

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

1. CL 222 (Greek and Roman Mythology)
 - a. Prof. Kirk Summers, ksummers@ML.AS.UA.EDU
 - b. Course web page: <http://bama.ua.edu/~ksummers/cl222/>
 - c. Online myth encyclopedia: <http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/>
2. Peer Mentors (Spring 2005) - Ashley Flubacher GTA ash.flubacher@gmail.com
 - a. Samantha Dansby, samantha.dansby@gmail.com
 - b. Alex Haber, trajan1985@gmail.com
 - c. Zach Broom, broom001@bama.ua.edu
 - d. James Johnson, princeps.caesar@gmail.com
 - e. Vera Welch, vwwelch@bama.ua.edu
3. Project Groups
 - a. Roughly 250 students, 50 project choices, 50 groups of 5 each.
 - b. Each group will complete 1 project.
 - c. Members assigned to groups randomly; projects assigned to groups randomly.
 - d. 12 or 13 projects to be posted before each of the 4 tests. Some groups will post before the first test, others before the second test, others before the third test, others before the final. Projects must be posted 7 days before the test date.
 - e. One Peer Mentor will oversee each group. Peer Mentors will work with 2 to 3 groups during each of the 4 testing periods.
 - f. Once a group has been assigned a project, the group will meet along with the peer mentor to discuss how to proceed and how to divide the labor.
 - g. Peer Mentors are responsible for posting the group's project to the web.
4. Project Description
 - a. Each group investigates the *Nachleben* ("afterlife") of its topic in the modern world. In other words, look for and catalogue *modern survivals* of the mythic personality, event, or idea assigned to the group.
 - b. *Modern* includes anything from the beginning of the Renaissance (ca. 1400) to the present day. *Survivals* includes music, art, literature, historical or current news events, video, place names, commercials, or any other medium that seems suitable to the group, so long as it is cultural and not personal. In the "hints" section of each project description I often use the term *media*.
 - c. Simply put, the group is looking for any trace of the myth in modern times. Normally, that means the group should find sources where the myth is mentioned or directly alluded to in some way. It is possible, however, that the group will find a parallel figure, idea, or event where no direct link has been made to the group's topic. The group can use the parallel so long as it explains the connection to the topic.
 - d. The group should create a web page, with the help of the Peer Mentor, bringing together five to eight examples of what it has found (the group could also include one ancient image of the myth on the web page to orient visitors to the site). The web page should be an attractive display of the group's efforts and might include art work, excerpts from literature, music clips in mp3 format, a segment of a video,

or news stories. Each item should be accompanied by a full description and some interpretive comments about how the myth is being understood, reflected, or manipulated in the example.

- e. The group should create a summary of no more than 75 words to be attached to the link to their project. The idea is to create a description of the project that will attract other members of the class to follow your link and view the results of your work.
5. Summary
- a. Group is formulated at random and assigned a Peer Mentor.
 - b. Group meets with Peer Mentor and divides labor.
 - c. After doing their investigation, group members meet again with Peer Mentor to discuss their results and choose what to include and what to reject.
 - d. Group designs its web page and writes descriptions.
 - e. Group sends the web page to the Peer Mentor who then posts it on the web and creates a link for the CL 222 web page.
 - f. Group members grade themselves and one another.
 - g. Other members of the class visit the web site and follow the links to view the projects. Students in the class are responsible for visiting five of the sites before every test and writing a short description of the five on each test.
 - h. Grades will be assigned to each member of the group according to the following criteria: a) peer grading b) peer mentor grading c) how many students in the class choose to view and write about the project. Prof. Summers has ultimate responsibility for the assignment of grades.
6. Project Topics (TEST ONE)
- a. Prometheus: aids Zeus in the Titanomachy, creates humans and gives them fire, bound to a rock and tortured by Zeus' eagle, commiserates with Io, freed by Herakles. *Hints*: Mankind is weak and primitive until Prometheus benefits humans with culture in the form of fire. Zeus punishes mankind's benefactor because he does not want man to become self-sufficient. Someone who unites divinity and humanity in one person, Prometheus, rescues mankind's benefactor from his torments. Besides just looking for obvious references to Prometheus, you could also look for examples of mankind's anxiety over progress and knowledge *vis-à-vis* religion.
 - b. Titanomachy and Gigantomachy: the struggle of Zeus against the Titan rulers and the giants sent by Mother Earth (Gaia). *Hints*: Before the Olympian gods seized control of the universe under the direction of Zeus, brutish divinities called Titans ruled creation by force. Zeus and his followers could not match them in size and strength, but even so they defeated them using intelligence (*metis*) and technology (such as the thunderbolts). Mother Earth tries to retaliate by again creating brutish monsters, the Giants, to attack Zeus, but in a desperate battle they are finally repelled and defeated. Since this story represents a struggle between a barbarous reign of terror and civilized authority, look for examples that refer, not only directly to the Titanomachy and Gigantomachy, but also to any clash between regressive and progressive elements within society and culture.
 - c. Four Ages of Man: both Hesiod and Ovid talk about "ages" of mankind in terms

