

**DEREE COLLEGE SYLLABUS FOR:****HHU 2209 The City of Athens as Myth: Landscape, Narrative, and Urban Memory**

Honors Seminar  
Spring 2014

**US CREDITS: 3/0/3**

**PREREQUISITES:**

WP 1010 Introduction to Academic Writing  
WP 1111 Integrated Academic Writing and Ethics

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

This Honors course will offer students the opportunity to unearth the hidden myths in the city of Athens, and study the interrelationship between ancient mythic narratives and contemporary urban development. Focusing on specific myths, students will be able to study and experience first-hand the complex mythic nexus that was responsible for the construction of urban identity in ancient Athens and which still functions as a subterranean "network" of cultural referents.

**RATIONALE:**

The production of myth in a specific urban environment offers valuable insights into the social, political and interpersonal anxieties of a given culture; it infuses with meaning specific city-sites, while creating a "mythological map" that shows surprising historical resilience. This course will attempt to decode specific clusters of Attic myths both in terms of their historical significance, and as elements of residual cultural memory that shapes experience in contemporary Athens. Using a variety of texts, ranging from Homeric hymns to 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of urbanity, combined with field trips in and around Athens, this course will address the trans-historical identity of urban landscapes and offer students the opportunity to "re-discover" Athens and its multiple cultural layers.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to

1. Engage with a variety of reading materials, from Ancient Greek texts to contemporary philosophy, urban theory, and documentaries;
2. Discuss the nature of the Athenian urban landscape in terms of myth, cultural memory, and historical development;
3. Examine important philosophical, cultural, and political issues related to the production of myths and their contemporary urban transmutations;
4. Demonstrate a firm grasp of concepts treated in the course through writing assignments, projects, and presentations.

**METHOD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:**

In congruence with the teaching and learning strategy of the college, the following tools are used:

- Textual analysis, class discussion, workshop-style pair work and group work during class meetings;
- Active student-centered teaching approach in the presentation of course material to engage learners;

- Field-trips that will allow students to have first-hand experience of concepts discussed in class
- Critical-thinking exercises and learning activities designed to help students acquire confidence and benefit from independent study;
- Student presentations of learning material to encourage involvement in the learning process;
- Co-curricular activities, ranging from collaboration with student clubs and societies to debates and event organizing, to encourage students' creative engagement with the material;
- Extensive instructor feedback on assignments and activities;
- Individualized assistance during office hours for further discussion of lecture material, additional reading, and assignments;
- Additional print and audiovisual educational material posted on the Blackboard course template;
- Other relevant educational material placed on reserve in the library.

**ASSESSMENT:****Critical essay 40%**

A 1,500-word critical essay drawn from one of the major cluster themes of the course. The essay needs to display a firm grasp of the topic at hand, of the issues discussed in the course as a whole, as well as of the relevant critical bibliography.

**Travelogue 40%**

The students will keep a blog in which they will record their responses to the urban landscape and its mythic subtext.

**Participation 20%**

Students' participation in class discussions, work groups, and projects is a prerequisite to the course.

**READING LIST:**

Selections from the following:

Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, Penguin, 1977.

Crudden, M. (ed.), *The Homeric Hymns*, Oxford World Classics, 2008.

Graves, R., *The Greek Myths*, Penguin, 2011.

Harvey, D., *The Urban Experience*, John Hopkins University Press, 1989.

Hayden, D., *The Power of Place*, MIT Press, 1997.

Meagher, S., *Philosophy and the City*, State University of New York Press, 2008.

Pausanias, *Guide to Greece: Central Greece*, Penguin, 1979.

Plato, *Phaedrus*, Hackett Publishing, 1995.

**RECOMMENDED MATERIAL:**

Bachelard, G., *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, 1992.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., *A Thousand Plateaus*, Bloomsbury, 2013.

Lefebvre, H., *The Production of Space*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1991.

Lorau, N., *The Divided City*, Zone Books, The MIT Press, 2006.

Osborn, R., *Athens and Athenian Democracy*, CUP, 2010.

Vernant, J. P., *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, Zone Books, 1990.

Vernant, J. P., *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks*, Zone Books, 1990.

**COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:**

With the exception of in-class activities, all written work must be word-processed on Word and adhere to MLA guidelines for manuscript format and documentation.

**SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS:**

Microsoft Office, Microsoft Powerpoint

**WWW RESOURCES:**

<http://www.ancientgreece.com/>  
[http://odysseus.culture.gr/index\\_en.html](http://odysseus.culture.gr/index_en.html)  
<http://www.publicspace.org/>

**INDICATIVE CONTENT:****I. Philosophy of a City and Myth as *Rhizome*: Reading Ancient Athens with Contemporary Theory**

- Fundamentals of contemporary urban theory: city as object of philosophical speculation
- Myth as cultural an urban memory

**II. Gender, Performativity and Urban Identity: Athena, Athens and Cultural Otherness**

- Gendering(s) of the city and the concept of performance
- Dionysian theater and the discourse of otherness
- Theater, language and democracy

Field Trip: The Acropolis, The Acropolis Museum, Theater of Dionysus

**III. Politicizing the City: The Theseus Myths and Political Inscription**

- Ancient sites as propaganda
- The use of myth and political modalities: from Theseus to contemporary fascism

Field Trip: Temple of Hephaestus and The Agora

**IV. The Phenomenology of Urban Erotics: Ancient Rivers, Philosophy and Desire in the City**

- The river as landscape of *eros*: the phenomenology of water and reverie
- The destruction of the aquatic horizon and the hidden life of rivers in contemporary Athens

Field Trips: Illisus, Heridanus and the Island of Aegina

**V. The “No-Place” of Urban Imagination: Eleusis and the Cult of Demeter**

- The ‘mystery’ of religious experience and the concept of *heterotopia*

- Urbanization and proletarianization in contemporary Eleusis:  
*heterotopia* as wasteland

Documentary Screening: *The Mourning Rock*, F. Koutsafitis, 2000.

Field Trips: Eleusis

## **VI. The City as Palimpsest: Myth and the Contemporary Experience of Athens**

- Walking across Athens: contemporary subjectivity and ancient mythic consciousness

The tourist discourse: myth as commodity