Classical Mythology
LLCU/CMLT 316.010/080

Class 1

Course Overview

Interpretation and Definition of Classical Mythology

Course Information on the Canvas Learning Module

- A comprehensive syllabus, including textbook information, assessments, attendance, and university policies

- Course PowerPoints will also be made available there (posted within 24 hours after each class)

- Do let me know in person or by e-mail (sukava@udel.edu) if you can't access this information

Why a Course on Classical Mythology?

Why a Course on Classical Mythology?

Historical contexts:

- Myth allows us to understand better the cultures in which these stories were told.

- What values did they hold?

- How do these stories help to define proper or improper behaviour?

- What role did religion play in their societies?

Why a Course on Classical Mythology?

Literary contexts:

- Myths are transmitted to us through literature, which gives insight into *how* stories were told.

- Why did myths and legends take the forms they did?

- Why various versions of the same stories?

- What makes a character 'good' or 'bad'

Why a Course on Classical Mythology?

Reception and analogies:

- Greek and Roman myths serve as foundations for Western storytelling.

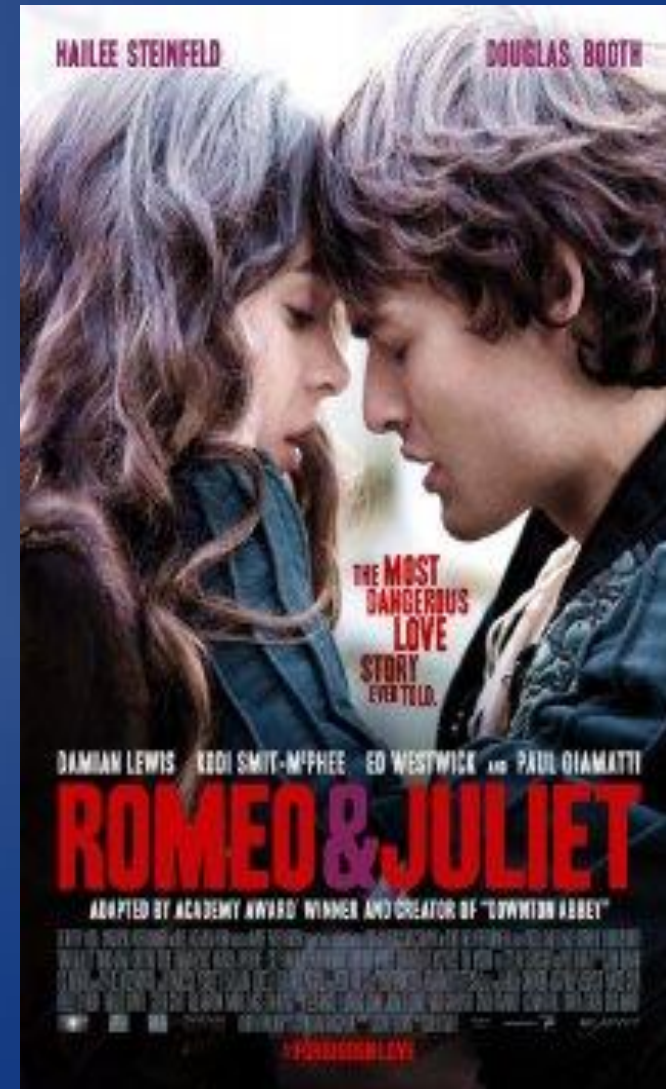- Knowing these helps to better understand our own 'myths' and 'legends.'

Why a Course on Classical Mythology?

