

From Homer to Harry Potter: Legend, Myth and Fairytale in European Storytelling

PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Fall 2009
ECH 3 Credit Course

Introduction

An introduction to the tradition of European storytelling, encompassing myths, fairytales, medieval legends, and how these traditional stories live on in fantasy, movies, role playing and other modern uses of storytelling. As well as introducing the stories in their historical context, the course will explore various theoretical approaches to interpreting them.

Time and Location

Mondays and Thursdays 10:05-11:25 am in TBA

Instructor: Bettina Sebjerg Sommer

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Bettina Sebjerg Sommer is mag. art. in the History of Religion, University of Copenhagen 2006. She is a specialist in Folklore and Nordic Religion and has published articles on Nordic Religion in periodicals. She teaches Nordic Mythology at the University of Copenhagen and at DIS. With DIS since 2006.

Office Hours

By appointment. Please call between 10 AM and 10 PM or use e-mail.

DIS Contacts

Jakob Lorentzen, ECH Program Director, jlo@dis.dk

ECH Program Assistant

Class Format

A combination of lectures, questions and answers, class discussions, field studies, examinations, quizzes, and research papers.

Course Learning Objectives

This course, taught at the upper-division level, is an introduction to European oral tradition as expressed in European myth-cycles, legends and fairytales from the earliest known sources up to and including modern uses of this tradition. Students will be introduced to all the major European myth and story traditions, which will be put in a historical context and discussed on their own terms. Parallel with this, students will be

introduced to a variety of major theoretical schools, the theories of which will be used for analyzing the text material.

The aim of the course is for the students to achieve a familiarity with both the content of European oral tradition and with a variety of major theoretical schools. In line with this aim, this course intends to help students gain practical experience in how to use the theories and apply them to text material, and an important part of the class will involve students practicing applying these theories to the texts in assignments and in-class discussions.

At the end of the course, students should be able to

- Demonstrate a familiarity with all the major myth and story cycles of European tradition
- Demonstrate a familiarity with a variety of major theoretical schools
- Demonstrate an understanding of the historical context of the various myth and story cycles
- Apply theories to traditional texts of the type introduced in the course and to other forms of literature as well
- Recognize the influence of traditional texts in other, more modern forms of literature
- Compose a research paper which will demonstrate an ability to independently identify and analyze a problem field in traditional literature using an appropriate theoretical approach

Course Content

The course will begin with a brief introduction to the concepts of myth, folktale and legend, as well as a short overview of the history of the study of myth and folklore. We will continue with introductions to the main mythologies of Europe: Greek, Roman, Nordic and Celtic.

Parallel with the presentation of these mythological traditions, some of the major theoretical approaches will be introduced. These include the psychology of Freud, Jung and Campbell, as well as the structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss and the Indo-European theory of Georges Dumézil.

The purpose for this is to present these theories early on in the course, so that we may be able to apply them to the material presented in the rest of the course.

Therefore the beginning of the course will be weighted towards introducing theories, but already from lesson 4 onwards there will be an increased emphasis on introducing the story material itself, as well as its historical context.

We will continue with the great heroic legend cycles of the medieval age: King Arthur, Charlemagne, Nibelungenlied and the Volsung-cycle.

Then we will discuss the popular medieval Christian tradition, legends and mythology, before moving on to fairy tales and folk tales, where the folkloristic methods and theories of Axel Olrik, Alan Dundes and Vladimir Propp will be introduced.

Finally, the course will move on to modern uses of traditional storytelling. First we will discuss the use of the concept of storytelling in the business world and in organizations, as well as storytelling as a personal life-strategy.

Then we will examine how traditional stories live on in modern culture in the form of fantasy literature, movies, role-playing and computer games.

Written Assignments and Exams:

Attendance and active participation in class discussion.

Two short answer tests (10 minutes each).

One midterm exam, 30 minutes.

One Research Paper, 8-9 pages.

Final exam.

PLEASE NOTE: All written assignments, quizzes and exams **MUST** be completed to pass course.

Reading Assignments

The reading for each class meeting is indicated in the attached syllabus. It is assumed that students are prepared and will be active participants in class discussion.

Please always bring the assigned readings to class as well as this syllabus.

Written Assignment

•The Research Paper (8-9 pages) is **due TBA at the beginning of class.**

The research paper is on a topic selected by the student together with the instructor. The purpose of this paper is to allow the student to work in-depth on a specific topic of special interest. Individual meetings to discuss the term paper can be arranged.

