The course will focus on a major theme found in the mythologies of nearly every major (and minor) world religious tradition: the hero’s quest. This common theme appears in the narratives of religions as different as the animism of the Trobriand islanders to the strict monotheism of Islam. While the details differ, representations of the hero’s quest follow a remarkably similar pattern across time and distance. We will examine this pattern step by step as it appears in various religious narratives. We will also see how people are still today telling this story, in new ways, with new characters and new adventures, adapting it to contemporary life. In movies, fiction writing, and TV, we humans continue to travel the path of the hero.

Through comparing these popular versions of the hero’s quest to those found in formal religious traditions, we will explore the role that this theme plays in human society, both past and present, local and universal. As well as finding commonalities, we will also discover what differs among versions of this story, and think about and discuss what these differences might mean. At a general and broad level, we will explore three types of belief systems: Western (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), Eastern (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism), and what we will refer to as Nature Traditions (Native North American, African, and Australian Aborigine).

Required Books:

* Mutant Message Down Under, Marlo Morgan, ISBN
* The Bhagavad Gita, trans. Stephen Mitchell
* Introduction to Mythology, Eva Thury, ISBN
**Learning Goals**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will:

- have a comparative understanding of the basic characteristics of major world religions’
- have a firm grasp of the genre of the hero myth, and be able to analyze its role in
  communicating religious ideals and creating meaning out of a chaotic world
- be able to identify contemporary manifestations of the hero myth, especially in fantasy novels
  and films, and evaluate their role in contemporary society

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

Students are required to keep a weekly blog on the course Sakai site. There will be a new question each week about that week’s material, and will ask students to consider various conceptual themes presented in class or in course texts. There will also be a series of three short tests that will consist of short essay questions, and a final short paper that will ask students to choose one or more of the theoretical concepts presented in the course and apply it to one hero myth of a formal religion, and one example of a

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<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly blogs</td>
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<td>Test 1</td>
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<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final short paper</td>
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Absences for religious observance and medical emergencies are fully excusable, but must be documented.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**January 20**

**Introduction to the course**

For Jan 22:
- Blog, Week 1: Introductions
- Acquire books

**DEFINITIONS**

**January 22**

**Why study the Hero myth? Finding Joe**

For Jan 27:
- Read Ring Ch 1 (on SAKAI in “Resources”)
- Read Harry Potter, Chs 1 - 4

**January 27**

**What is Religion?**

For Jan 29:
- Read Ring Ch 6 (SAKAI)
- Read Thury, Ch 1
- Read Harry Potter, Ch 5
January 29

**What is Myth?**

For Feb 3:
- Blog, Week 2: Making Meaning
- Read Thury Ch 2, Intro to Part 2A, Chs 5 & 6
- Read *Harry Potter*, Chs 6 & 7

◆ **The WESTERN Tradition◆

February 3

**Creation Myths**

For Feb 5:
- Read Eliade Introduction, Ch 1 to p. 32
- Read *Harry Potter*, Chs 8 & 9

February 5

**Sacred Space**

For Feb 10:
- Blog, Week 3: Sacred Space
- Read Thury Intro to Part 3, Ch 15
- Read *Harry Potter*, Chs 10 - 15

Feb 10

**The Hero’s Journey**

For Feb 12:
- Thury Ch 16 first half
- Finish *Harry Potter*

Feb 12

**Refusal of the Call: Rise of the Guardians**

For Feb 17:
- Read Campbell H.O.
- Blog, Week 4: Refusal of the Call
- Finish Thury Ch 16

Feb 17

*finish Rise of the Guardians / discuss Harry, Gilgamesh, and Jack Frost*
- study for Test I

Feb 19

**TEST I**

For Feb 24:
- Read Eliade Ch 2 pp. 68 – 104
- Read *Neverending Story*, Prologue, Chs 1 - 3

◆ **EASTERN Traditions◆

Feb 24

**Sacred Time**

- Read L’Engle (SAKAI)
- Read *Neverending Story*, Chs 4 – 7
- Blog, Week 6: Sacred Time

Feb 26

**A Glimpse at Hinduism**

- Read Eliade pp. 104 – 113
- Read Thury Ch 18
- Read Neverending Story, Chs 8 – 9

Mar 3
The Ramayana
- Read Neverending Story, Chs 10 – 11
- Read Wrinkle in Time, Chs 1 – 2

Mar 5
Who is “The Special?” The Lego Movie
- finish Wrinkle in Time
- Read Neverending Story, Ch 12
- Blog, Week 7: “The Special”

Mar 10
“The Year is a circle around the world”
- Read The Bhagavad Gita
- Read Neverending Story, 13 - 21

March 12, 17, 19
SPRING BREAK

March 24
Doing your Duty: The Bhagavad Gita
For Mar 26:
- Blog, Week 9: Axis Mundi
- Read Neverending Story Ch 22

Mar 26
A Glimpse at Taoism
For Mar 31:
- finish The Neverending Story
- Blog, Week 9: Wishes

Mar 31
Analysis: The Neverending Story
- study for Test II

Apr 2
TEST II
- Read Thury Ch 8

◆NATURE RELIGIONS◆

April 7
Creation Myths: North America
- Read Thury Ch 9

Apr 9
Creation Myths: Africa
- Read Thury Ch 23
- Read TBD (SAKAI)
- Blog, Week 11

Apr 14
Heroes and Tricksters: North America
- Read Thury Ch 24
- Read Mutant Message
Apr 16  Heroes and Tricksters: Africa
- Read Ring Ch 4
- Blog, Week 12

Apr 21  Ritual: Rites of Passage
- finish Mutant Message
- Blog, Week 13

Apr 23  Mutant Message Down Under

Apr 28  Review

Apr 30  TEST III

May 8  FINAL DUE AT 3PM

* * * Have a great summer! May you always find your Center… * * *