of metal types: Golden Age, Silver Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age. Hesiod adds a “Heroic Age” at the end of the Bronze Age. *Hints*: References to the “Golden Age” will be easy to find, since this schema assumes that mankind is on the decline, going from precious metals to baser metals, and longs to return to a better time. The major cause for mankind’s decline is, in this scheme, the desire for personal possessions. Human beings want to cordon off property, to take from their neighbors, and to sail overseas looking for adventures. Look for allusions to the various ages and their corresponding metals, but also for the general idea that human beings are slowly bringing about their own destruction through greed.

- d. Furies: also called the Erinyes and the Eumenides; born from the severed genitalia of Kronos (Cronus); sisters of Aphrodite. Their primary function was to avenge murders, particularly of family members. They either goaded another relative to take revenge or they themselves drove the murderer mad by hounding him (or her) like dogs. *Hint*: The Furies are popular in art and literature because they are such striking characters: they have dog-like features, wings (sometimes), blood-shot eyes and fangs with rotting flesh, snaky hair. They make their abode in the underworld. They uphold the law of the eternal blood feud, namely, that the only just payment for murder is another murder. This is sometimes called the *Lex talionis*, the law of retaliation. It is similar to the Old Testament principle of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” Look for, of course, direct references to the Furies, but also to the idea that there is an unwritten law governing the universe that says for recompense to be just it must equal and reflect the original loss.
- e. Pandora: created by Hephaestus under the direction of Zeus. Pandora was endowed with such alluring, enticing qualities that she became a distraction for men, who were otherwise contending with the gods. *Hint*: Focus on the “box” of Pandora, which has lent itself to numerous interpretations. Pandora brought the box with her as part of her dowry, but was instructed now to open it. When she did, all the ills that afflict mankind and eventually lead to death flew out of the box in the form of sprites. Startled at first, Pandora gathered herself and slammed the lid, unwittingly shutting in the last, slow sprite, Hope. How has this story been handled in art and literature? Has the view of Pandora’s role in introducing evil into the world changed through the centuries?
- f. Lycaon: Zeus had heard that evil had spread throughout mankind, so he paid the world a visit to see for himself. Lycaon of Arcadia entertained him, but in reality doubted his divinity. At a banquet in the god’s honor, Lycaon tried to feed to Zeus one of his slain servants and was immediately turned into a wolf. *Hint*: Lycaon is the paragon of human presumption, a symbol for all that is wrong with human beings. His impiety caused Zeus to send the flood that destroyed most the world. Pay particular attention to the notion that the evil character of man can be symbolized by the wolf (the Greek root *lyk-* means “wolf”). Closely related to this story of Lycaon is the distinctive cult of this region: The people of Arcadia worshiped “Zeus of Mt. Lykaion” with human sacrifice. The priest who performed the sacrifice is said to have been exiled into the wilderness for nine years in the form of a wolf, bearing and paying for the sins of the community.
- g. The Birth of Aphrodite: when the genitals of Ouranos fell into the sea after the

attack by Kronos, their fertile power caused Aphrodite to be born. She is said to have emerged from the sea at Cytherea or Cyprus. The root *aphro-* possibly means “foam,” which relates both to the foam of the sea and the foam of the genitalia.

Hint: Aphrodite’s emergence from the sea was a crucial moment in the creation story. Her beauty and sexuality was the essential ingredient needed for the world to become vital and productive. Look for references to the arrival of Aphrodite (Venus) as a kind of allegory for the coming of springtime or new life. You will certainly want to include the famous Renaissance painting by Botticelli.

