

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE PROPOSAL
UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

Use this form to submit **EXISTING** courses for review. If this course will be submitted for review in more than one category, submit a separate proposal for each category.

COURSE NUMBER:	FSEM 100:		
COURSE TITLE:	THE JOURNEY TO THE UNDERWORLD IN GREEK MYTH AND MODERN FILM		
SUBMITTED BY:	A. Gosetti-Murrayjohn, CPR	DATE:	1/29/08
<i>This course proposal is submitted with the department's approval. (Put a check in the box to the right.)</i>			XX
<i>If part of a science sequence involving two departments, both departments approve.</i>			

THIS COURSE IS PROPOSED FOR (check one).

First-Year Seminar (<i>indicate in the rationale if this will also count for major credit</i>)	XX
Quantitative Reasoning	
Global Inquiry	
Human Experience and Society	
Experiential Learning	
Arts, Literature, and Performance: Process	or
	Appreciation
Natural Science (<i>include both parts of the sequence</i>)	

NOTE: See the report entitled "General Education Curriculum as Approved by the Faculty Senate," dated November 7, 2007, for details about the general education categories and the criteria that will be used to evaluate courses proposed. The report is available at www.jtmorello.org/gened.

RATIONALE: Using only the space provided in the box below, **briefly** state why this course should be approved as a general education course in the category specified above. *Attach a course syllabus. Submit this form and attached syllabus electronically as one document to John Morello (jmorello@umw.edu).* All submissions **must** be in electronic form.

This interdisciplinary course endeavors to provide students with the interpretive tools and frameworks that will enable them to analyze Greek texts in translation and modern films. Focusing on how one mythic archetype (the katabasis) pervades both classical literature and cinema, we will explore incarnations of the archetype in a variety of genres and narratives from war films to films about urban decay, class disparity, and bleak poverty to dystopic, cyberpunk films.

As students in this course consider the relationship between the classical mytheme of the "Journey to the Underworld" and modern film, they will also be prompted to consider how this theme relates to their own lives, and particularly to the intellectual and civic journey they are undertaking in their transition from high school to college.

FSEM 100: The Journey to the Underworld in Greek Myth and Modern Film

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One of the most fascinating archetypal stories in the surviving body of myths from ancient Greece is the hero's journey to the Underworld (the "katabasis" or "descent"). This Freshman Seminar offers an opportunity to study this archetype as it appears in ancient texts and in modern films. This course, therefore, takes an interdisciplinary approach, working from the premise that mythic archetypes and mythemes pervade modern art, literature, film, and other expressions of popular culture. As we explore the theme of the "Journey to the Underworld" in myth and cinema, we will simultaneously assess how this theme relates to our own lives—to our emerging identities as college students, as participants of a democracy, as citizens of the world.

Learning Objectives:

- To learn the body of Greek myths pertaining to *katabatic* journeys
- To gain an understanding of various interpretive frameworks by which ancient myths have been understood (psychoanalytic, structural, Marxist, and feminist)
- To identify interpretive points of contact between katabatic myths and films
- To learn the formal features of film, and to apply our knowledge of these formal features to our interpretive endeavors
- To become "experts" on the "katabatic" elements of one film: what do the katabatic elements of this film have to do with the moral, political, social, and interpersonal questions of modern life?
- To grapple with the questions, "how do myths reflect universal human experiences?"; "why are myths so enduring?"; and "what do they mean to me?"

Required Textbooks:

1. Lombardo, Stanley and S. Murnaghan (ed., tr.). *The Essential Homer*. Hackett Publishing. (\$12.95)

2. Bordwell, D. and K. Thompson. 2004. *Film Art: An Introduction*, 7th ed. McGraw-Hill. (\$67.97)

3. Coursepack

Required Films: (these should be purchased)

Apocalypse Now: The Complete Dossier. Francis Ford Coppola, dir. 1979. (Amazon.com: \$16.99)

City of God. Kátia Lund, dir. 2002. (Amazon.com: \$18.49)

The Matrix. Larry and Andy Wachowski, dirs. 1999. (Amazon.com: \$9.99)

*You might consider purchasing: *The Ultimate Matrix Collection*, 2004 (Amazon.com: \$38.99)—but *The Matrix* is the only required film in the collection.
Khandahar. Mohsen Makhmalbaf, dir. 2001. (Amazon.com: \$26.99)

