UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

COURSE TITLE AND NUMBER

Film 352: Critical Topics in Film

Film and Myth

Instructor: Marina Shron
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Office Hours: Monday, 2PM-3PM or by special arrangement. I will be available via Skype or phone.

Class Days/Times: Online

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: Intro to Film

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to explore and deepen your understanding of story structure. It will introduce you to the alphabet of myth, the ancient and ever modern language of storytelling. We will analyze films that update and revise old myths (such as Black Orpheus, Dogma, Days of Heaven, My Own Private Idaho, Pan’s Labyrinth), identifying character archetypes, story patterns and visual symbols (universal as well as unique to a specific culture) that account for these films’ universal appeal. We will examine how three key definitions of myth (historical, cultural, personal) can be used in -- and challenged by - the films and the film genres. The assignments will include readings, screenings, and writing exercises along with the discussions. For the final project, you will have a choice of completing a short script or writing an analytical paper.

COURSE GOALS:

Students will screen and analyze films to reveal a wide range of mythic references, story patterns, themes and visual symbols/motifs that shape powerful and original cinematic stories. We will examine films and scripts either derive their inspiration from mythology (Greek, Biblical, etc.) and folklore (Lion King), are create and are shaped by the cultural archetypes (Hollywood
genres). We will also examine films that create uniquely personal “myths” (My Own Private Idaho).

By the end of the term, you will complete a script, 15 pages long, based on the exercises.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- Study mythic structures and archetypes in storytelling including the Hero’s Journey and other models.
- Understand mythic references and symbolism (on the level of plot, character and visual imagery) by examining the films that include references to myths both ancient and modern.
- Explore the films of various genres and the way in which they represent, deviate from and subvert cultural myths.
- Through a series of exercises, create a script that incorporates elements derived from historical, cultural and personal “mythologies”. Complete a short screenplay.

**PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate expertise in:

**Critical Synthesis**

1. Identifying mythic structures and their functions in the works of cinematic art.
2. Recognizing mythic structures and archetypes in the films of various genres and analyze the way in which they represent, deviate from and subvert cultural myths.
3. Developing a vocabulary to discuss specifics examples of mythic plots and the stages of the hero’s cycle.
4. Synthesizing the critiques of others for revision of their own work.

**Communication and Collaboration**

1. Giving constructive feedback to peers.
2. Communicate skillfully and responsibly with a teacher.
3. Express themselves effectively in the online environment.

**2. Creativity in Context**

1. Manifest a personal approach to the techniques of cinematic writing.
2. Contextualize their own choices within or in reference to cinematic history and mythology.
3. Acquire a deep understanding of dramatic structure and develop the ability through practice to communicate thought and theme within the form of dramatic/cinematic storytelling grounded in myth.
4. Through a series of exercises, create a script that incorporates elements derived from historical, cultural and personal “mythologies”. Complete a short screenplay.
REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

1. Man and his Symbols
   Carl Jung
   Dell Press
   **ISBN-10:** 0440351839
   (Available as the e-book)

2. Myth and the Movies
   Stuart Voytilla
   Michael Wiese Productions
   **ISBN-10:** 0941188663

Recommended Texts:

The Hero with a Thousand Faces
   Joseph Campbell
   Princeton University Press
   3rd edition
   **ASIN:** B001AVK6HK

Mythology
   Edith Hamilton
   Grand Central Publishing
   ISBN-10: 0446574759

The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology
   Arthur Cotherrell
   ISBN: 1843094371

Any collection of Greek, myths, Biblical stories, the world folklore.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:

Computer access to the internet is required in order to successfully navigate this course. Firefox is the recommended browser for Sakai compatibility and can be downloaded free from [www.mozilla.com/firefox](http://www.mozilla.com/firefox). You will require additional plug-ins (Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash, Real Player, Quicktime). These are all free downloads. Internet Explorer for Windows, version 6 or higher is also an option. Be sure to turn off pop-up blocker.
**SAKAI HELP:**

Here is the link for Sakai help: [https://sakai.uri.edu/portal/help/main](https://sakai.uri.edu/portal/help/main).

In the Sakai menu on the left you will see Sakai Documentation at the bottom of the menu. If you click on it, it will take you to the help pages. You can also call the Help Desk at 401-874-4357.