- h. Ganymede: when Zeus wanted to replace his cupbearer, Hebe, he turned to a beautiful young boy from Troy named Ganymede. Zeus, so the story goes, either seized the child himself or sent down his eagle to do the work for him. From then on, Ganymede served drinks to Zeus and the other Olympian gods. *Hint:* In ancient art, Ganymede often appears with a rooster, which stands as a symbol for the erotic feelings between himself and Zeus. To modern sensibilities, the relationship between them seems immoral and unacceptable, but to the ancient Greeks, it was fairly common for older men to take young boys into a kind of apprenticeship that involved skills training as well as mutual physical admiration. Look for how this controversial subject has been handled in modern media, paying special attention to the degree to which it has been glossed over or expressed. Are there any similar social conventions in the modern world?
- i. The Three Graces: Eurynome was a daughter of the Ocean, and with Zeus she produced the three Graces. They are often associated with the coming of springtime and stand as symbols of happiness and loveliness, or more precisely, the feminine qualities that attract men to women. The universe depends on their power of attraction, with men being drawn to women, in particular, because of loveliness. Without the Graces, the world would lie dormant and stagnant. *Hint:* The subject of the three Graces is popular in all kinds of media and art, but also look for girls dancing naked as the ultimate expression of feminine elegance and beauty and as a means to charm the opposite sex.
- j. Thalia: One of the nine muses, she is often designated the goddess of comic poetry. She was born from an affair between Mnemosyne (Memory) and Zeus. Thalia lives with her sisters on Mt. Helicon around the waters of the Hippocrene fountain, but some authors call her and her sisters Pierides (from the region Pieria), placing their abode around the foot of Mt. Olympus. Apollo, the god of music, is said to be their leader. *Hint:* Poets of all types claim to “drink from the Hippocrene fountain” before they begin writing poetry. In other words, they are claiming inspiration from one or all of the Muses. By appealing to Thalia, poets and artists give their medium a specific generic identity and predispose their audience to a certain understanding of their work. Look for how the figure of Thalia has been employed as a marker in various kind of media.
- k. Parcae: the Fates, called “Moirai” by the Greeks. In their most classic representation, they are three women, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. Whenever a human being is created, Clotho spins a thread to represent his life. Lachesis is responsible for measuring that thread while Atropos cuts it with a pair of scissors. *Hint:* People are most fascinated with the figure of Atropos. Her name means, “no

turning back,” or “inevitable,” an indication of how we feel about the predetermined lot that we all face. Look for images of the Fates in various modern media, but also for the notion that our life span is measured and cut as a thread.

- l. Hermes Psychopompos: Hermes’ many spheres of influence, speech, trade, shepherding, traveling, marital reconciliation, and so on, reveal him to be a god who loves to move and maneuver and negotiate boundaries of all kinds. He uses his cleverness and skill (*technē*) to surpass barriers that limit others. Related to this ability, his epithet *psychopompos* indicates his roll in escorting the souls of the departed to the underworld. When someone dies, Hermes comes to lead the remaining “shadow” of the person to the eternal home of Hades. *Hint*: In Greco-Roman literature and art, when someone enters or exists the underworld, Hermes is there showing the way. The underlying assumption, therefore, is that underworld is so foreign and other-worldly to us that we cannot negotiate it without help. Look in the various modern media for the notion that we need guidance after we die. Tombstones and obituaries could be a valuable source for you.
 - m. Hippolytus: a son of Theseus, King of Athens, and the Amazon queen Hippolyta. Hippolytus was devoted to the arts of Artemis, meaning that he spent his youth traipsing through the woods with his friends and dogs hunting wild animals. Aphrodite was angry that he refused to turn his attention to love and marriage, so he punished him by causing Theseus’ wife, Phaedra, to fall in love with him. This had disastrous consequences, of course, leading to false accusations from Phaedra and her suicide. Theseus assumed from the events that Hippolytus had violated his wife, thus he cursed Theseus and drove him into exile, where he immediately died. *Hint*: Often called the “Potiphar’s wife” theme, from the well-known Biblical story involving Joseph, this motif appears in many guises in modern media. I suspect you will find stories in the news itself that reflect this sequence of events to some degree or other. But there is more to the story than just a sequence of events. For the Greeks, it was a discourse about social conformity. Hippolytus’ refusal to leave behind his carefree youth to enter the estate of marriage was unsustainable and eventually brought about disaster. Likewise, Phaedrus’ unnatural lust for her stepson redounded to her own death. Therefore, you may want to expand your search to include other stories of disaster brought about by someone’s refusal to conform to the natural transitions of life.
7. Project Topics (TEST TWO)
- a. Adonis: After Adonis’ mother Smyrna (or Myrrha) carried on an incestuous relationship with her father and was turned into a myrrh tree by the gods, Adonis was born from the bark of the tree. Aphrodite considered him to be incredibly handsome and so fell in love with him. When Adonis died during a boar hunt, Aphrodite mourned him by sprinkling his blood with nectar, the immortal food of the gods. This caused to spring up the anemone flower, a short-lived plant that holds its seeds in a pliant pod and then releases them to the wind. *Hint*: The death of Adonis was a favorite theme for artists in all periods, so you won’t have any trouble finding images of it and allusions to it. An interesting addition to the story sometimes given in antiquity makes clear the meaning that stands behind it. In that version, Persephone helped rear Adonis after a child and she too fell in love with

him, vying with Aphrodite for his attention. This struggle and jealousy between Aphrodite, the goddess of the love and passion that creates life, and Persephone, the queen of the dead, became a metaphor for the cycle of life.