Resources on the web (recommended): There are numerous fine resources available on-line to help you research, quiz yourself, and help you refine your working body of knowledge about classical myth. The following are probably amongst the best:

The Perseus Digital Library

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll_Greco-Roman.html

Greek Mythology Link

<http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/index.html>

Classical Myth: The Ancient Sources

<http://web.uvic.ca/grs/bowman/myth/>

Diotima: Materials for the Study of Women and Gender in the Ancient World

<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/>

Encyclopedia Mythica

<http://www.pantheon.org/>

Internet Movie Database (IMDB)

<http://www.imdb.com>

Other Useful Tools:

Hornblower, S., A. Spawforth, et al., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. Oxford University Press, 1996. Ref DE5 .09 1996 (in ref. section of the library)

Course Requirements and Final Grade Breakdown:

2 film response papers (2 pages each): 5% each; 10% total

Formal Analysis Paper (5-6 pages): 10%

Individual Blog: at least bi-weekly posts: 20% (I'll be grading for creativity, interestedness, overall quality of content, and regular, active participation)

Participation in Discussions: 15%

Annotated Bibliography, Thesis, Draft: 5% each; 15% total

Final Paper (and all elements): 15%

Symposium Presentation: 15%

Late assignments will be marked down ½ grade per day late.

GRADING SCALE:

94-100%	A	80-82%	B-	69%	D+
90-93%	A-	78-79%	C+	60-68%	D
88-89%	B+	73-77%	C	59% or less	F
83-87%	B	70-72%	C-		

The provisions of the Honor system are in effect for this course. You are authorized and highly encouraged to read, watch films, and discuss the material of the course together—and, indeed, to form regular study groups. You may NOT discuss exams with those who have not taken them; you may NOT collaborate on take-home quizzes without my specific authorization. You will be expected to write out and sign the Honor Code at the bottom of each written assignment.

Classroom Environment:

It is expected that we treat each other with dignity and respect at all times. I have read the university's policy on Sexual Harassment and fully support it. Language or behavior that interferes with the mission of this course and of UMW will not be tolerated and may result in an instructor-initiated drop or other disciplinary measures.

Disability Services: The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you need accommodations (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.), I would be happy to refer you to the Office of Disability Services (540-654-1266). They will require appropriate documentation of a disability.

Dates, Course Topics, and Assignments Due: Assignments in the far right column are due on the corresponding date.

First Part of Course: The Hero on a Journey: The Sources in Translation**Week One: Fantastical Landscapes and the Katabatic Hero**

- In class exercise: “My Journey: From There to Here” (Monday)
- Overview of Academic Resources and Visit to the Simpson Library (Wed.)
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, books 6-12 (from selections) (Fri.)
- Research “Films for Study” through IMDB: select 3 (I will assign one of these to you)
- Work on Procuring your Film For Study

Week Two: The Male Hero's Coming of Age

- Apollodorus, (on Herakles and Perseus): coursepack
- **Film: The Lord of the Rings** (excerpts)

- Set up your course blog
- Blog Assignment #1: “What are the elements of a katabasis?”
- Blog Assignment #2: “Analyze one item (book, article, ad, photo, etc.) from contemporary media: how does it depict a katabasis or a ‘coming of age’”

Week Three: Katabasis and the Feminine

- *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (coursepack)
- **Film: Bleu**
- View your film for study (for your final project)

Response Paper #1 (2 pages) due: Scene Analysis
 “Katabasis and Khadzad-dum (the Mines of Moria)” OR
 “Katabasis and the *Bleu* Swimming Pool”

- In-class workshop:

Part Two: Interpretation of Myth

Week Four: Myth and Psychoanalysis

- Freud, from *The Interpretation of Dreams* (coursepack)
- Slater, from *The Glory of Hera* (coursepack)
- **Film: Pan’s Labyrinth**
- Blog #1: Myth and Psychoanalysis: A response or critique
- Blog #2: From here on out, at least a bi-weekly post on your film (how might your film be interpreted psychoanalytically?)

