

**English Composition I – 50:350:101:08 – Fall 2007**  
**T/Th 9:30-10:50am**

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## **Myth, Magic and Imagination**

### **Course Description**

"Everything old is new again." We can apply this sentiment to many aspects of popular culture. In pop music, artists make new hits by sampling old ones. Many blockbusters at movie box offices are remakes of movies that were originally made at least twenty years earlier. Even auto makers have called on the past in recent years with cars such as the PT Cruiser and the re-invention of the VW Beetle. When it comes to what is popular, sticking to an old formula is a key to success.

In many ways, this holds true in myths, legends and magical tales as well. No matter how different they may seem, mythic and magical tales written in recent years owe a great deal to age-old tales from thousands of years ago. This course will attempt a comparative mythology and look at modern retellings of ancient myths; for example, how is *Star Wars'* Anakin Skywalker related to the ancient Greeks' Oedipus? We'll also consider modern renditions of ancient classics. Writing in the academy is based on building upon knowledge and work that has come before; in this course, we will look at the ways in which writing in literature and other media does the same. In addition to our summer reading selection of *Chocolat*, major readings and viewings include *Oedipus the King*,

*The Iliad, The Hobbit and Star Wars*, as well as a consideration of Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

I have two primary goals for this course. The first is to teach you the craft of composition and prepare you for the kind of writing, thought and analysis required of you in college and beyond. This includes a strong focus on argumentative writing and peer collaboration and feedback. The second is that each of you realizes that you possess a voice and a place in the discussion both within this university community and in the community-at-large. This course seeks to help you clearly and eloquently express that voice through your writing and, in so doing, teach you how to think independently.

### Required Texts:

*The Iliad*, Homer, Translated by Robert Fagles (Penguin Classics Edition; ISBN: 0-14-044592-7)

*The Hobbit*, J.R.R. Tolkien (Houghton Mifflin, ISBN: 0-618-00221-9)

*Oedipus the King*, Sophocles (ISBN: 1-599-86951-9)

*Superheroes and Philosophy: Truth, Justice and the Socratic Way*, Tom Morris and Matt Morris (ISBN: 0-8126-9573-9)

*The Brief Penguin Handbook*, Lester Faigley (ISBN: 0-321-24531-8) \*NOTE: Buy this text from the bookstore and Keep the enclosed card with your MyComplab registration number.

A decent dictionary/thesaurus

### Recommended Text:

*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell (ISBN: 0-691-01784-0)

### Requirements and Expectations:

#### ***Attendance and Participation***

Excessive absence and lateness will hurt your final grade, up to and including failing the course. You are allotted 2 unexcused absences before I begin deducting from your final grade. Beginning with the 3<sup>rd</sup> unexcused absence, I will begin deducting from your final grade. After 6 absences, you will fail the course. Attendance means *mental* presence as well as physical presence. If you are inattentive, sleeping, disruptive, texting/using your cell phone, etc. I count you as absent. If you are significantly late (15 minutes or more), I count you as absent. This applies on due dates as well; "printing problems" will not excuse your being late. If you are a few minutes late (i.e., you come in during or just after role), it is your responsibility to see me after class so I can mark you as late rather than absent. Your participation grade includes participation in class discussions, as well as all in-class assignments, workshops, short writing assignments and exercises, etc.

#### ***Writing Assignments & Essays***

All work must be properly formatted and all citations must follow MLA format. Also, papers must be turned in on paper. This means I will not accept a floppy disk or thumb drive or other portable media storage device with your paper saved somewhere on it. Nor will I accept emailed papers or

assignments. All papers **MUST** meet minimum length requirements—5 pages means 5 full pages of written work, not merely 5 sheets of paper. On due dates, you have until 4:00 p.m. that day to hand in your papers. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for every day they are late.

### ***Conferences and Workshops***

You are required to meet with me during office hours at least twice during the semester to discuss your writing and progress. These appointments will probably benefit you most while you are working on earlier drafts rather than final submissions, but you may also use them to discuss a final grade on an assignment. I will also hold individual conferences with students during class time at different times during the semester (these do not count as the required office hours' appointment and are required). In addition, I strongly recommend that you take advantage of the Writing Assistance offered at the RLC as you work on your drafts. We will also hold several in-class workshops where you will evaluate and respond to each other's work. You will be graded on the quality of the feedback you provide your fellow students, so take this task seriously.

### ***Pop Quizzes***

There will be a minimum of three pop quizzes during the semester—there may be more, but only your top three quiz grades will count in your final grade. You may not make up a missed quiz. Quiz grades will be added to your attendance and participation grade.

### ***Read and Keep Up with the Syllabus***

Seems obvious, but I've learned it apparently is not. Bring it to class with you in case changes are made.