Tests

•2 10-minute short answer tests (key dates, names, identifications, definitions). For dates, see syllabus.

• 30-minute midterm test (definitions and a short essay). For dates, see syllabus.

•Final two-hour exam (identification and significance, one essay covering the content of the entire course).

Field Trips

• Visit to Glyptoteket to see pictorial representations of Greek and Roman myth.
Wednesday TBA Meeting time TBA

• Visit to The Open Air museum in Lyngby.
Wednesday TBA Meeting time TBA

• Movie night. TBA

•Please note that participation in all field trips is mandatory. Exams and quizzes will contain questions which have only been addressed on field trips.

Grading elements

2 short answer tests: each 5 %
 30 minute midterm exam: 15%
 Research Paper: 8 -9 pages 35%
 Final exam: 30%
 Class attendance and participation:10%

PLEASE NOTE: All written assignments, quizzes and exams MUST be completed to pass course.

General Information

•**Assignments must be turned in on time, which is at the beginning of class on the day due.** Late papers will be penalized by a third of a grade per day, e.g. an A- paper three days late will count as a B- paper.
 •**All written assignments must be typed or computer printed with best quality printing on plain, white paper.** Handwritten or hand printed papers are not acceptable.
 •Papers must be written in accordance with the conventions listed in the MLA Handbook (available from DIS reference-library) and the DIS document Writing Papers at DIS: Some general recommendations. Bibliographies and endnotes are mandatory.

Required Reading:

Main text book: Robert A. Segal: Myth. A very short introduction.

Text Collection (binder):

1: Sophocles: King Oedipus. Trans by F. Storr. From Project Gutenberg:
www.gutenberg.org

2: Apollodorus: The Library of Greek Mythology. Book II. Trans by Keith Aldrich. Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1975. P. 34-36, 64-65, 82-83, 86-90.

3: Ovid: Metamorphoses. Trans. by A. S. Kline. From Project Gutenberg:
www.gutenberg.org

4: Plutarch: Theseus. Trans. by John Dryden. From Project Gutenberg:
www.gutenberg.org

5: Freud, Sigmund: The Interpretation of Dreams. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. P. 195-205.

6: Jung, C.G.: The psychology of the Child Archetype. In: Segal, Robert A. (ed.): Theories of Myth, vol. 1. New York, Garland Publishing, 1996. P. 151-181.

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- 7: Drake, Carlos C.: Jung and his critics. In: Segal, Robert A. (ed.): Theories of Myth, vol. 1. New York, Garland Publishing, 1996. P 321-333.
- 8: Livius, Titus: The History of Rome. Trans. by D. Spillan. From Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org
- 9: Campbell, Joseph: The Hero with a thousand Faces, 2nd ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968. P 30-40.
- 10: Snorri Sturluson: The Prose Edda. Trans. Jean I. Young. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971. P. 29-37, 48-59.
- 11: The Poetic Edda. Trans. Carolyne Larrington. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Sayings of the High One. P. 14-38.
- 12: Dumézil, Georges: The three functions. In: Segal, Robert A. (ed.): Theories of Myth, vol. 6. New York, Garland Publishing, 1996. P.148-175.
- 13: Littleton, Scott: The comparative Indo-European Mythology of Georges Dumézil. In: Segal, Robert A. (ed.): Myth. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies, vol. 3. London: Routledge, 2007. P. 226-242.
- 14: Walters, K.R.: Another showdown at the cleft way. In: Segal, Robert A. (ed.): Myth. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies, vol. 3. London: Routledge, 2007. P 181-196.
- 15: Lévi-Strauss, Claude: Structural Anthropology. Allen Lane: Penguin Press, 1967. P. 206-231. The Structural Study of Myth.
- 16: Koch, John T. & John Carey (eds.): The Celtic Heroic age. Literary sources for ancient Celtic Europe and early Ireland and Wales, vol. I. Massachusetts: Celtic Studies Publications, 1994. a: Lebor Gabála Érenn. P. 244-261. b: The death of Cú Chulainn. P. 124-133.
- 17: The Mabinogion. Trans. by Jeffrey Gantz. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1982. a: Pwyll, lord of Dyfed, p. 46-65; b: How Culhwch won Olwen, p. 135-176; c: Peredur, son of Evrawg, p 218-257.
- 18: Bricriu's Feast. Trans by George Henderson. Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1899.
- 19: Preiddeu Annwn: "The Spoils of Annwn". Text and Translation: Sarah Higley. <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/preideu.html>
- 20: Baile in Scáil: The Phantom's Frenzy. The Cycle of the Kings ed. and trans. By Myles Dillon. Oxford: OUP 1946.