Remember to use Firefox as your browser as there have been compatibility issues with Internet Explorer and Safari. Firefox works on both PC and Mac platforms.

**CLASSROOM PROTOCOL:**

For this online course, Sakai is our “classroom.” Please refer to the Sakai tutorial video embedded on our course homepage (START HERE) for a detailed screencast on how this course will run via Sakai, which tools you will need, and how to use those tools.

In the online learning environment, “attendance” is measured by your PRESENCE in the site as well as your CONTRIBUTIONS to the site. The importance of regular log-ins and active participation cannot be overstated. I will gauge your participation by your regular, on-time forum postings and responses, and timely assignment submissions. If you’ve never taken an online course, “hanging out” on Sakai will take some getting used to, and it will be easy to forget about the course from time to time. I recommend that you check out the Online Learn Orientation at [https://sakai.uri.edu/portal/site/8287ab7d-aa33-4fa7-ad8c-066fe8203251](https://sakai.uri.edu/portal/site/8287ab7d-aa33-4fa7-ad8c-066fe8203251). This short orientation will provide you with an introduction to the important aspects of taking an online course. I further recommend that you get in the habit of daily attendance online to maximize your successful completion of the course. Please refer to the Schedule of Readings, Assignments, Quizzes, Exams at the end of this syllabus and on the Sakai site for details on how and when you will be expected to contribute to the course.

**ONLINE LEARNING:**

This course is divided into seven weeks with one major Lesson per week.

As stated above, the best way to begin this course is to view the START HERE video, read the syllabus, and complete the Online Learn Orientation. In addition, you can find more helpful information at this site: [web.uri.edu/learningonline/intro/](http://web.uri.edu/learningonline/intro/). Finally, the syllabus is your map to this course.

Each Week on Sakai contains the learning objectives for that week, assigned readings, videos, and links to other important content on the internet, written assignments, quizzes, and discussion activities.

In order to receive the full attendance/participation points you must participate in the weekly class discussion at least 2 different days per week. I count a "week" from Sunday evening at midnight to the following Sunday at midnight. Yes, weekend days count. You need to post on 2
different days of the week, not just post 2 times on one day, and yes, responding to other people counts

Remember to discuss with your peers -- not just post in a vacuum. Interacting with your group members is the equivalent of "going to class" -- and it is not optional.

There will be prompts provided to guide your discussions. Please respond to these with a thoughtful, well thought-out posting. A brief "I liked the movie," or “it’s well-edited” won’t do, and you will receive either reduced points or no points for your contribution.

- Be specific and detailed in your postings. Discuss a specific scene (and tell us which scene it is). Avoid generalized, overall comments.
- Quote (briefly) from the text when relevant, or point to a page # for others to refer to on the subject that you’re discussing.
- Respond to others’ postings (politely). A large part of the purpose of the forums is to engage in conversation about the films that we see and the readings in which we are engaged.
- Don’t overdo!! I hate to suggest limits, but one-two solid paragraphs will do. You may also want to go back to the wiki to respond to others’ discussion of your postings.

**Discussion Groups:**

You are required to participate in the discussion of the assigned films. You don’t have to respond to both films but you do need to respond to at least one. You’re encouraged to jump into both groups, though! Discussing the films (participation) is a significant portion of your class grade, so please engage in the discussions. There will be discussion prompts to guide you. And yes, responding to other people’s posts count!

I run the discussions like seminars -- they tend to be run by the students rather than me being the focal point or "expert.” I will participate in the discussions, occasionally, but more in the form of asking follow-up questions and encouraging discussion. I read almost every post in all of the group areas even though I won’t reply often. I do reply, though, to every question you post.

**Creative Assignments:**

There will be 2 creative exercises/assignments due in the course of the semester and the final script, about 10-15 ages long due on the last day of the semester. The creative assignments should be posted in designated weekly forums where other students would be able to view them and respond.

The final script should be submitted via the course Drop box.

**Films:**

The DVDs for the films assigned for viewing will be placed on reserve for our class in Kingston library. Alternatively, you will need a Netflix account in order to watch the films that are required. This is the best way to easily see a film online at high quality.
It is your responsibility to watch all the films we discuss in timely manner.

