

SLLC 299J: Mythology of the Oppressed instructor: j. Unágercka jjuan@umd.edu

*Americans are the descendants of people who came here from somewhere else. The only question is when—Henry L. Gates, Jr.
I would like for children to be taught that the modern United States was built on Indian land by African labor—Walter Johnson.*

DESCRIPTION: While our world is run by financial concerns, behind each of those, there is a human story. **Humans build existence narratively** coalescing into mythologies, as recordings of shared knowledge. While mythological recurrences often correlate with the experience of natural events, the repetition scale points to **cognitive archetypes** and **societal regularities**. The matter is especially interesting from the viewpoint of cultures that did not become dominant, and thus had to adapt their world-views while attempting to preserve them.

The present course is **about narratives and is itself a narrative**, building on the fact that no culture is eternal, and the oppressor often turns oppressed and vice-versa... The experience is divided into two parts, the first led by **scholars commenting** on documentaries and podcasts, the second of an **experiential nature**. In raising questions about the cognitive or social bases of mythology—to be pursued from insights in cultural and literary studies, linguistics, the cognitive sciences, paleo-anthropology, archeology, etc.—the course is designed to help students **think about complex problems from a humanistic perspective**, making **liberal use of the sciences** for that.

PREREQUISITES: In this interdisciplinary class, students **need not have an extensive background**. However, **curiosity about the relevant topics** is expected. Participants are encouraged to apply their own interests to a question that can be approached from different angles, thus contributing to the formation of affinity groups. The objective is to collectively **pursue ideas in a rigorous analytical fashion** and **express them eloquently**.

FORMAT: Prior to the Midterm, foundations for the study of myths are presented through **guest lectures**. Aside from being quizzed about, these are accompanied by reading assignments and individual reflections, focusing on aspects of (short) essay writing: (1) brainstorming, (2) outlining, (3) pitching, (4) drafting, and (5) finalizing. This first half of the semester centers around five core units, each **confronting disparate historical periods**:

Prelude: *The Great Human Odyssey*:

1. From the Mystique of Columbia [1492-1776] ... to the Bronze Age and its collapse [-3500-1000 BC]— ANTIQUITY
2. From the Pilgrims' Voyage to the Colonies [1606-1765] ... to the Viking Sagas [-515-1285 AD] —TI III ATLANTIC
3. From the Revolutionary War (Extended) [1765-1816] ... to the Neolithic Expansion [-7.5K-6K BP] — EURASIA
4. From Manifest Destiny [1816-1898] ... to the scope of the Beringian Landscape [30K BP-1491 AD] —THEAMERICAS
5. From the Civil War and Reconstruction [1854-1877] ... to the African Roots [-200K BP-1526 AD] — AFRICA

Coda: From the New Colossus [1877-1945] ... to the New World Order [1945 - ...?]

Each topic is presented **by an invited lecture and video/reading sources**. Topics correspond to **affinity groups**: (1) Classical Origins, (2) Atlantic Sagas, (3) Eurasian Cosmogonies, (4) American Ends, (5) African ETERNITY. Two weeks into the semester, students choose a group to work with in research/experiential activities.

The Midterm is a **topic abstract posted in the Discussion tool**, with a **position statement** from each group and individual reactions (200 collective words & short responses). Concurrently, each affinity group engages in an analysis—in the specific Wikipedia Foundation format—of a **Wikipedia entry related to their investigation**. This serves to deepen understanding of the topic and practice academic writing. In instances of excellent editing, **the results may be uploaded into Wikipedia** for continued editing by that open-access community.

Affinity groups are to **visit identified sites** (museums, libraries, the field, etc.) **with an undergraduate mentor**. In the process, **minutes** of the experience are expected, as well as an **investigation report** (context, results, discussion). Then each group builds a **website** for their topic, including visuals, sounds, materials, etc. as relevant.

Finally, **each group presents their site to the class**, which acts as a **“panel of experts”** to choose a winner. The “prize” is that the **final exam includes an essay question about the winning website**. An **individual, hand-written, in-class final** exam calibrates what outcomes students have achieved.

Course Goals: Students succeeding in the class should be able to:

- Critically evaluate the comparative mythology literature and related themes.
- Gain skills related to the analysis & production of humanistic studies from a scientific perspective.
- Formulate arguments related to a cognitive and sociological approach to the humanities.