- b. Hermaphroditus: the child of Hermes and Aphrodite, who was loved by the nymph Salamacis. Although he rejected her and pushed her away, she surprised him once while he was swimming and clung to him tightly. Meanwhile, she prayed loudly to the gods never to let her be separated from her beloved. The gods, hearing her prayer, merged the two into one body so that Hermaphroditus became a double-gendered person, displaying the attributes of both men and women. *Hint*: In the English language, “Hermaphrodite” is a synonym with “androgynous.” There are documented medical cases of such children. It is important to remember, however, that Hermaphroditus *became* androgynous, he was not born that way. The ancient story itself seems to be focused on the melding of boy and girl as a reflection of the metamorphosis that takes place in marriage. Look to see how the Hermaphroditus story is handled in modern art and literature and whether it matches the cultural use of the name.
- c. Eros and the dew: an attendant of Aphrodite, “Cupid” to the Romans. Sometimes the Greeks and Romans spoke of more than one, who collectively were known as *Erotes*. Eros appears in Greek mythology around the same time as Gaia and Chaos, though of uncertain parentage, and functions as the generative force that initiates life in the universe. Although we tend to think of him as a young boy with bow and arrow, the Greeks and Romans clearly understood him to be the dew itself, the primal moisture necessary for productivity and growth. As such, he is seen as the patron of gardens and flowers. *Hint*: Because of his association with the dew, the ancients thought of Eros as a tender young boy who danced on the flowers in the early morning. That imagery appears in many guises in modern contexts. The ancients had realized that wetness was an essential ingredient in sexuality and so saw it as part of the divine in nature. As you work on this project, concentrate primarily on Eros as a god of dew or primal moisture and see how artists and writers have handled the subject.
- d. Attis: consort of Cybele, he may have been primarily a Greek creation from Thracian influences. Regardless of where he originated, Attis was thought of as a Phrygian shepherd. He wears Eastern-style clothing and a characteristically Phrygian cap. Cybele, as a protective, mothering goddess, cares for him and uses her powers to keep the germ of life in him continuing, even after he dies. One striking aspect of Attis’s life is that he castrates himself as a kind of illustration of the importance of the bloodiness and death necessary for life to continue. *Hint*: Attis stands as a symbol of the cyclical nature of life. While the great mother nurtures him, Attis matures, dies, and is reborn. The Greeks were fascinated by this principle that they saw in nature (plants, animals, the moon, etc.), and hoped that the same applied to human beings as well. Thus, Attis eventually took on the functions of a savior god, who teaches us by his experiences that death is not final. We may even share in his rebirth vicariously. Because of certain functional similarities with Jesus, Attis has become a fairly popular figure in art and literature. But also, be aware, that priests of Cybele, often called “Attis” themselves, castrated

themselves to show their devotion to the goddess. You will find that this “castrated Attis” theme is very prevalent in modern media.

- e. The Return of Persephone: After Hades snatched Persephone and took her down to the underworld, the other gods pressured him to release her. As the result of a certain trick he pulled using the seeds of a pomegranate, Persephone was obligated to spend 1/3 of the year in the underworld as his bride, but the other 2/3 of the year she spent with her mother Demeter. Her return from the realm of the dead brought with it the joy of her mother and consequently the arrival of spring. *Hint*: Look for the way different artists have handled the return of Persephone, not only as a striking image of the return of spring in the form of a maiden rising from the dead, but also as a metaphor for renewal and a fresh beginning.
- f. Hecate: When Demeter went looking for her daughter, she first went to Hecate to see if she knew anything. Hecate sent her to Helios the sun god. In ancient art, however, Hecate appears often in the story of Demeter and Persephone as the goddess who with her torches lit the way for Hades as he traveled to and from the underworld to abduct Persephone. Her torches, in fact, became an important symbol of the Eleusinian Mysteries (the cult in which Demeter and Persephone were worshiped), indicating the flicker of life that shines in the dark abyss of the underworld. Hecate is a mysterious goddess who knows dark secrets and magic and who, with Artemis, is associated with the moon, though usually Hecate is thought of as the dark side of the moon (the negative side of Artemis). She is also associated with crossroads, which the ancients (and moderns) considered special places. *Hint*: Hecate is much beloved by witches because of her various powers and her love of mysterious, dark places. She often is shown with a triple form, representing the many facets of her personality and the power that she holds at crossroads. The ancients seem to have thought of her as a symbol of the unexplained, in other words, of phenomena whose sources they themselves were in the dark about. Look for how moderns have dealt with this mysterious but necessary power that Hecate represents. Does she seem most fearsome to people when her power is least understood? Does she ever appear beneficent?
- g. The Followers of Dionysus: the followers of Dionysus, Sileni, Satyrs, and Maenads, were a raucous bunch who enjoyed a good erotic romp and a jug of wine. The Maenads preferred dancing in ecstasy, however, and are often seen using their thyrsi to stave off the aggressive Satyrs, but they are by no means consistent about this. *Hint*: The followers of Dionysus personify the kinds of freedom and energy that he himself promotes. Usually calm and light-hearted, when someone tries to suppress them or stop their ecstatic rites, they explode into a frenzy of violence and reprisal. Look for how their free-loving behavior and their violent tendencies are handled in modern media. Are they seen as a positive expression of human behavior, or do they reflect a negative manifestation of the human spirit?
- h. Pentheus: a cousin of Dionysus who resisted the god’s return to Thebes. His story became the subject for Euripides’ play *The Bacchae* (sometimes called *The Bacchantes*). Pentheus was ruling Thebes when Dionysus came to convince the people there that he is now a divinity. Pentheus tried to have him imprisoned, but the god was able to escape and confront the king. Eventually, Dionysus is able to