Week Five: Myth and Social Structure

- Lévi-Strauss, from *The Structural Study of Myth* (coursepack)
- Marx, from : *On Society and Social Change* (coursepack)
- On Cixous, from: Toi, M. (ed.), *Sexual/Textual Politics* (coursepack)
- **Film: Thelma and Louise**

Response Paper #2 (2 pages) due: Interpretation of Film
 “Provide an interpretation of the mythemes in *Pan’s Labyrinth* through EITHER a psychoanalytical, structural, Marxist, or feminist lens”
 OR

“Provide an interpretation of the mythemes in *Thelma and Louise* through EITHER a psychoanalytic, structural, Marxist, or feminist lens”

Third Part of Course: Interpretation of Film

Week Six:

- *Film Art: An Introduction*: Chapters 2, 3, and 4, “The Significance of Film Form”; “Narrative as a Formal System”; and “Film Genres
- **Film: Thelma and Louise** (a re-cap)

- Blog #1: Discuss the formal features of your film
- Blog #2: Discuss the generic features of your film

Week Seven:

- *Film Art: An Introduction*: Chapters 6, 7, “The Shot: Mise-en-Scene”; “The Shot: Cinematography”
- **Film: Pan’s Labyrinth** (a re-cap)

**From here on out, Blog at least bi-weekly on your film. See assignment descriptions for ideas.

Week Eight:

- *Film Art: An Introduction*: Chapters 8, and 9, “The Relation of Shot to Shot”; “The Sound in Cinema”
- **Film: Bleu** (a re-cap)

Formal Analysis Paper (5-6 pages) due: Provide a cinematic excursus of your film. What techniques have the director, cinematographer, sound artists, etc. used, and what effects did these techniques create?

Fourth Part of the Course: Mythemes and Modern Film

Week Nine: Katabasis of War

- **All Quiet on the Western Front (in class)**
- **Apocalypse Now (assigned)**
- Discussion Groups: Discuss one scene from AQWF or AN: how is this scene “katabatic”? What formal features and techniques assist this association?

Bibliography for final paper Due:

Week Ten: The Journey Through Urban Hell

- **Film: Brazil (in class)**
- **Film: City of God (assigned)**
- Discussion Groups: Discuss one scene from Brazil or COD: what mythemes or archetypes are at work? What formal features and techniques assist this association?

Thesis for final paper due:

Week Eleven: The Journey of the Cyberpunk through Dystopic Utopias

- **Film: Blade Runner (in class)**
- **Film: The Matrix (assigned)**
- Discussion Groups: Discuss one scene from BR or The Matrix: what mythemes or archetypes are at work? What formal features and techniques assist this association?
- Workshop: Outlines

Outline for final paper due:

Week Twelve: The Journey of the Nation

- **Film: Ulysses' Gaze (in class)**
- **Film: Kandahar (assigned)**
- Workshop: Draft

Draft of final paper due:

Week Thirteen: Our OWN Journeys: What have we learned about ourselves???

- In-class reflection papers and discussion

Final Paper Due:

Week Fourteen: Symposium: Student Presentations

Week Fifteen: Symposium: Student Presentations

Assignment Descriptions

- To the FSEM/ GenEd committee: Please note that this is a preliminary sketch only: it will be GREATLY revised.

I. Guidelines for Your Blog

What Is it? A blog is an electronic journal or log in which one can:

- Write thoughtful responses to “your” film—you may wish to provide a plot summary; discussion of particular scenes or camera shots; discussion of the archetypes in the film or mythemes running through the film
- Discuss reviews of “your” film and provide electronic links to those reviews where appropriate
- Incorporate stills or images into the actual posts you are writing so that you can discuss specific camera angles, shots, etc.
- Upload documents, mp3 files, and most other kinds of files.
- Provide links to YouTube clips of the films in question and discuss those clips
- Develop and publish a bibliography on “your” film
- Discuss news stories (and other media) that you find relevant to your film; if they are electronic stories, you can post the links to them
- Provide the opportunity for you to get feedback from your peers and from me about your ideas. You will be graded, in part, on your participation as a peer-reviewer who comments on other people’s ideas.

Most of the entries should take you about 15 minutes; but feel free to take longer if the creative juices are flowing.

Your blog will be the place where you develop ideas about the film that you are developing expertise on throughout the semester. You will write a formal research paper on this film, and present your ideas to your peers in a class symposium at the end of the semester.

This sounds like “Busy-Work”! My time is valuable! What is the purpose? Through the *process* of writing, one’s scope and depth of intellectual inquiry and critical thinking about a topic expand exponentially. Through writing about literature, art, and film, we become more careful readers, viewers, and thinkers. Informal writing can be a very powerful tool by which to clarify information, synthesize complex ideas, and produce deeper levels of inquiry into a subject. I shall provide some of the prompts, but you will have to do your own prompting about half-way through the course. Each of the questions that I shall pose is, essentially, a guide for deeper examination of course material. If you engage each of these questions seriously—with an open mind, with sustained concentration, and away from distractions (e-mail, TV, Blogging, partying roommates, etc.)—you will engage in a multi-layered dialogue with some of the most significant problems of interpretation and with your own thought processes.