Grading & Assignments: Based on nine criteria (assignments turned in via ELMS and exams in class).

ASSIGNMENT	PROPORTION	DESCRIPTION
Quizzes	5%	Multiple choice questions about lectures & readings.
Lecture Reflections	10%	<1 paragraph written discussion of guest lectures.
MIDTERM	15%	Open forum w/ statement from groups & reactions.
Wikipedia Work	10%	Group work on Wikipedia topic.
Investigation Report	10%	Detailed group report of external visit.
Group presentation	10%	In-class PowerPoint of website.
Website with Analysis	15%	Group organized site based on experiential task.
Individual participation/discussion	5%	Contributions to & engagement in group topic.
FINAL EXAM	20%	Hand-written, in-class, final asking about class topics.

Unjustified late assignments will generally be accepted by the next available class with a 20% penalty, and will not be accepted thereafter. If a student believes to have a university-sanctioned exception to a late assignment policy, they should make this known as soon as possible. Please see the undergraduate catalogue for description of grades, e.g., A+, A, A-, etc.: <http://www.uind.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1534>

Selected Bibliography

Michael Witzel's *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* is used as the general reference text for a first-pass analysis of any of the topics in the class, both in terms of theoretical proposals and summaries of original texts with a mythological basis. The following names and original sources are also suggested, among many others, for students to pursue in the campus library, the Library of Congress, on-line archives, etc.:

RELEVANT THEORY [Author names]: Peirce, Propp, Frazer, Saussure, Jung, Bakhtin Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, Dumézil, Tesnière, Greimas, Eliade, Campbell, Renfrew, Berezkin, Lincoln Bradley...

RELEVANT Originals: *Kesh Temple Hymn, Pyramid Texts, Enheduanna's Hymns, Eridii Genesis, Gilgamesh, Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor, Debate Beel'een a Man and his Soul, Dynasty ofDunnum, Legend of Etana, Enuma Elis, Atra-Hasis Epic, Rigveda, The Book of the Dead, Hymn to the Aten, Tale of Two Brothers, Theogony, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Shan Hai Jing, Shahnameh, The Book of the Dun Cow, Eddas, Laxdaela Saga, The Saga of Erik the Red, Popol Vuh.* [LIST OF LINKS BELOW]

ORAL Tradition: African, Australian & Oceanic, Siberian & other Asian, Native American mythologies... Texts from each of these are in our libraries, and check also the following links: <http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Mythology%28Bookshelf%29>, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>, <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>. The Big 10 Alliance also has Voth's Myth in Human History (<https://www.thegreatcourses.com/courses/myth-in-human-history.html>) and the Roku Channel's "Great Mythologies of the World" (<https://www.overdrive.com/media/3070879/great-mythologies-of-the-world>).

On Line: Possibilities are literally endless, but useful, generally accurate, and safe, sites include Rugnetta's *Crash Course World Mythology* (<https://episodecalendar.com/en/show/crash-course-mythology>), Encyclopedia Mythica: <https://pantheon.org/>

Windows to the Universe Mythology Map: https://www.windows2universe.org/mythology/worldmap_new.html, and Godchecker guide to the gods: <https://www.godchecker.com/>.

Also useful are the Bradshaw Foundation, on rock-art: <http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/> and several databases on non-Western religions, like the Pulotu Database of Pacific Religions: <https://pulotu.shh.mpg.de/>, among others. McKeldin has resources too numerous to mention, including audiovisual ones. Recommended for interest in the American roots are: Gates's *Africa's Great Civilizations* and Hager's *149T. The Untold Story of the Americas Before Columbus*. Free in downtown D.C., aside from the Library of Congress Research Centers, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/>, National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/>, and National Gallery of Art, <https://www.nga.gov/>, we also have the Museum of African-American History & Culture: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/>, the National Museum of the American Indian: <https://americanindian.si.edu/>, and the Holocaust Memorial Museum: <https://www.ushmm.org/>.

Possible topics of Group Study: Women, African-Americans, Native Americans, Indentured Servitude, Non-binarity.

Possible myths to relate to such topics: *The Amazons, Flying Africans, The Great Serpent, The Promised Land, Two Spirit*.

