*

sine of Sacrifice among the Greeks, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 21–86.

Presentation:
1-2 students

11 March 5. First Women in Creation: Similarities of Hesiod's Pandora and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination

Reading:

– Dora and Erwin Panofsky, *Pandora's Box: The Changing Aspects of a Mythical Symbol*, New York: Pantheon, 1956, 27–113.

– Susan Felleman, *Botticelli in Hollywood: The Films of Albert Lewin*, New York: Twayne, 1997, chapter 4, 81-99.

Additional material:

– Albert Lewin (director), *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, 122 min., England, 1951.

Presentation:
1-2 students

18 March 6. Pandora and the Flying Dutchman: Ancient Greek Myth and Dutch Legend

Reading:

– Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4: *Der fliegende Holländer: Romantische Oper in drei Aufzügen*, ed. by Egon Voss, Mainz: Schott, 2001.

The libretto in German:

<http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Wagner,+Richard/Musikdramen/Der+fliegende+Holländer>

The libretto in English:

http://www.impresario.ch/libretto/libwagfli_e.htm

Presentation:
1 student

25 March 7. Hollywood's Star System and the Making of Modern Myths

Reading:

– Jeanine Basinger, *The Star Machine*, New York: A. A. Knopf, 2007, 1–19.

Presentation:
1 student

No classes on 1, 8, 15 April

22 April _____ 8. *Oedipus the King*

Reading:

– Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, translated by Bernard M. W. Knox, New York: Washington Square Press, 1959.
Or: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, translated and with an introduction by David Grene, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

– Jean-Pierre Vernant, “Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of *Oedipus Rex*,” in: Vernant & Pierre Vidal-Naquet (eds.), *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. by Janet Lloyd, New York and Cambridge/MA: Zone Books, 1988, 113–140.

Additional material:

– Vladimir Propp, “Oedipus in the Light of Folklore,” in: Lowell Edmunds & Alan Dundes (eds.), *Oedipus: A Folklore Casebook*, New York: Garland, 1983, 76–121.

– [Figure:] Oedipus seated on a rock ponders the riddle of the Theban Sphinx. Attic red-figure kylix, c. 480/470 BC, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, attributed to the so-called Oedipus Painter.

Presentation:
1-2 students

29 April _____ 9. Oedipus and the Sphinx: Thresholds and Liminality

Reading:

– Arnold van Gennep, “The Classification of Rites,” and “The Territorial Passage,” in: van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* [1908], translated by Monika B. Vizedom & Gabrielle L. Caffee, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, 1–14 and 15–25.

– Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” in: Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Chicago: Aldine, 1969, 94–130.

– Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage,” in: Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, 93–111.

Presentation:
1-2 students

6 May 10. Secrets of the Sphinx: Ancient Greek and Egyptian Mythology in Europe’s Modern Intellectual History

Reading:

– Heinz Demisch, *Die Sphinx: Geschichte ihrer Darstellung von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1977.

Additional material:

– Lorenz Winkler-Horaček (ed.), *Wege der Sphinx: Monster zwischen Orient und Okzident*, Rahden: Westphalia, 2011.

– [Figure:] J. A. D. Ingres, *Œdipe et le Sphinx*, 1808–1825, oil on canvas, 189 × 144 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Ingres first painted this composition in 1808, then altered it before presenting it at the Salon of 1827.

Presentation:
1-2 students

13 May 11. The Oedipus Myth in the 20th century

Reading:

– Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by J. Crick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 200–203, 246–247, 402–403.

– *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, 1887–1904, trans. J. M. Masson. Cambridge, Mass., 1985, 270–273.

– Elzbieta Wesolowska, “The Image of Oedipus in Modern Literature,” in: *Aufidus* 40 (2000), 79–88.

– Marianne McDonald, “The Dramatic Legacy of Myth: Oedipus in Opera, Radio, Television and Film,” in: McDonald & J. Michael Walton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 303–326.

Presentation:
2-4 students

27 May 12. Freud's Oedipus and his Collection of Greek, Roman and Egyptian Antiquities

Reading:

– Sigmund Freud, “The Material and Sources of Dreams,” in: Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (3rd edition), translated by A. A. Brill, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913, Chapter 5 (d): “Typical Dreams”; also on <http://www.bartleby.com/285/5.html>.

Or: Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Chapter 5D: “Typical Dreams”; <http://books.eserver.org/nonfiction/dreams/chap05d.html>.

– Joachim Scharfenberg, “Freud and His Intellectual Roots,” in: Scharfenberg, *Sigmund Freud and His Critique of Religion*, translated by O.C. Dean, Jr., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, 26–48.

Additional material:

– [Figure:] Berggasse 19, Freud's consulting room, detailed view of the end of the couch, including reproduction of Ingres's Oedipus and the Sphinx (Œdipe et le Sphinx). Photograph taken by Edmund Engelmann in 1938 before Freud left Vienna after the Nazi annexation of Austria. Reproduced courtesy of Todd Engelmann and Freud Museum, London.

– [Figure:] Medallion for the fiftieth birthday of Sigmund Freud, 1906, by Carl Maria Schwerdtner, which shows Oedipus and the Sphinx. Its inscription is from Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*: “he who unraveled the great riddle, and was first in power.” Bronze, 60 mm, Archives of the University of Vienna, Inv. 102.2.7.

– Janine Burke, “Introduction,” and “Conversations with the Sphinx,” in: Burke, *The Sphinx on the Table: Sigmund Freud's Art Collection and the Development of Psychoanalysis*, New York: Walker and Company, 2006, 1–8 and 198–220.

Presentation:

1-2 students

3 June 13. With Sophocles contra Freud: Cocteau's Work on Myth

Reading:

– Jean Cocteau, “The Infernal Machine,” translated by Albert Bermel, in: *The Infernal Machine, and Other Plays*, New York: New Directions, 1963, 1–96.

– Ralph Yarrow, “Ambiguity and the Supernatural in Cocteau’s *La machine infernale*,” in: Patrick D. Murphy (ed.), *Staging the Impossible: The Fantastic Mode in Modern Drama*, Westport/Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992, 108–115.

Additional material:

– Second act of *The Infernal Machine*, read from the translation by Carl Wildman:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdKdW42oE-o>

Presentation:

1 student

10 June

14. Conclusion

Concluding discussion and presentation of students’ papers.