**Scripts**

In addition to watching films, you’re required to read the screenplays for this film, since the focus of the course is primarily on writing. I will provide the scripts for the films we watch – and expect you to read them. In a rare case when you can’t immediately get access to the film, make sure to read the script before responding to the discussion prompts.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY:**

Participation: Class discussions, viewing and reading questions, attendance - 40% (5% per each weekly discussion post plus responses).

Creative Assignments 30% (2 assignments 15 each)

Final Project (30%)

**ATTENDANCE:**

In the online learning environment, “attendance” is measured by your PRESENCE in the site as well as your CONTRIBUTIONS to the site. The importance of regular log-ins and active participation cannot be overstated. I will gauge your participation by your regular, on-time forum postings and responses, and timely assignment submissions. If you’ve never taken an online course, “hanging out” on Sakai will take some getting used to, and it will be easy to forget about the course from time to time.

**SAKAI READINGS/RESOURCES:** All readings besides the text are available online under “Resources” on the class Sakai site. I did want to provide you with supplemental readings. You can, of course, use both the required and suggested readings in your responses, essays, and posts.

**ASSIGNMENTS/QUIZZES/EXAMS NOT SUBMITTED BY THE SPECIFIED WEEKLY DEADLINE WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO.** Please back up your work on a flash drive, email to yourself, and/or store in a cloud. It is a good idea to have a back-up plan in case of computer problems, e.g., a friend’s computer, a library computer, etc.

**GRADING SCALE:**

A: Outstanding work (90 – 100%). Work is above and beyond the requirements of the
assignment. Demonstration of outstanding effort and personal investment is evident. Some measure of remarkable skill, creativity, and/or energy marks the work.

**B: Above Average (80 – 89%).** Fulfills all aspects of the assignment and goes beyond competence, showing extra effort, achievement, and/or investment.

**C: Average (70 -79%).** The work fulfills all aspects of the assignment with competence. *Doing the assignment exactly as assigned, no more or no less, will earn you a grade in this range.*

**D: Below Average (60 – 69%).** Some aspect of the assignment has not been fulfilled, or errors make clear communication difficult. There may also be a failure to follow directions, to implement specific recommendations, or to demonstrate effort or improvement.

**F: Not acceptable (59% and below).** The student did not complete the assignment as assigned, or the writing fails to meet the minimum level acceptable for college work.

**Essays:** All essays must be typed, using MLA format, and should adhere to the suggested length for each particular assignment. The final draft of each assignment must be accompanied by any working drafts and peer-reviewed drafts.

**ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Office of Disability Services**

1. Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me early in the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. Students should also contact Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098.

2. From the University Manual: **6.40.10 and 6.40.11 Accommodations for Qualified Students With Disabilities.**

   Students are expected to notify faculty at the onset of the semester if any special considerations are required in the classroom. If any special considerations are required for examinations, it is expected the student will notify the faculty a week before the examination with the appropriate paperwork.

**PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses, which are dealt with firmly by the College and University. Scholastic integrity presumes that students are honest in all academic work. **Cheating** is the failure to give credit for work not done independently (i.e., submitting a paper written by someone other than yourself), unauthorized communication during an examination, or the claiming of credit for work not done (i.e., falsifying information). **Plagiarism** is the failure to give credit for another person’s written or oral statement, thereby falsely presuming that such work is originally and solely your own.
Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student’s name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student’s own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student’s own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

- Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation;
- Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently;
- Unauthorized possession or access to exams;
- Unauthorized communication during exams;
- Unauthorized use of another’s work or preparing work for another student;
- Taking an exam for another student;
- Altering or attempting to alter grades;
- The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams;
- Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references;
- Facilitating or aiding another’s academic dishonesty;
- Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the Instructor.

Please note the following section from the University Manual:

8.27.17. Instructors shall have the explicit duty to take action in known cases of cheating or plagiarism. The instructor shall have the right to fail a student on the assignment on which the instructor has determined that a student has cheated or plagiarized. The circumstances of this failure shall be reported to the student’s academic dean, the instructor’s dean, and the Office of Student Life. The student may appeal the matter to the instructor’s dean, and the decision by the dean shall be expeditious and final. Such action will be initiated by the instructor if it is determined that any written assignment is copied or falsified or inappropriately referenced.

Any good writer’s handbook as well as reputable online resources will offer help on matters of plagiarism and instruct you on how to acknowledge source material. If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to indicate your references, PLEASE ASK.