- 21: Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Thirteen Treasures of Britain. Trans. and ed. by Rachel Bromwich. Cardiff: UWP, 1961.
- 22: Malory, Thomas: Le Morte D'Arthur. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Ed. Ltd., 1996. a: Malory p. 1-9, 151-152, 166-170, 178-179, 742-746. b: Malory, p. 563-571, 664-672.
- 23: De Troyes, Chrétien: Perceval. The Story of the Grail. Trans. by Burton Raffel. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. P. 97-114.
- 24: The Saga of the Volsungs. The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer. Introduction and Translation by Jesse L. Byock. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990. P. 55-72; 78-84.
- 25: Das Nibelungenlied. Song of the Nibelungs. Trans by Burton Raffel. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. P 3-10; 14-16; 47-49; 58-66; 88-96.
- 26: The Song of Roland. Anonymous. Trans. by C.K. Moncreiff. From Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org
- 27: Caesarius of Heisterbach: The Dialogue of Miracles, vol. I. Trans. by H. von E. Scott and C.C. Swinton Bland. Ed. G.G. Coulton and Eileen Power. London: Routledge & Sons, 1929. P. 86-87; 104-106; 161-162; 210-213; 218-220; 234; 366-372; 455; 501-502; 525-526.
- 28: Voragine, Jacobus de: The Golden Legend, Vol. I & II. Trans. by William Granger Ryan. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993. Vol. I: p. 201-202. Vol. II: P. 85-87, 149-158.
- 29: Thompson, Stith: Narrative Motif-analysis as a folklore method. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1955. P. 3-9.
- 30: Olrik, Axel: Epic laws of folk narrative. In: Dundes, Alan (ed.): The Study of Folklore. Englewood Cliffs: Prectice-Hall, 1965. P. 129-141.
- 31: Dundes, Alan: The Motif-Index and the Tale Type Index: A Critique. In: Brown, Mary Ellen (ed.): Journal of Folklore Research, Vol. 34, No. 3 September-December 1997. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Folklore Institute, 1997. P. 195-202.
- 32: Propp, Vladimir: Morphology of the Folktale. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1994. P. 19-65.
- 33: Bettelheim, Bruno: The uses of enchantment. London: Thames and Hudson, 1976. P. 66-83.

- 34: Von Franz, Marie Louise: Interpretation of Fairytales. Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications, 1982. P. 83-120.
- 35: Shippey, Tom: Tolkien and the appeal of the pagan: Edda and Kalevala. In: Jane Chance (ed.): Tolkien and the Invention of Myth. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2004. P. 145-161.
- 36: Burns, Marjorie J.: Norse and Christian gods: the interactive theology of J.R.R. Tolkien. In: Jane Chance (ed.): Tolkien and the Invention of Myth. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2004. P. 163-178.
- 37: St. Clair, Gloriana: An overview of the Northern influences on Tolkien's works. In: Reynolds, Patricia og Glen H. Goodknight (eds.): Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference, Keble College, Oxford, 1992. Altadena, California: the Mythopoeic Press, 1995. P. 63-67.
- 38: Nikolajeva, Maria: Harry Potter – a return to the Romantic Hero. In: Heilman, Elizabeth (Ed.): Harry Potter's World. Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003. P. 125-140.
- 39: Huey, Peggy J.: A Basilisk, a Phoenix and a Philosopher's Stone: Harry Potter's myths and legends. In: Hallett, Cynthia (ed.): Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005. P. 65-83.
- 40: Brown, John Seely, et. al.: Using narrative as a tool for change & The role of narrative in organizations. In: Storytelling in Organizations. Why Storytelling is Transforming 21st Century Organizations and Management. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005. P. 97-135; 165-179.
- 41: Gabriel, Yiannis: Storytelling in Organizations. Facts, fictions, and Fantasies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. P 111-131.
- 42: McAdams, Dan P.: The Stories We Live by. New York: the Guildford Press, 1996. P. 11-15; 102-113; 251-279.
- 43: McLean, Kate C. and Avril Thorne: Identity light. In: McAdams, Dan P. et al. (eds.): Identity and Story. Creating Self in Narrative. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006. P. 111-127.
- 44: Ochs, Elinor and Lisa Capps: Living Narrative. Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001. P. 251-255.

