Classics 199, Digital Mythology: Syllabus

Course web site with all information and course material: `https://neelsmith.github.io/digitalmyth/`

Contact information

Instructor: Neel Smith. **Email**: at `holycross.edu`, user name `nsmith`

Regular class meeting times: TTh 9:30-10:45, Fenwick 420.

Scheduled drop-in hours: Tues. 11:00-12:00; Wed. 1:00-2:30; Thurs. 1:00-2:00, Fenwick 415.

Manuscripts, Inscriptions and Documents Club: Friday, 2:00 pm - ?, fourth floor of Fenwick Hall.

Overview

Myths are a kind of traditional tale. Like any traditional story, they are *multiform*: there is no single, "correct" version. We can think of a *mythology* as the collection of myths that relates all of the (potentially contradictory) versions of many stories.

In this course we'll explore large collections of myths preserved in ancient handbooks of mythology and in scholarly commentaries on the major Greek epic, the *Iliad*. We will learn how to use digital methods to explore questions about Greek myth that we could not answer from close reading alone. The course will emphasize both content and methodology. To the course title "Digital Mythology," you may add either of two subtitles: "Reading Greek mythology using data science" or "A first encounter with data science through Greek mythology."

Goals

By the end of this course, you will:

- identify mutiforms of Greek myths represented in our surviving literary sources
- recognize the historical context for the Greek mythological handbook by Apollodorus and the Latin mythological handbook attributed to Hyginus
- articulate how *scholia* to the *Iliad* (scholarly notes in our extant manuscripts) can inform us about multiforms not preserved in literary texts

- write short programs in the Julia language to recognize named entities (proper nouns and adjectives), analyze social networks, and cluster texts in groups based on similarities of vocabulary
- design tests to assess code you plan to write *before* actually writing code
- specify code requirements clearly enough to generate candidate code using ChatPT
- apply your predefined tests to code generated by ChatGPT

Organization of the course

There are probably as many definitions myth as there are scholars of Greek myth, but somehow, even if it's hard to define, we largely agree on what stories are myths. Our approach will strongly emphasize hands-on work with textual content that everyone would consider mythical. We will consider how to organize and approach the study of digital texts, with special emphasis on definition of tests prior to developing code.

Collaborative work is an important part of this work. Both in-class work and assignments outside of class will include a mix of individual and team work. Our 75-minute classes will regularly include time to workshop solutions to practical problems.

Resources, technologies and mechanics of submitting assignments

The following required book is on order from the college book store:

- R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus'* Library *and Hyginus'* Fabulae: *Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology* (Hackett 2007).

In exploring drafts of code we develop, we will use juliahub's AskAI, a version of ChatGPT trained to generate code in the Julia language.

- It is available online here. You can use your Holy Cross Google login to get access to it.

We will use a course Google drive to share reading material, and to submit assignments.

- You submit an assignment by dropping a file into your individual folder. (Other students do not have access to your individual folder.)

We will write code in the Julia language. You will want to install it on your personal computer, or speak with Prof. Smith about access to the Classics Department research lab, where machines have Julia installed.

- To install Julia on your computer, follow these instructions for class preparation

What to expect

There are no formal prerequisites for this course: it is intended to be accessible to any Holy Cross student. In class work, and especially in an extended course project, you will have opportunities to contribute to the course by drawing on your own experiences and interests.

The course emphasizes hands-on work, and you are expected to be able to use a computer to follow this basic sequence of tasks on your personal computer, or the computer you are using in a lab:

1. Given a link to a text file on the internet, download the and save it to the computer.
2. Find the saved file on the computer, and open it with a text editor.

Before our first hands-on class session on Thursday, Aug. 31, please make sure that you are comfortable doing this. If you have questions or need help, you can get help from Educational Design and Digital Media Services.