Expected Course Schedule [Slight variations possible depending on student interests]				
Schedule	Topic	Description	Syllabus	Assignments
Weeks 1&2: Juan Uriagereka	Prelude	Our ancestors once lived only in Africa in bands of a few hunter-gatherers. Then we spread to every corner of the planet.	Viewing: <i>The Great Human Odyssey</i> [NOVA]: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/great-human-odyssey/	Quiz & Writeup
Week 3: Colleague from Classics	From the Mystique of Columbia [1492-1776] ... to the Bronze Age and its collapse [-3500-1000 BC]	During the European Renaissance and into the Baroque, the Indies were “the new Eden”, where European values were imposed, allegedly as those of a superior civilization. Those specific values largely stemmed from reexamining the Greco-Roman empires that had arisen from displacing the Bronze Age, at the time of Homer’s compositions.	Viewing: “The Bronze Age Collapse”, <i>Fall of Civilizations</i> podcast: https://falloffcivilizationspodcast.com/ Reading: <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> : http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/mesopotamian/gilgamesh/	Quiz & Writeup Antiquity
Week 4: Colleague from Germanic Studies	From the Pilgrims’ Voyage to the Colonies [1606-1765] ... to the Viking Sagas [-515-12851]	While the Pilgrims sought religious freedom in the colonies, their puritan values led to the Salem trials. This echoed earlier, by then lost, Norse settlements 200 ml. to their NE, Erik the Red having arrived by that route around 1000 AD. Story & Goodman were among the Mayflower Norse last-names...	Viewing: BBC’s <i>The Viking Sagas</i> : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KSxM0g1EY8 Reading: <i>Laxdaela Saga</i> : https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Laxdaela_Saga	Quiz & Writeup The Atlantic
Week 5: Colleague from Anthropology	From the Revolutionary War (Extended) [1765-1816] ... to the Neolithic Expansion [-7.5K-6K BP]	Parallel to the French liberal revolution is the (slightly earlier) American one, led by the (generally) European-educated elite in the colonies. While Eurasia had been peopled by Anatomically Modern Humans between 110K and 40K BP, current Europeans descend from a massive push from agricultural societies from the Middle East, in the Neolithic.	Viewing: DW’s <i>Secrets of the Stone Age</i> : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2vYr6gx56 Reading: Grigsby 2018: <i>Skyscapes, Landscapes, and the drama of Proto-Indo-European myth</i> : http://eprints.boumemouth.ac.uk/322261/GRIGSBY%2C%20John.Ph.D.2018.pdf	Quiz & Writeup Eurasia
Week 6: Colleague from History	From Manifest Destiny [1816-1898] ... to the scope of the Beringian Landscape [30K BP-1491 AD]	The bourgeois revolution values fed into the redeem-the-Old-World doctrine (by taking the West from Mexico, expanding into Indian Territory) or the Scramble for Africa, “civilizing” their natives. First Peoples, then pushed into reservations, had lived in the area since the Paleolithic, having adapted to two diverse continents; an efficient and more local version of the New Imperialism elsewhere in the world.	Viewing: “Origins”, <i>1491: The Untold Story of the Americas Before Columbus</i> : https://vimeo.com/292727873 Reading: <i>Popol Vuh</i> : https://www.mesoweb.com/Dublications/Christenson/PopolVuh.pdf	Quiz & Writeup The Americas
Week 7: Colleague from English	From the Civil War and Reconstruction [1854-1877] ... to the African Roots [-200K BP-1,526 AD]	Conflict over the Kansas-Nebraska act, opening up western territories to slavery, led to the Civil War. At its heart were the economic bases of an institution first born in the Fertile Crescent with agricultural societies, not so clearly part of the prehistoric Sub-Saharan tradition (hunter-gatherers until -3000BP).	Viewing: “The Atlantic Age” & “Commerce and the Clash of Civilizations,” PBS’s <i>Africa’s Great Civilizations</i> . https://fod-infobase.com/proxy-um.res.earchport.um.d.edu/pView.Video.aspx?xtid=144354 Reading: AFRICA Lauro 2015: <i>Transatlantic Zombie: Slavery, Rebellion, & Living Death</i> : https://www.jstor.org/proxyum.res.earchport.um.d.edu/stable/6.eti.bhkr0m	Quiz & Writeup
Week 8:	Midterm in Discussion Section [Elms] -> Wikipedia Project ^-			
Weeks 9,10: Uriagereka & Mentors	Research Tools	Library Visit & mechanisms to pursue in-situ investigations with mentors.		Discuss Midterm
Weeks 11,12 Affinity Groups	Review of Progress Reports & Early Drafts	Actual visits to museums, libraries, labs, the field, etc. to develop full experiential phase.		Minutes Research Report
Weeks 13,14 Whole Class		Presentation of Group Website	Panel Discussion re: Presentations	
Final week	Final Exam			