Please note: Students are responsible for being familiar with and adhering to the published “Community Standards of Behavior: University Policies and Regulations” which can be accessed in the University Student Handbook.
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

MY PROMPTS FOR OUR WEEKLY POSTINGS WILL APPEAR IN OUR SAKAI FORUM.

YOUR WEEKLY POSTINGS AND COMMENTS ON OTHERS’ POSTS ARE POSTED IN THE SAKAI FORUM.

YOUR CREATIVE ASSIGNMENTS ARE POSTED IN THE SAKAI FORUMS.

ALL FILMS ARE AVAILABLE ON NETFLIX AND ARE ON RESERVE IN THE MEDIA ROOM OF THE URI LIBRARY (2nd FLOOR).

YOUR FINAL PROJECT, A SCRIPT OF ABOUT 15 PAGES, ARE TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE DROPBOX ON SAKAI

WEEK ONE: Monomyth

Read: “Myth as Language” (Sakai, Resources)
      “Hero’s Journey (online)
      Suggested: Carl Jung “Approaching the Unconscious” from “Man and his Symbols”

Watch: Batman Begins and Memento

Sunday
Read the syllabus carefully!! Send questions/comments to me at shron_marina@uti.edu

Spend some time on our Sakai site familiarizing yourself with it. This will save you a lot of time later on!

Introductory Post due by 11:59 tonight.

Thursday
Post #1 due 11:59 PM

Sunday
Comment on at least three student postings: Due 11:59 PM

WEEK TWO: The Hero Myth and The Initiation Myth.
Read Part 2 of “Man and His Symbols” (Ancient Myth and Modern Man” by Joseph Henderson)

Watch Pan’s Labyrinth and Walkabout

Thursday
Posts #2 due by 11:59 PM (notice that we have two discussion topics this week, each one worth half of the weekly grade)

Sunday
Comment on at least three student postings: Due 11:59 PM

Begin working on Creative Assignment 1


Read:
Part 3 of “Man and His Symbols” (“The Process of Individuation” by M.-L. von Frantz)

“The Hero’s Psychological Journey” (Sakai Resources)

Suggested: Article about the film (online)

Watch My Own Private Idaho

American Beauty

Thursday

Post #3 due by 11:59 pm

Thursday

Creative Assignment 1: Due 11:59 pm

Sunday

Comment on at least three posts by your peers: Due 11:59 pm

Comment on 1 creative assignment of your peer/partner in a group: Due 11:59 pm

WEEK FOUR: Archetypical Plots

Overcoming the Monster, From Rags to Riches, and Voyage and Return.
Read: “The Archetypical Plots” (Sakai Resources)  
Chapter 1 of “Myth and the Movies” by Stuart Voytilla

Watch:  There Will be Blood, Thelma and Louise, 50/50

Thursday

Post # 4: Post by 11:59 PM

Sunday

Comment on at least three student postings: Due 11:59 PM

Begin working on Creative Assignment 2

WEEK FIVE: Myth and Dreams

Read Ch.1 from “Man and His Symbols: by Carl Jung

Read about methods of working with dreams

Watch Meshes of the Afternoon, Kurosawa Dreams, Un Chien Andalou, Sea Child

Thursday

Post # 5 due by 11:59 pm

Saturday

Creative Assignment 3: Due 11:59 pm

Sunday

Comment on at least three posts by your peers: Due 11:59 pm

Comment on 1 creative assignment of your peer/partner in a group: Due by 11:59 pm

Begin working on Creative Assignment 4

Read
- The Wheel of Genres (Sakai Resources)
- The Tragic Plot (Sakai Resources)
- The Comedic Plot (Saka Resources)

Watch
- Rumble Fish, Days Of Heaven, Dogma

Thursday

Post # 6 due by 11:59 pm

Saturday

Creative Assignment 4: Due 11:59 pm

Sunday

Comment on at least three posts by your peers: Due 11:59 pm
Comment on 1 creative assignment of your peer/partner in a group: Due by 11:59 pm

WEEK SEVEN: The Mythology of Classical Hollywood Genres

Read
- From “Myth and the Movies” by Stuart Voytilla

Watch
- Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
- Chinatown

Thursday

Post # 6 due by 11:59 pm

Sunday

Comment on at least three posts by your peers: Due 11:59 pm
Final Project (script) is due.