Course schedule:

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1. Thursday, August 27th

Lesson 1: Introduction. Definitions: myth, folktale, legend. The history of myth-study, various approaches to myth.

Readings: Segal p. 1-10, 46-78.

2. Monday, August 31st

Lesson 2: Greek myth. Freud. Jung.

Introduction to Freud and Jung and how they may be applied to the Greek myths.

Readings: Binder text 1: Sophocles: Oedipus Rex. Binder text 2: Apollodorus: The Library of Greek Mythology. P. 34-36, 64-65, 82-83, 86-90. Binder text 3: Ovid: Perseus. Segal p. 79-112.

3. Thursday, September 3rd

Lesson 3: Roman myth. Campbell.

Introduction to Roman mythology. Continuing with Jungian and Freudian interpretations.

Readings: Binder text 8: Livy: Early history of Rome.

Binder text 5: Sigmund Freud: The interpretation of dreams. P. 195-205. Binder text 6:

C. G. Jung: Archetypes of the collective unconscious. P. 3-10; 42-53. Binder text 7:

Carlos C. Drake: Jung and his critics.

Field study to Glyptoteket.**4. Monday, September 7th**

Lesson 4: Nordic myth.

A general introduction to Nordic mythology and some of the main sources.

Readings: Segal p. 113-125. Binder text 10: Snorri Sturlason: The Prose Edda. P. 29-37, 48-59. Binder text 11: Poetic Edda, p. 14-38: Sayings of the High One.

Short Tour to Western Denmark – Thursday, September 10th – Saturday, September 12th**5. Monday, September 14th**

Lesson 5: Nordic myth. Dumézil

Discussing Dumézil's theory of a shared structure for all Indo-European mythologies in the context of the Nordic myths.

Readings: Binder text 12: Georges Dumézil: The three functions. Binder text 13: Scott Littleton: The comparative Indo-European Mythology of Georges Dumézil.

6. Thursday, September 17th

Lesson 6: Nordic myth. Levi-Strauss.

Introducing Levi-Strauss and the theory of structuralism and trying to apply it to Nordic myth.

Readings: Binder text 14: K.R. Walters: Another showdown at the cleft way. Binder text 15: Claude Levi-Strauss: The Structural Study of Myth P. 206-231.

7. Monday, September 21st

Lesson 7: Celtic myth.

A general introduction to Celtic mythology. Can we find remains of Celtic pre-Christian ritual and religion in these late, medieval stories?

Readings: Binder text 16a: Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of Invasions. P. 244-261.

Binder text 17a: Mabinogion p. 45-65: Pwyll, Lord of Dyfed.

8. Thursday, September 24th

Lesson 8: Celtic myth.

Continuing the discussion from last time and introducing the Irish heroes such as Cú Chulainn.

Readings: Binder text 16b: The death of Cú Chulainn. P. 124-133. Binder text 18:

Bricrius Feast.

9. Monday, September 28th

Lesson 9: King Arthur.

The historical Arthur, the fact behind the legend? The earliest Arthur traditions.

Readings: Binder text 17b: Mabinogion p. 135-177: Culhwch and Olwen. Binder text 19:

Preiddeu Annwn: The Spoils of Annwn. Binder text 20: Baile in Scáil: The Phantom's Frenzy.

10. Thursday, October 1st

Lessons 10: King Arthur.

The literary evolution of the Arthur legend. The "classic" image of Arthur.

Readings: Binder text 22a: Thomas Malory. P. 1-9, 151-152, 166-170, 178-179, 742-746.

Long Program Tour – Sunday, October 4th – Friday, October 9th

11. Monday, October 12th

Lesson 11: The Grail Legend.

The development of the Grail Legend: a fusion of Celtic and Christian.

Readings: Binder text 21: The thirteen Treasures of Britain. Binder text 17c: Mabinogion p. 218-257: Peredur. Binder text 23: Chretien de Troyes: The story of the Grail p. 97-114.

Binder text 22b: Thomas Malory: P. 563-571, 664-672.

12. Thursday, October 15th

Lesson 12: Heroic legend: The Volsungcycle.

Introducing the saga of the Volsungs, the Nordic version of one of the most enduring and popular European legends.

Readings: Binder text 24: The Saga of the Volsungs.

Field study to Frilandsmuseet, open air museum in Lyngby.

13. Monday, October 19th

Lesson 13: Heroic legend: The Nibelungenlied. Charlemagne.