tap into Pentheus curiosity about his ecstatic rites and to urge him, having disguised himself as a woman, to spy on the Thebans who were on the mountainside reveling. When Pentheus arrived at the site of the revelry, he himself became the victim of the ritual *sparagmos* and *omophagia*, the rending and eating of a living creature. *Hint*: Pentheus' refusal to accept the reign of Dionysus illustrates what happens to any individual he ignores the god's power. If Dionysus is not worshiped properly so that his power becomes a positive, channeled force for self-renewal, then his power works through the weak points of our personality to destroy us. Therefore, expect modern uses of the Pentheus story to focus in on the psychological aspects of the story. Any story about someone who refuses ever to let go and let loose, and the harmful consequences that follow, is a retelling of the Pentheus story.

- i. Midas: a king of Lydia who had hospitably entertained Silenus, companion of Dionysus. The god offered to the king to grant any wish, and the king replied that he wished anything he touched would turn to gold. The king soon regretted his wish, however, since even his food turned to gold, so he pleaded with Dionysus to undo the charm. Dionysus consented, ordering Midas to bathe himself in the river Pactolus, which thereafter became rich in gold. *Hint*: Midas is a popular subject, so you should be able to find many allusions to him in modern media. Is Midas consistently treated as a short-sighted man of greed, as we would suspect, or do any moderns have a different take on him?
- j. Ariadne Abandoned: In Crete, Ariadne, daughter of king Minos, had helped Theseus navigate through the labyrinth so that he could kill the Minotaur and escape unharmed. She only desired that Theseus take her back to Athens with him and marry her. Halfway home, however, Theseus abandoned her on the island of Naxos while she was sleeping. Here Dionysus found her and made her his wife. *Hint*: The moment that Ariadne wakes up and finds herself forsaken by Theseus is a very dramatic image of, among other things, the dependability of love and its accompanying promises. In what ways have modern media handled this striking story? Don't forget that, while Ariadne was crying over the loss of her love, Dionysus was appearing (often portrayed as ivy or grape vines growing around her), bringing her a new life and new love at the very height of her despair.
- k. Apollo the Healer: as a god of reason, order, and civilization, Apollo naturally has mastered one of the most important human arts, medicine. He is sometimes known as the mouse god, because he has the ability both to send diseases (plagues are connected with mice) and to take them away. The hymns sung to Apollo in his function as healer are called "paeans," which may be a term taken from an old Cretan god of healing named Paiawon. *Hint*: You should be able to find many references to Apollo in the medical field, but remember that his healing powers extend far beyond physical limitations. He has the power to heal the soul and society as well. Look for references to his healing powers in modern media, taking special note of the wide range of its manifestations.
- l. Hyperboreans: The ancients believed that during the winter months Apollo abandoned his temples in Greece and headed to the far north to visit the mythical race of people called the Hyperboreans. These people lived in a blessed state, free

from property disputes, and enjoyed banqueting and merriment all day long. The historian Herodotus (4.13ff.) even entertains the idea that they could actually exist. *Hint:* Their interest in Apollo may be connected to the legend that the Hyperboreans enjoyed unending sunshine, which will undoubtedly make them a fitting symbol for those in the solar industry. Artists, however, will probably be more interested in their culture as a paradigm of morality and peace, while philosophers may see it as an anti-imperialistic model.