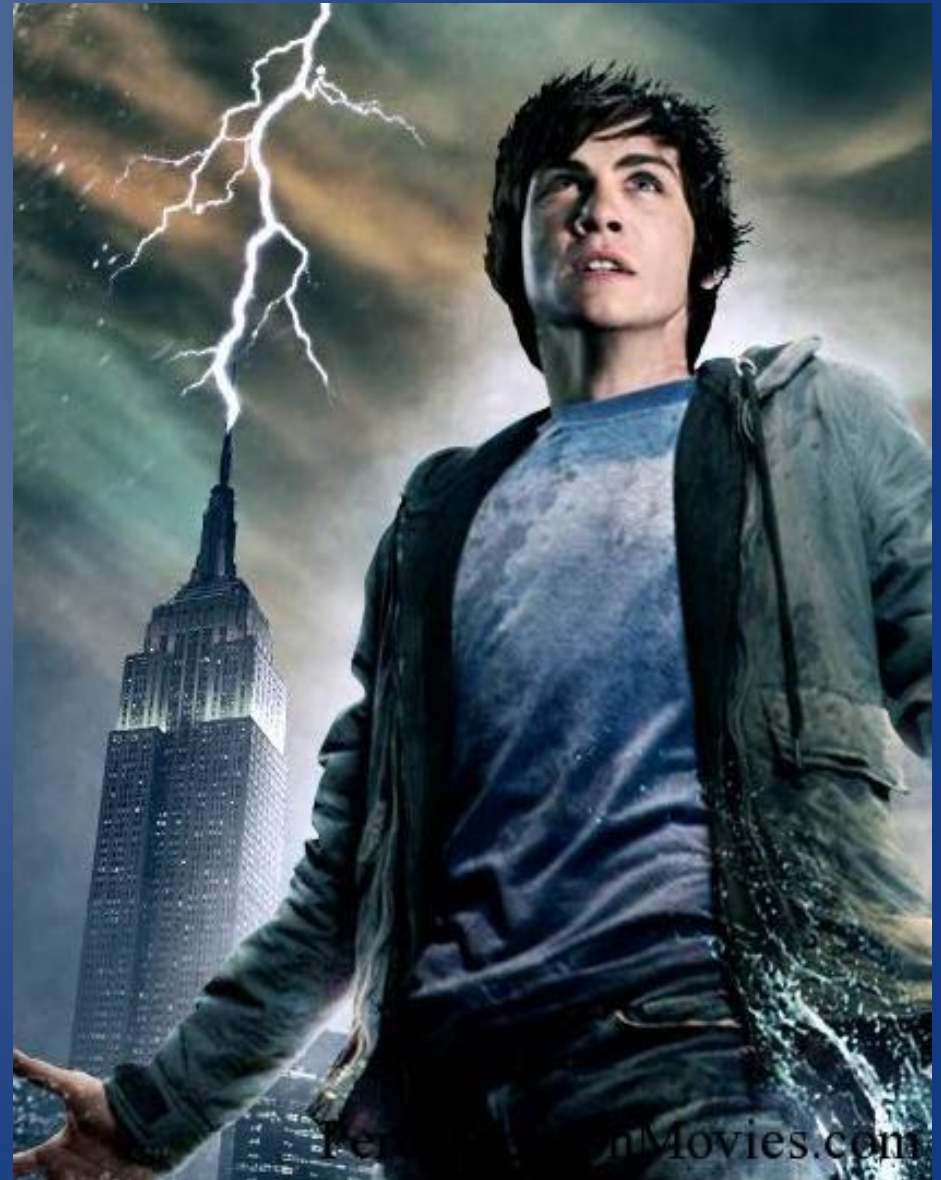## Reception: reforming ancient stories

Why a Course on Classical Mythology?

Analogies: drawing upon elements of ancient stories

Why a Course on Classical Mythology?

Why a Course on Classical Mythology?

Two Core Course Objectives:

- To better understand the principal Greek and Roman myths, which form the backbone of Western storytelling.

- To explore *how* and *why* these stories were and continue to be told.

Required Text

Morford, P.O., R.J. Lenardon, and M. Sham. 2013. *Classical Mythology*, 10th ed. Oxford.

Older editions are acceptable, if you have them, with this caution: the page numbers will be off (usually within about 8-10 pages)

Readings

- Usually, I advise that students read the text *after* the class where the topic is explored (possibly some deviation from the course syllabus)

- For *Classical Mythology* readings, pay special attention to Morford's analysis (excerpts from ancient sources as supporting evidence)

- Classes will provide some summary of independent readings to identify and reinforce especially important points

- Note syllabus links for online supplement to text (it's for an older version of the text, but still relevant)

Assessments

- Term Examination 1: Thursday, March 1 (30%)

- Term Examination 2: Thursday, April 5 (30%)

    - Multiple choice and short answer format

- Five short In-class writing assignments (5%)

- Final Examination: TBA, May exam period (35%)
Students enrolled in CMLT 316-080 (Honors): please see syllabus and Canvas website document for Honors component and grading rubric

Assessments

- Final Examination

- Cumulative, but emphasizing material after April 5th exam

- Greater emphasis on interpretations and synthesis of these myths

- Presumes familiarity with key myths and legends

Attendance

- There will be no attendance taken in this class; however, regular presence is expected