Introducing the German version of the Volsungcycle: the Nibelungenlied and comparing it the Nordic version. Brief introduction to the Charlemagne cycle.

Readings: Binder text 25: Nibelungenlied. Binder text 26: The Song of Roland.

14. Thursday, October 22nd

Lesson 14: Medieval Christian legends, Christian mythology and popular tradition.

An introduction to popular medieval Christianity. Legends about the childhood of Christ and of the Holy Cross.

Readings: Binder text 27: Caesarius of Heisterbach, p. 104-106; 210-213; 218-220.

Binder text 28: Voragine, Jacobus de: The Golden Legend, Vol. I: p. 277-278.

Vol. II: p. 170-171.

15. Monday, October 26th

Lesson 15: Medieval Christian legends, Christian mythology and popular tradition.

Legends about the Holy Virgin, the saints and the devils.

Readings: Binder text 27: Caesarius of Heisterbach, p. 86-87; 161-162; 234; 366-372; 455; 501-502; 525-526. Binder text 28: Voragine, Jacobus de: The Golden Legend, Vol. I: p. 201-202. Vol. II: p. 85-87, 149-158.

16. Thursday, October 29th

Lesson 16: Fairy tales, folk tales. The brothers Grimm. Folklore methodology.

The brothers Grimm, their influence on the fairy tale genre. How the fairy tales were collected and edited. Brief introduction to folklore methodology.

Readings: Binder text 29: Stith Thompson: Narrative motif-analysis. Binder text 30: Axel Olrik: Epic laws of folk narrative. Binder text 31: Alan Dundes: The motif index and the tale type index: A critique.

Optional Tours and Travel Break – Saturday, October 31st – Sunday, November 15th**17. Monday, November 16th**

Lesson 17: Fairy tales, folk tales. Myth, ritual and fairy tale.

The possible connection between fairy tales, myths and pre-Christian religion.

Introduction to Vladimir Propp and his theory of the structure of the wonder tale.

Readings: Binder text 32: Vladimir Propp: Morphology of the folktale. P. 19-65.

18. Thursday, November 19th

Lesson 18: Fairy tales, folk tales. Psychological interpretations.

How Jungian and Freudian theories may be applied to fairy tales.

Readings: Binder text 33: Bruno Bettelheim: The uses of enchantment: P. 66-83. Binder text 34: Marie-Louise Von Franz: The interpretation of fairy tales: P. 83-120.

19. Monday, November 23rd

Lesson 19: Myth and fairytale in Fantasy literature: The Lord of the Rings.

The mythology influences on Tolkien: especially Nordic and Finnish.

Readings: Binder text 35: Tom Shippey: Tolkien and the appeal of the pagan: Edda and Kalevala. Binder text 36: Marjorie J. Burns: Norse and Christian gods: the interactive theology of J.R.R. Tolkien. Binder text 36: Gloriana St. Clair: An overview of the Northern influences on Tolkien's works.

Optional Tours – Thursday, November 26th – Saturday, November 28th**20. Monday, November 30th**

Lesson 20: Myth and fairytale in Fantasy literature: Harry Potter.

The mythology influences on Rowling: especially classical and Christian?

Readings: Binder text 38: Maria Nikolajeva: Harry Potter – a return to the Romantic Hero. Binder text 39: Peggy J. Huey: A Basilisk, a Phoenix and a Philosopher's Stone: Harry Potter's myths and legends.

Movie night with relevant movie.

21. Thursday, December 3rd

Lesson 21: Myth and fairytale in popular culture: Movies, role-playing and computergames.

How mythology has influenced these genres, partly through Tolkien.

Readings: To be announced.

Role-playing session. (Voluntary)

22. Monday, December 7th

Lesson 22: Storytelling today: The business world and organizations.

The growing popularity of the concept of storytelling as a business tool.

Readings: Binder text 40: John Seely Brown et. al.: Using narrative as a tool for change; The role of narrative in organizations. Binder text 41: Yiannis Gabriel: Stories, culture and politics.

23. Thursday, December 10th

Lessons 23: Storytelling today: A personal life strategy.

How the concept of storytelling can be used as a tool for personal development.

Readings: Binder text 42: Dan P. McAdams: The Stories we live by. Binder text 43: Kate C. McLean and Avril Thorne: Identity light. Binder text 44: Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps: Living narrative.

Final exams – Monday, December 14th – Friday, December 18th