- m. The Castalian Spring: the spring at Delphi, sacred to Apollo and thought to have certain healing and purifying properties. The Sibyl bathed in this spring before she began to prophesy, and pilgrims to the sanctuary had to bathe themselves in the water before they entered. Poets would sit by the quiet waters while they wrote, and “drinking from the Castalian waters” became a metaphor for receiving poetic inspiration. *Hint:* You will have no trouble finding references to “Castalia” in modern culture. Look for the term in music and literature, but also as the name of a location or a business. What quality of this spring appears to attract the most attention? Does its modern use retain any recognition of its original context?
8. Project Topics (TEST THREE)
- a. Cerberus: the three-headed guard dog of the underworld. He keeps the souls (or “shades”) of the underworld within their confines, and he challenges the heroes who try to make their way down to the land of the dead alive. Herakles drug him up from his cave into the light of day as a kind of symbolic conquering of death. Aeneas put him to sleep (a nice way to think about death). *Hint:* Cerberus’ position at the entrance of the underworld, after one crosses the river Styx, emphasizes the finality of death. Since the shades of the underworld cannot be bitten (they are insubstantial), Cerberus restrains them by his baying, since they are afraid of loud noises. In what kinds of modern contexts do we find Cerberus? Is there an emphasis on his role as a guardian or on his connection with death?
- b. Tantalus: He tried to feed his son Pelops to the gods, so Zeus punished him in the underworld by frustrating his mad lusts. Tantalus stands in a pool of water while a basket of food hangs over his head. When he stoops to get some water, it immediately recedes; when he tries for the food, it is pulled out of his reach. Thus he is forever tantalized, but never fulfilled. *Hint:* Some ancient authors say that Tantalus suffers his fate because he tried to share the secrets of the gods with men, and for this he is forever denied pleasure and satisfaction. Look for the ways that the punishment of Tantalus is used today, whether through image or by metaphor. Or why would a business choose the name of this infamous villain? Is he always viewed negatively?
- c. Sisyphus: He got into trouble with the gods when he reported one of Zeus’ affairs to Hera. Thereafter, he constantly thwarted Zeus’ attempts to send him to Hades, even turning the tables on Death itself. Eventually, Zeus punished him in the underworld by forcing him to push a rock up a hill over and over again, only to have it roll back down upon him. *Hint:* Nowadays, I suspect, Sisyphus’ task is used as a metaphor for the futility of human effort, but there may be other interpretations. The punishment of Sisyphus fits his crime, however: the tables are constantly being turned on him, just as once he turned the tables on others.

- d. Orpheus: highly-skilled and enchanting musician from Thrace; his marriage to Eurydice immediately turned disastrous when she died on their wedding day. He tried to retrieve her from the underworld, and at first appeared to be successful, but on the way out he broke the gods' commands by turning to look at her. She was lost to him forever. From then on he wandered around, singing a mournful song and rejecting all women. Bacchant women finally caught up with him and tore him apart. His head continued to talk, however, and became the source of a new religion. *Hint*: The power of Orpheus' music to calm the savage heart and even to manipulate nature will probably be the most prominent aspect of his character and life that draws attention. There may be some interest in Orpheus as the inventor of homosexuality (as he rejected women). Are there any modern uses of Orpheus as a mystical symbol?
- e. Charon the Boatman: guides the souls across the Styx, a river of the underworld that corrals the souls of the dead. He is often portrayed as a scruffy, unkept fellow who punts a creaky skiff. When Aeneas tries to get across the river Styx while still alive, Charon at first refuses and complains of how much damage other living people did in the underworld. Only the golden bough changes his mind. *Hint*: Our image of Charon comes primarily from Vergil, but the ancients often put a coin under the tongue of the dead so that they could pay Charon for his ferry. His appalling appearance is a reminder of the grim place which the souls are about to enter. Do modern uses of the myth of Charon always focus on death? Is he anything but a depressing, pessimistic image?
- f. Lete: the river of forgetfulness in the underworld. Souls drink from this river for a 1000 years to forget their past. Vergil says that after they drink from the river for the requisite amount of time, individuals can return to the earth to start life anew. *Hint*: Lethe speaks to a belief in reincarnation, but as a way to explain why we are born with a blank slate. It also says something about the human longing for an earthly existence as opposed to an eternal existence in the next world.
- g. Herakles and the Hydra: One of the earliest labors that Eurystheus imposed upon his cousin was to slay the dragon Hydra who lived in the swamps of Lerna. The latter is a real place that at some point in antiquity was drained of its swampy, snake-infested waters. Herakles, as the great civilizer, seems to be responsible for subduing the swamp and making it a place where humans can safely live. The slaying of the Hydra represents his efforts in this regard. *Hint*: Herakles found the Hydra difficult to kill, since everytime he chopped off a head, the Hydra grew back two more. Thus I suspect that for moderns, the Hydra will be a symbol of a task that gets more difficult the more you deal with it.
- h. Perseus and Andromeda: Cassiopeia, queen of Ethiopia, had boasted that her own beauty was greater than that of the sea nymphs (the Nereids), and for that offense Poseidon sent a flood and a sea monster. To appease the gods, Cassiopeia and her husband had to offer Andromeda as a sacrifice to the monster. It was during this bloody ritual that Perseus came flying by, fresh from the kill of Medusa, and rescued her. *Hint*: You are interested in the moment that Perseus finds Andromeda chained to the rock as a sacrifice to the sea monster. I suspect in modern media you will find a great deal of interest in the complete helplessness of

the woman in the situation. Has this been used as a metaphor for the plight of women? And what about the selfish parents, who stand by to watch their daughter be devoured so they can extract themselves from trouble?