### ***Final Portfolio***

All Composition students are required to complete a portfolio as a final requirement the course. Details for the portfolio will be provided later in the semester.

### **Do Not Plagiarize!!**

Original work is required. Plagiarism—the theft of someone else's work **or ideas** and passing it off as your own—will result in a failing grade on the assignment and possibly the course and can also lead to serious disciplinary action from the university.

### **Grading Policies**

Essay 1 - Compare and Contrast - 2-3 pages	20%
Essay 2 - Argumentative Essay - 5-7 pages	20%
Essay 3 - Analytical Essay with minimal research 5-7 pages	20%
Attendance and Participation	20%
Final Portfolio	20%

Students must complete all assignments and earn a C or better on the final portfolio to establish readiness for 102. You may repeat this course if you have not successfully mastered academic writing.

## Schedule

The schedule is tentative and subject to change; bring your syllabus to each class in case changes occur. Complete all assigned readings before the assigned class to be ready for discussions and possible quizzes. *ER* = Electronic Reserve; these readings are available through the library's website.

- Tue 9/4 Introduction to the course and to each other
- Thu 9/6 *Reading Effectively in Order to Write Effectively*: **Read** Faigley, Chapter 6, pp. 71-81; Begin discussion of *Chocolat*
- Tue 9/11 *In the Beginning: Invention and Pre-writing*: **Read** *Patterns*, Chapter 2 (ER); Continue *Chocolat*
- Thu 9/13 *Invention* cont'd: **Read** Faigley, pp. 36-38; Continue *Chocolat* - **View** film version of *Chocolat* on your own; Brief Introduction to *The Iliad*; **Due**: Personal Essay on a personal hero
- Tue 9/18 *Organization and Arrangement*: **Read** *Patterns*, Chapter 3 (ER); **Read** Book 1 of *The Iliad*
- Thu 9/20 *Drafting and Revising*: **Read** *Patterns*, Chapter 4 (ER); **Read** Books 6 and 9 of *The Iliad*
- Tue 9/25 *Drafting and Revising* cont'd: **Read** Faigley, Chapters 4, pp. 43-60; **Read** Books 16 and 18 of *The Iliad*
- Thu 9/27 *Comparing and Contrasting*: **Read** *Patterns*, Chapter 11 (ER); **Read** Books 22 and 24 of *The Iliad*
- Tue 10/2 Viewing of *Troy*
- Thu 10/4 *Troy* concluded
- Tue 10/9 *Keys to Stronger Writing*: **Read** Faigley, Chapters 26 & 27, pp. 379-391, and George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language" (ER); **Due**: **First Draft of Essay 1 - Workshop (Bring a min. of 4 copies of your draft)**
- Thu 10/11 Conferences
- Tue 10/16 Conferences
- Thu 10/18 *The Structure of Argument*: **Read** *Patterns*, Chapter 14, pp. 555-566 (ER); **Bring** in a letter to the editor to share and discuss with the class; Begin discussion of *The Hobbit*

- Tue 10/23     *The Structure of Argument* cont'd: **Read** *Patterns*, Chapter 14, pp. 566-580 (ER);  
Continue *The Hobbit*
- Thu 10/25     **Library Session:** Meet in the lobby of the Paul Robeson Library; **Due: Final Draft  
of Essay 1**
- Tue 10/30     *Using and Incorporating Scholarly Sources:* **Read** "Taking Notes" (ER), Faigley,  
Chapters 18 & 19, pp. 216-235 and Chapter 20c, pp. 236-240; Continue *The Hobbit*
- Thu 11/1       **Due: First Draft of Essay 2 - Workshop (Bring a min. of 4 copies of your  
draft)**
- Tue 11/6       Conclude *The Hobbit*; *Tragedy and Fall*: Begin *Oedipus the King*
- Thu 11/8       Conclude *Oedipus*; *In Focus: Stronger Introductions and Conclusions*
- Tue 11/13      *Tragedy and Fall Revisited* - View *Star Wars: Ep. I* and *Ep. II* on your own by this  
point; Begin *Star Wars: ROTS*
- Thu 11/15      Conclude *ROTS*; **Due: Final Draft of Essay 2**
- Tue 11/20      *In Focus*: Topic TBA
- Thu 11/22      Thanksgiving Recess - No Class
- Tue 11/27      **Due: First Draft of Essay 3 - Workshop (Bring a min. of 4 copies of your draft)**
- Thu 11/29      *Final Steps: Honing Your Craft*; *Superheroes as Modern Mythic Figures*; Sample  
Presentation
- Tue 12/4       Presentations from *Superheroes and Philosophy*
- Thu 12/6       Presentations cont'd
- Tue 12/11      Conclusions and Wrap-up; **Due: Final Draft of Essay 3**

**Tue 12/18 - Final Exam Period - 9:00-12:00 in our classroom**

Happy Holidays!