Course requirements and grades

You determine your own course grade by satisfactorily completing a number of assignments in the following categories:

1. individual assignments completed in class: (up to) six assignments
2. four lab notebooks completed outside of class (group submission)
3. helping lead one class, extending one of your coding assignments
4. a multi-step course project
5. class attendance and participation

All assignments will be graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory according to an explicit specification of requirements: if you complete all requirements, the assignment is satisfactory.

For in-class assignments, lab notebooks, and for each step of a five-step course project, you earn two points. The first point is for a *complete*, on-time submission. If your work also satisfies all the requirements for a *satisfactory* submission, you earn a second point. If your work is complete and on time, but some part of it is not satisfactory, you will have an unlimited number of opportunities to revise the submission by a given deadline. For example, for short, in-class assignments, if you complete the work and earn the first point for the assignment, but have an error, you would typically have about a week to resubmit the work with corrections. To resubmit an assignment, bring the revised work to office hours, or make an appointment to go over the revised work with Prof. Smith.

Attendance points

Being prepared and attending class earns up to 6 points in this category of your final course. We have 27 scheduled class meetings. This table summarizes the scale of attendance points:

Class meetings	Points earned
26+	6
25	5
24	4
23	3
22	2
< 22	0

Project

- proposed topic
- initial code submission
- presentation for external reviewer
- final submission

Determination of final course grade

Your course grade will be recorded from this table. In the row for each grade, the numbers in each column represent the *minimum* number of points required in that category.

Course grade	Up to 6 in-class assignments (12 possible)	4 lab assignments (8 possible)	Multi-step project (10 possible)	Extending an assignment (2 possible)	Attendance (6 possible)
A	11	8	10	2	6
A-	11	8	9	2	6
B+	10	8	9	2	5
B	10	7	8	2	5
B-	9	7	8	2	5
C+	9	6	7	1	4
C	8	6	7	1	4
C-	8	5	6	1	3
D	7	4	5	0	2

Policies

Class attendance

Work in class is an essential component of the course, and regular attendance is required. (See the course grading rubric in this syllabus for how class attendance contributes to your final course grade.) Excused absences do *not* count against your course grade. If you know of scheduled conflicts with class meeting times, please speak with Prof. Smith as soon as possible to make arrangements ahead of time for how best to make up work for an excused absence.

If you are sick or have symptoms of a possible communicable disease such as COVID, on the other, please do *not* come to class. You should get in touch with Prof. Smith by email as soon as possible to make arrangements for following up on an unplanned excused absence.

Masking and testing

In August, 2023, COVID infections are again on the rise. It is impossible to foresee how the spread of infections will develop this semester, and we continue to teach and learn in ways

we did not anticipate. We will monitor the spread of the virus and re-evaluate our masking practices periodically throughout the semester.

Because even a "mild" case can have serious consequences for at-risk populations, as the semester begins, medical-grade or better masks are required in class and in drop-in hours until further notice.

Masking is equally uncomfortable for us all, but feeling unsafe creates a poor learning environment so please do your part. Please continue to proactively monitor, test, and isolate at the onset of COVID-19 symptoms and close contact with any individuals with known infections. We will continue to closely monitor viral surges and current College recommendations in regards to COVID-19 and any other infectious diseases that might emerge as we move through the semester.

Diversity and Inclusivity

The study of the ancient Mediterranean world belongs to all of us: if you have chosen to study Greek mythology, then you belong here. The diversity that our student body brings to this class is a resource, a strength and a shared benefit for all of us.

In developing this course, our aim has been to make the course materials and our interactions with each other respectful of diversity of all kinds: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. If you have suggestions about how to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups, please share them.

Accommodations for disabilities

Any student who feels the need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services to discuss support services available. The office can be reached by calling 508 793-3693 or by visiting Hogan Campus Center, room 215A.

If you are already registered with Disability Services, please let me know as soon as possible, so that I can take account of this in planning for tests or other course activities.

Academic integrity

You should be familiar with the College's policy on Academic Integrity posted at https://catalog.holycross.edu/requirements-policies/academic-policies/#academicintegritytext