- i. The Minotaur in the Labyrinth: When Pasiphae, queen of Crete, gave birth to the monstrous Minotaur, her husband Minos ordered Daedalus to build a prison for it. Daedalus succeeded in building the labyrinth, a structure so complex that no one who entered could ever hope to find his/her way out again. Here Theseus entered to be sacrificed up to the Minotaur, but he used several tricks and the help of the king's daughter Ariadne to defeat the Minotaur and escape. *Hint*: You will not have trouble finding references in modern media to the labyrinth itself, so concentrate on instances when the Minotaur gets mentioned too. The ancients saw the Minotaur as representative of the primitive and the uncivilized way of life that had to be conquered in favor of Athenian high culture. I suspect that recently moderns have been more interested in the Minotaur as a symbol of personal psychology, but your research may uncover something completely different.
- j. Medusa: The main task assigned to Perseus was to behead the Gorgon Medusa. Medusa had once been a beautiful priestess of Athena, but when Poseidon had his way with her in the temple of Athena, the goddess punished the girl (not Poseidon!) by turning her into a Gorgon. She then lived with them as the only mortal member of their group. One look at her gleaming eyes and snaky hair could turn a man to stone. *Hint*: The figure of Medusa is often understood to be a symbol for the dangerous side of womanhood (from a man's point of view, of course), because she causes such harm to men. I suspect that you will find that women have viewed her differently, as representative of a destructive power that they can wield. Do you notice a difference between how women have received Medusa and how men have?
- k. Daedalus and Icarus: The most famous story involving this pair is the story of their escape from their prison on the island of Crete. Daedalus, a clever artisan, built wings of feathers and wax so that he and his son could fly off the island to Italy. Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun (it will melt the wax) or too close to the water (it will soak the feathers). Icarus, being an impulsive youth, did not obey and so came to his ruin in the sea that is now called Icarian. *Hint*: The main use of this myth has been to treat it as an illustration of the "Golden Mean." In other words, Daedalus was warning his son that it is best to hold to the middle course, between the extremes on either side. Auden, the poet, has another famous use of this myth. Are there any other receptions of this myth?
- l. The Submission of Pasiphae: In a startling and grotesque display of lust, Pasiphae fell in love with a white bull that Poseidon had sent to the Cretans as a suitable sacrifice to himself. Instead of sacrificing the animal, king Minos kept it, but he soon discovered that his wife had sacrificed herself, so to speak, to the animal. This submission to the bull resulted in the birth of the Minotaur, a monstrous combination of human and bull. *Hint*: Daedalus had to help Pasiphae submit to the bull by constructing for her an artificial and hollow cow. This moment, when she climbed into the cow so she could mate with the bull, is one of the most bizarre moments in Greek myth. Do moderns shy away from talking about or depicting

this, or do they find it useful as a metaphor for bestial desire of all kinds?

9. Project Topics (FINAL EXAM)

- a. The Judgment of Paris: Paris was a son of Priam, king of Troy. When at his birth the signs said that he would bring ruin to the city, he was sent into the countryside to be raised by shepherds. It was to him that Hermes brought the three goddesses, Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena, who were all vying for a golden apple inscribed, “To the fairest.” Zeus had designated Paris as the one who would decide who gets the apple. *Hint*: We see that Paris is at a crucial moment in his life, segregated from society (cf. the girls at Brauron or other examples of youths undergoing their rites of passage) and given time to think and prepare for the future. At that moment he is presented with the all-important choices (power, lust, wisdom), but he does not choose wisely. Look for modern allusions to Paris as a model of the bad choice.
- b. Hector: a son of Priam, king of Troy. Hector was the leader of the Trojan troops and their fiercest warrior. He finally met his match when he was killed by Achilles in one-on-one combat before the walls of Troy. *Hint*: Hector was beloved by his parents and had a warm relationship with his wife Andromache. They were horrified and devastated when Achilles killed him in battle and then drug his body behind his chariot around and around the city walls, shouting taunts at them. Look for modern allusions to this hero who bravely fought to protect his home and family and in doing so had to undergo the worst possible humiliation.
- c. The Sirens: The goddess Circe had warned Odysseus that he would sail past the Sirens, who live along the cliffs overlooking the water and draw in sailors to the dangerous rocks by the charm of their song. Odysseus was able to hear their song by having his men, whose ears were stuffed with wax, tie him to the mast of the ship. *Hint*: The Sirens sing something so alluring that men want to run their boats onto the rocks so they can sit and hear it all day long. In doing so, of course, they lose their ships and their lives. What *is* this Sirens’ song? You will find it interpreted in many ways. Homer seems to hint that the song is adulation and sycophancy. In other words, men are crazy to hear their own praises. Look for examples of how the notion of an alluring Sirens’ song has been used in modern media.
- d. Calypso: The nymph of the island Ogygia, she kept Odysseus prisoner for seven years before she finally sent him on his way back home. By this point, Odysseus had lost all his men and all his ships, so he had to build a small boat to get himself off her island. *Hint*: The name Calypso means “the one who conceals,” which fits, because she hid and concealed Odysseus on her island, smothering him and not letting him go. But in modern media, does Calypso come off as a smotherer or as something else, something positive?
- e. Death of Iphigenia: When Agamemnon was gathering Greek troops at Aulis to sail to Troy, he found that Artemis was opposing him by sending unfavorable winds. In order to obtain favorable sailing winds, the priests told Agamemnon he must sacrifice his own daughter to Artemis. He was so anxious to sail to Troy, that he summoned Iphigenia, his daughter, on the pretext of a wedding, so that he could sacrifice her on the altar. *Hint*: This story obviously relates to the “death of the maiden” motif that we have discussed in relation to the rites of passage and