Your blog will be, in a sense, the “foundation” for all the other assignments in this course. The blog entries will help to prepare you for your two short response papers; these response papers will, in essence, come out of the ideas and questions generated in your blog. Your final paper will develop some aspect of your “blogging” discoveries, so your largest assignment for this course will re-conceptualize, elaborate, and refine an idea or system of ideas originating from your blog.

Ok, I have the sheet of questions in front of me; now what? First things first; review your class notes and the assigned reading to which the questions pertain. Next, be sure you are in a place that is free of potential distractions. (Train your mind to concentrate on a single strain of inquiry for 15 minutes—if you find your mind wandering, gently guide it back to task.) Think for a few moments, then just write for at least 15 minutes. Research shows that skilled writers can produce about 2 “free”-written pages in that time (albeit, on standard 8 1/2 x 11 paper); then spend a few moments cleaning up what you have written. Remember—your blogs will be public.

How will the Blog count in my final grade? The blog will constitute 20% of your final grade. I will be grading on the following:

- Timely completion of entries
- Creativity--
- Engagement with other sources (reviews, images, audio files, other bloggers, media articles; advertisements—to name a few; these should be reliable and pertinent). **MAKE CONNECTIONS!!!**
- Substantive content

So, how and by what criteria will the professor “grade” the log? I will periodically review your blog and grade it using the following rubric. I will average all of your grades together for a final score.

Rubric For Blogs

8, 7 [A range]: All entries completed in a timely manner. Entries show a confident understanding of the material; difficult concepts addressed and engaged; (where relevant) close examination of the text; good questions posed; critical thinking sharp and focused. Connections to other resources add depth and range to discussion. Engages with the community of bloggers (via comments). At least 2 entries per week. All entries show depth of thought, critical analysis, and fundamental understanding of the concepts addressed.

6, 5 [B range]: At least minimum (2 entries per week). Completed in a timely manner. Entries show relatively good understanding of the material; difficult concepts addressed and engaged; (where relevant) close examination of the text; good questions posed; critical thinking in progress. Connections to other resources add depth and range to discussion, and engages with other bloggers. Globally speaking, entries may reveal that the writer probably understands the general concepts, but depth of inquiry not pursued beyond general concepts. This category is also appropriate for entries with minor misunderstandings of information or concepts (such as elements of plot; etc).

5,4 [C range]: Minimum number of entries not completed; and/or entries not completed in a timely manner. Entries “do the job”, but do not reveal inquiry beyond the general concepts. Misunderstandings may occur with some frequency. Few connections to other media discussed. Questions not posed; entries have little or no development.

3, 2, 1 [D-F range]: Minimum not achieved; entries not completed on time. Misunderstandings occur with frequency. Little or no development in entries.

II. Response Papers

You will be writing **two** short reflection papers of 2-2 ½ pages each (please do not go beyond that limit). These reflection papers are both interpretive in nature, and each asks you to do a specific task respecting films we will watch in class. Consider these response papers practice for developing the kind of analytical lines of thought that you will be expected to pursue for your final paper.

Consider the reflection papers to be more formal than the entries in your blog, but not quite as formal as your final paper. Spelling, grammar, logic, writing style, word-choice, paragraph development, etc. will count, but the organization need not be quite as “tight” as in your final paper. What counts here is your ability to perform analysis and to think critically and precisely. By the end of each paper, you should have discussed a finely crystallized, unique idea, and offered real insights into the reading or topic at hand. Your paper should reflect very close reading of ONE SCENE of the films you address.

Times New Roman; 12 point; double-spaced; normal margins.

III. Formal Analysis Paper

The formal analysis paper provides an opportunity for you to think about “your” film with a new vocabulary and to identify some of the formal features that went into its production (such as lighting, mise-en-scene, editing, sound, camera angles, etc.). Specifically, how do some of these formal elements function in terms of developing the “journey to the Underworld” motif?

Times New Roman; 12 point; double-spaced; normal margins.