  - Beyond encouraging active engagement with material, class attendance will also help to identify material likely to appear on exams

- Alternate sittings of exams will only be permitted under exceptional circumstances and with supporting documentation

Contact and office hours

- E-mail: sukava@udel.edu

- Office: 112 Jastak-Burgess Hall

- Office Hours: Mondays 10.30-12.30; Thursdays, 11.00-12.00 or by appointment
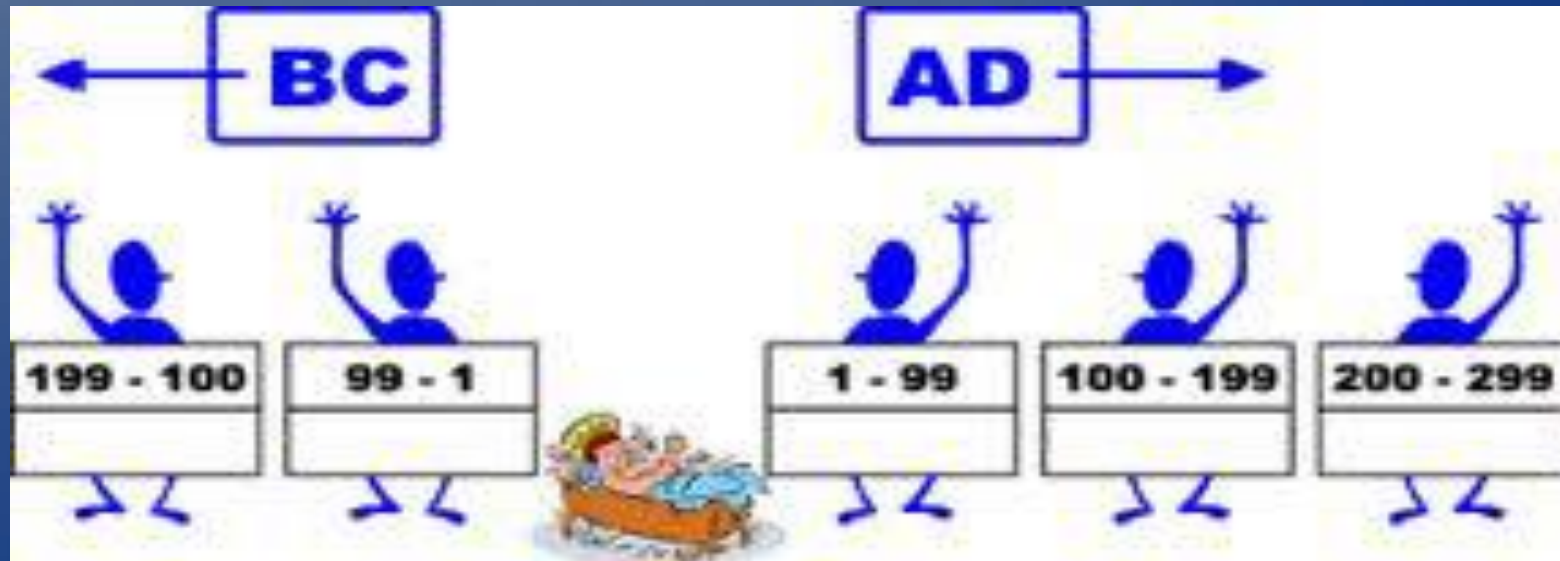
Background Information

Chronology (Traditional Manner)

How do we measure time?

B.C. and A.D.