University Policy: For details on university policies (on students with challenges or disabilities, academic dishonesty, copyright, religious observance and more), visit www.ugst.umd.edu/corsereLATEDpolicies.html

PERSEUS DIGITAL LIBRARY: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collections>

Kesh Temple Hymn, Babilonian, 27th c. BC: <https://genius.com/Kesh-temple-hymn-kesh-temple-hymn-english-translation-aimotated>

Pyramid Texts, Egyptian, 25* BC: <https://www.pyramidtextsonline.com/translation.html>

Enheduanna 's Hymns, Babilonian, 24th c. BC: https://www.atanet.org/publications/beacons_10_pages/page_15.pdf

Eridu Genesis, Babilonian, 24th c. BC: <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/oriental-varia/eridu-genesis/>

Gilgamesh, Babilonian, 22nd c. BC: <http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/mesopotamian/gilgamesh/>

Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor, Egyptian, 21st c. BC: <http://www.editorerie.com/greatlit/books/Shipwrecked-Sailor-text.html>

Debate between a Alan and his Soul, Egyptian, 20th - 18* BC: http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzUwNiOxNjF9tOU41?sid=e93b463a-6347-42c6-9081-29986e983984@sidc-v-sessmgr01&vid=0&fomiat=EB&lpid=lp_iii&rid=0

Dynasty of Dnunum, Babilonian, 19th? c. BC: http://melammu-proiect.eu/database/gen_tpl/t04/t0000353.html

Legend of Etana. Sumerian, 19thc. BC: <https://ezine.mythicscribes.com/issues/issue-3/the-legend-of-etana/>

En um a Elis, Akkadian, 18* c. BC: <https://www.ancient.eu/article/225/enma-elish—the-babylonian-epic-of-creation—fu/>

Atra-Hasis Epic, Akkadian, 18* c. BC: <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/ancet/104-106-the-epic-of-atrahasis/>

Rigveda, Sanskrit, 16th - 13* c. BC: <https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/index.htm>

The Book of the Dead, Egyptian 16* c. BC: <https://bookofliedead.book-lover.com/>

Hymn to the Aten, Egyptian 14* c. BC: <https://katlierinestange.com/egypt/ljymn2.htm>

Tale of Two Brothers, Egyptian 13* c. BC: <https://www.perankligroup.com/brotliers.html>

Theogony, Greek, 8* c. BC: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/liopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0130>

Ramayano, Sanskrit, 7th - 3rd c. BC: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/24869>

Mahabharata, Sanskrit, 5th - 3rd c. BC: <https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/maha/>

Shan Hai Jing [Classic of Mountains and Seas], Chinese, 4th c. BC: https://catalog.unid.edu/F/?func=fmd-b&local_base=cp&find_code=020&request=0140447199

Shahnameh [Book of Kings] Persian, 10th c. : <https://libnmlia.contentdni.oclc.org/digital/collection/pl5324coll0/id/36222>

The Book of the Dun Cow, Irish, 11th c. : <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy-uni.researchport.unid.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=64756bf6-55ff-4d3c-8c9f-8ae0e2552a13%40sidc-v-sessmgr03&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtOG12Z0%3d%3d#AN=621935&db=nlebk>

Eddas, Norse, 13th c.: <https://anibrosiasocietv.org/sacred-text/the-eddas>

Laxdaela Saga, Icelandic, 13* c.: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Laxdaela_Saga

The Saga of Erik the Red, Icelandic, 13* c.: <https://sagadb.org/eirik/saga-rauda.en>

Popol Vuh, Mayan, 16th c.: <https://www.niesoweb.com/publications/Cliristenson/PopolVuh.pdf>