marriage. In some versions of the story, Artemis mysteriously exchanges a deer for Iphigenia and whisks her away to be her priests in another land. It is the pathetic moment, however, when daughter recognizes that father is sacrificing her, that evokes the most pity and, I suspect, will be the focus of modern media. Look for the use of this story in particular when the relationship between father and daughter is in view.

- f. **Oedipus and the Sphinx:** The Greek Sphinx, which does not seem related to the Egyptian Sphinx, appears only in the story of Oedipus. She is part woman, part lion, and part eagle, and hold a plague over the city of Thebes while she waits for an answer to her riddle. Those who try to answer it and yet fail she tears to pieces. Finally, Oedipus comes along, not knowing how much his fate is tied up with that of the city, and answers the riddle. *Hint:* We have many ancient images of Oedipus facing the Sphinx and contemplating the answer to the riddle. The answer, which he finally gets, is “man,” and the hero then quickly dispatches the monster. Only later in the story does it become apparent that “man” is the one thing that Oedipus does *not* understand. But how has the story been handled in modern media? Look for examples of how this encounter between man and monster, between the seeker of truth and the holder of the mystery, is handled in modern times.
- g. **Medea:** the magical woman from Colchis on the Black Sea. Jason met her while trying to retrieve the Golden Fleece. She used her charms to make Jason fall in love with her and take her back to Greece with him. When she arrived in Greece, she found herself a barbarous woman in a civilized land (at least from the Greek point of view). When Jason fell for a young princess of Corinth, perhaps wanting the position and power more than anything, Medea became enraged and killed the princess and the two sons that she had with Jason. *Hint:* Medea is a murderous woman, terrifying, in fact, and most modern references to her never get past the fact that she killed her children. I suspect, however, that many feminists recognized the fact that she was a desperate woman trying to wield power any way she could in a world dominated by men. Look for both negative and sympathetic allusions to the story of Medea, concentrating, particularly, on the murder of her children. I suspect you will find many.
- h. **Clytemnestra:** sister of Helen and wife of Agamemnon. She became angry when her husband sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia just to gain favorable winds for sailing to Troy. The entire time that Agamemnon was fighting at Troy, Clytemnestra was plotting his murder. When her husband returned, she invited him into the palace and then axed him in the bathtub. *Hint:* You must not imagine that Clytemnestra was totally innocent in this whole story. Her murder of Agamemnon was tainted by excesses against the gods and against humanity, in general. For example, she herself was having an affair with Aegisthus, a cousin of Agamemnon and one of his sworn enemies. But how is she portrayed in modern media? Look for allusions to Clytemnestra as a husband-killer to see how the image of what she did has evolved through the ages.
- i. **Romulus and Remus:** sons of the god Mars and Rhea Sylvia, a Vestal Virgin of Alba Longa in Italy. The king of Alba Longa tried to expose them to the elements

to bring about their death, but they were spared by the gods and suckled by a she-wolf. Later they founded the city of Rome on the spot where they were rescued.

Hint: It is the image of the wolf nurturing the two boys that has intrigued people the most. Nature, which normally would have brought about the death of the infants, took them in and contributed to their well-being. Look for how modern media has handled the story, particularly as it involves the wolf. Does it only get mentioned in regard to the founding of Rome, or has the story been used independently of that?

- j. Lucretia: She was the wife of one of the aristocrats of early Rome, while the city was still ruled by kings. When she was raped by the son of the king, her shame and subsequent suicide caused the people to rise up against the royal family. This expulsion of the kings marked the beginning of a new era for Rome and a new kind of government, a republic. *Hint:* There is a very dramatic moment in the story when Lucretia calls in her husband and the other nobles of the city to tell them about the rape. In front of all of them she draws out a knife and commits suicide. It is often events such as this that epitomize the oppression of a people and spark a revolution. Look for the use of the Lucretia story as a model for dramatic change and the thirst to be free.