B.C. = Before Christ

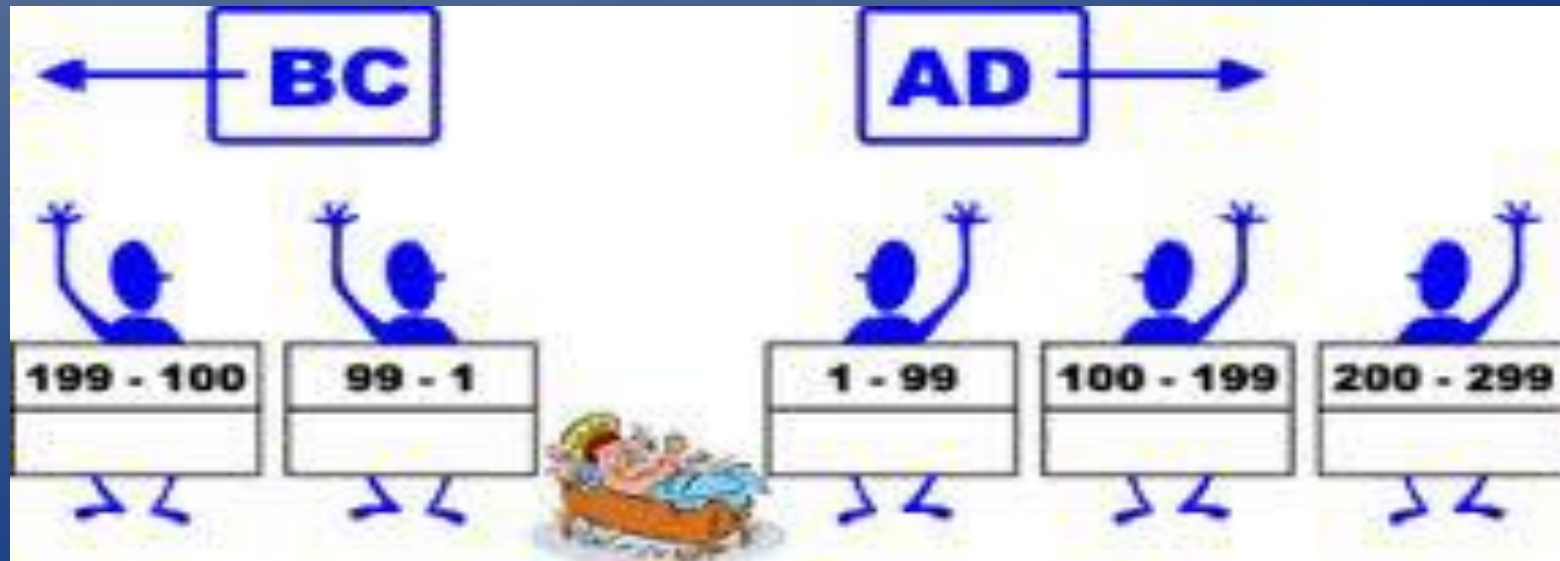A.D. = Anno Domino ('In the year of the Lord')

Chronology (Newer Manner)

How do we measure time?

B.C.E. and C.E.

B.C.E. = Before the Common Era

C.E. = Common Era

Chronology (Newer Manner)

Date ranges Before the Common Era

- 450 BCE is *before* 350 BCE
- Likewise, the date ranges would be "450-350 BCE", not "350-450 BCE"

Centuries:
- The 8th century BCE is 799-700 BCE; the 8th century CE is 700-799 CE;
- Because the 1st century BCE is 100-1 BCE; the 1st century CE is 1-100 CE

Classical Mythology

Time frame: around 800 BCE to 100 CE

Cultures: Greek and Roman

Sources: mainly poetry (including theatre), but also some prose writings and material evidence (e.g. statues, vase paintings)

Geography

sandrashaw.com

What is a Myth?

Etymology

'Myth' = Greek *mythos* 'word' / 'story'

'Mythology' = Greek *mytho-logos*, 'the study of myth'

'Mythography' = ?

What is a Myth?

Etymology

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'Mythology' = Greek *mytho-logos*, 'the study of myth'

'Mythography' = *mytho-graphia*, 'the writing of myth'

The Question of Definition

- Myth (proper)

- Legends

- Fairytales

The Question of Definition

Myth (proper): stories pertaining to gods and human relations with them – i.e. supernatural

www.theoi.com

The Question of Definition

Legend / saga: stories that take place in the 'historical' world – i.e. within the world as we know it

Trojan War

bbc.uk

The Question of Definition

Folktales and fairytales: 'stock' stories, e.g. Hero vs. Giant, wicked stepmother, mistaken identity

Jack and the Beanstalk

The Question of Definition

Folktales and fairytales: 'stock' stories, e.g. Hero vs. Giant, wicked stepmother, mistaken identity

Perseus and Medusa

www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com

The Question of Definition

Folktales and fairytales: 'stock' stories, e.g. Hero vs. Giant, wicked stepmother, mistaken identity

Cupid and Psyche

Myths as truth

These stories – myths, legends, and fairytales – relate some form of truth(s), either universal (for everyone) or particular (for the person or group that tells them)

One main concern for the student of myths is to try to discover what particular type of 'truth' any given myth is relating.

Reading for next Thursday

Classical Mythology 3-38