

San José State University

English 116, Myth in Literature, Spring 2026

Course and Contact Information

Instructor(s):	Professor N. Stork
Office Location:	Faculty Offices Building 218
Email:	Nancy.Stork@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Monday 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Thursday and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	MW 10:30-11:45 AM
Classroom:	Hugh Gillis Hall 225
Prerequisites:	Upper Division Standing

Course Description

Max Müller, the first European professor of Sanskrit, once said that “Mythology is a disease of language.” I prefer to think of it as a distinctive feature. By looking at the earliest recorded myths from a variety of cultures, we will try to understand how mythology arises from language, ritual, folk belief and visual culture. We will also read myths from later time periods and those that have traveled between cultures, including Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Celtic, Norse, Christian, Middle Eastern, African, Hindu, Buddhist and Chinese. Informal lectures will be given on historical and textual backgrounds as well as modern approaches to the study of mythology. Please feel free to ask questions in class.

Course Format

In person lecture and discussion, plus Hybrid.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Write effective analyses of world mythology.

Understand the complex textual and oral transmission of culturally significant myths.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. *Do their own research into some aspect of world mythology, including transmission of texts about gods, demons and other supernatural beings.*

2. Investigate the earliest sources for both written and oral mythologies

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

Texts as listed in the syllabus are available on-line

Course Requirements and Assignments

Reaction to Frazer and Geertz	10%
Reading Response	20%
Reaction Paper to Angel's Egg	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Oral Presentation of final project	10%
Final Research Project	20%

Two Options for Final Research Project:

2,500 word essay. OR

Visual Project with introduction of 500-800 words

Grading Information

Papers will be assessed for content, mechanical correctness and overall quality of writing.

An A essay will have NO mechanical or stylistic errors.

A B essay will have no more than FOUR mechanical or stylistic errors.

A C essay will have no more than EIGHT mechanical or stylistic errors.

A D essay will have no more than TWELVE mechanical or stylistic errors.

Please see me if you would like extra help in addressing any writing issues.

Late Policy:

Work will be accepted up to one week late with a full grade (10%) penalty in the case of genuine and compelling emergencies beyond the student's control.

For work more than one week late, and a compelling emergency, a 20% penalty will be allowed. Please see me in this case.

Classroom Protocol

Please see me or email if you have disability accommodations.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as **student responsibilities**, academic integrity,

accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>), which is hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Week/Lesson /Module	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines (If appropriate, add extra column(s) to meet your needs.)	
1	1/26	Introduction, James Frazer <i>The Golden Bough</i> (no need to read anything for this class.)	
1	1/28	Read Clifford Geertz, <i>Cock Fighting in Bali</i> https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~rfrey/PDF/410/Geertz72.pdf <u>Reaction to Frazer and Geertz: In Class</u>	
2	2/2	Hymn to Isis at her Temple in Philae, Section # 4, Hymns I-VIII https://www.attalus.org/poetry/isis_hymns.html#4	
2	2/4	Read <i>The Homeric Hymn to Demeter</i> https://uh.edu/~cldue/texts/demeter.html	
3	2/9	<i>Egyptian Love Songs</i> (humanistictexts.org), <i>Sappho's Hymn to Aphrodite</i> (on-line)	
3	2/11	Plutarch, <i>Isis and Osiris</i> , Introduction – p. 70. https://archive.org/details/plutarch-isis-osiris-loeb/page/73/mode/2up?view=theater	
4	2/16	MEN AND DONKEYS Excerpts from <i>The Golden Ass</i> , Chapters 1-5, 9, 15-17, 47-48 https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1666/1666-h/1666-h.htm	
4	2/18	Exodus 20:17 Deuteronomy 22:10 Job 39:5-8 Judges 15:16 Numbers 21-22 (Balaam's Ass) 1Kings 1:38 Matthew 21 Mark 11 Luke 19 John 12	
5	2/23	Nasruddin, https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/earthbeat/ecocatholic/nasruddin-and-his-donkey-fool	

Week/Lesson /Module	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines (If appropriate, add extra column(s) to meet your needs.)	
		<p>Sancho Panza, Don Quixote, Chs. 8 and 9 https://www.gutenberg.org/files/996/996-h/996-h.htm#ch1</p> <p>Bottom, <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> Act 3: Scene 1 and Act 4, Scene 1 http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/</p>	
5	2/25	<p>SNAKE WOMEN: Eve, <i>Genesis</i> 3: 1-22</p> <p>Medusa and Echidna, Hesiod's <i>Theogony</i>, lines 270-305 https://www.theoi.com/Text/HesiodTheogony.html</p>	
6	3/2	<p>SNAKE WOMEN: Melusina, The Legend of Beautiful Melusina, Ancestress of Luxembourg Counts, https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/melusina.html#scudder</p> <p>Mami Wata, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mami_Wata</p>	
6	3/4	<p>THE UNDEAD: Selections from <i>Grettir's Saga</i> (Chapters 32-35, 65 and 66), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/347/347-h/347-h.htm</p> <p><i>Njal's Saga</i>, Chapter LXXVII (77) "Gunnarr Sings a Song Dead" and Chapter CXXIX (129) "Skarpheddin's Death" https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17919/17919-h/17919-h.htm</p> <p>RESURRECTION: Shunamite Woman's Son, 2Kings 4: 8-37 Lazarus, John 11</p>	
7	3/9	<p>Reading Response DUE Midnight. We will discuss your ideas in class.</p>	
7	3/11	<p>FAIRY LOVERS: Marie de France, <i>Lanval</i> https://people.clas.ufl.edu/jshoaf/files/lanval.pdf</p>	
8	3/16	<p><i>King Henry</i> and <i>Tam Lin</i>, Child Ballads 32 and 39 https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/child/index.htm</p>	
8	3/18	<p><i>Sundiata, An Epic of Old Mali</i>. Read The Words of the Griot Mamadou Kouyate – The Lion's Awakening, p. xxv – 26</p>	

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		ools.k12.ny.us/cms/lib5/NY01001205/Centricity/Domain/202/Su ndiata.pdf	
9	3/23	Anansi Comes to America. http://anansistories.com/Anansi_Came_to_America.html	
9	3/25	MidTerm Exam	
10	3/30	<i>Spring Break</i>	
10	4/1	<i>Spring Break</i>	
11	4/6	Angel's Egg (animated film shown in class)	
11	4/8	Reaction Paper to Angel's Egg DUE Midnight. Discussion in class	
12	4/13	<i>The Bamboo-Cutter's Tale (Princess Moonbeam)</i> /japanese-fairy-tales-002-the-bamboo-cutter-and-the-moon- child%20(1).pdf	
12	4/15	<i>Rig Veda</i> (sacred-texts.com. Poems # 7, 8, 12, 64, 92, 105)	
13	4/20	<i>Journey to the West Chapters 1 and 2</i>	
13	4/22	Oral reports	
14	4/27	Oral reports	
14	4/29	Oral reports	
15	5/4	Oral reports	
15	5/6	Oral reports	
16	5/11	Personal Day – No Class Meeting	
16	5/13	FINAL PAPER OR PROJECT DUE. Saturday, May 16, MIDNIGHT	