IV. Annotated Bibliography

Find **four** scholarly articles, reviews, or chapters in books that deal specifically with “your” film. Read each very carefully. Study these. When you have studied an article sufficiently and feel that you have a pretty good idea what the author is arguing, write down **IN YOUR OWN WORDS** the central claims the author is making. This is the heart of an annotated bibliography entry—a summary of the author’s argument, as you understand it. An entry also orients the reader to the general topic—a preliminary sentence will usually do (prefacing the summary of the central claims), stating what the entry has to do with your topic. A good entry also provides a summary of the kinds and nature of the evidence the author uses to support those claims. Each entry should be about 100-150 words (about the size of this paragraph).

Times New Roman; 12 point; normal margins; double-spaced; cite the entry in bold print at the top of the paragraph in APA or MLA style. Be consistent.

Please try to incorporate the fruits of your labor into your final paper—you may wish, for example, to have a paragraph summarizing what others have said about the topic you are

addressing, and how and why you have come to alternative conclusions. It is important, therefore, that you choose the sources (articles or books) that you are going to be using very carefully. Your grade will, in part, reflect the appropriateness of your article to your final paper topic. So, do approach me if you have questions about a particular article!! I may be able to help you find better sources.

Please use APA style.

V. Thesis

This assignment provides an important bridge between your blog entries and your final paper. You may wish to write your paper expanding your favorite post, or developing a series of related posts. While the blog is a good “idea crystallization” tool, the purpose of the “thesis assignment” is to turn that idea into an effective thesis. A good thesis briefly orients the reader to the problem your paper will address, and it offers a summary of the claims respecting that problem you will be making in that paper.

A good start might be to summarize in a short paragraph the central idea of your blog entry (or entries). This process should at least help make clear to you what exactly it is you are going to argue. The next step is to put that into a formal thesis paragraph. Think about what the reader needs to know (consider audience) to help contextualize your argument (i.e., what problem are you addressing)? How will you “solve” (or at least interrogate) that problem?

Since the thesis is the most important part of any paper, we will be “workshopping” these in class. Since formulating summaries of other people’s theses may help you to revise your own, I have assigned your annotated bibliography previous to this step.

VI. Outline and Draft

Please produce an outline of your paper and a draft of it. Your draft should be very well thought out and free from grammatical and spelling errors. We will workshop these in class.

V. Final Paper

Your final paper (6-8 pages body; bibliography; 12 point Times New Roman; normal margins; double-spaced) should contain at least the following: (1) what basic problem are you addressing? (2) what claims are you going to make about that problem? (3) what have other people said about that problem (i.e., your research for the annotated bibl.)? (4) carefully and methodically make the case for your claims.

Your blogs helped you to crystallize an idea; your thesis statement helped you to turn that idea into a well-ordered, concisely argued claim or set of claims; your annotated bibliography helped you to understand how other people have approached the topic; your final paper should include all of that *and* do the work of logically, methodically presenting the evidence and string of ideas that led you to argue your thesis. Your argument should be fully fleshed out with strong evidence and textual details.

In the final paper, organization will be very important. Each paragraph should have a distinct purpose. The first sentence of each paragraph (called a “topic sentence”) should “signpost” to the reader what that paragraph has to do with what came before it and what the paragraph is going to do in terms of fleshing out your claims. Each paragraph should be placed perfectly so as to create a smoothly flowing argument that leads logically from one point or subordinate claim to the next.

Quote literature and dialogue from the film only when you back it up with discussion.

VI. Symposium:

Now: let’s put all of our work this semester together. We are going to have a symposium on the topic of “The Journey to the Underworld in Myth and Film” during which you can showcase your blogs, read your papers aloud to an audience, and—if you wish—show a screening of a film short you made on the topic. This is YOUR symposium. Let’s be creative and have fun!!!!

Possible Films for Study: The following is the list of “approved” films for research.

The Unforgiven, 1992
Das Boot, 1981
Pan’s Labyrinth, 2006
Black Hawk Down, 2001
The Last Emperor, 1987
The Night of the Hunter, 1955
The Killing Fields, 1984
Amistad, 1997
Safar (“The Journey”), 1994
2001: A Space Odyssey, 1968
All Quiet on the Western Front, 1930
Apocalypse Now (or Apocalypse Now, Redux), 1979
Brazil, 1985
Cidade de Deus (“City of God”), 2002
Blade Runner, 1982
The Matrix, 1999
Ulysses’ Gaze, 1995
Safar e Ghandehar (“Kandahar”), 2001