

# Classical Mythology Exam Review

## Dr. Conor Whately

The exam is to be held on Wednesday, December 5, at 1:30-4:30pm, in 4M31.

- The first section of the exam will consist of a host of short answer questions for which you might, for example, have to match points from two columns, or answer multiple choice questions. This will occupy 40% of the exam.
- The second section of the exam will consist of quotations and images, ancient and modern, which will test your basic familiarity of the myths and texts we have covered. You will have to identify the various references included in the passages/images, and in some cases explain them. This will occupy 40% of the exam.
- The third section of the exam will consist of long answer questions. You might, for example, be given a scenario and be asked to find a solution using examples from myth. This will occupy 20% of the exam.

## NOTE:

- Ultimately, the exam is not cumulative, as you can see below
- use your lecture notes and the slides
- use theoi.com to fill in the pieces
- be prepared to be asked about the course readings (Homer's *Odyssey*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*)

## Select Key Topics

### Dionysus

THE GOD DIONYSUS	
Parents	Zeus and Semele
Wife	Ariadne
God of	Wine, festivity, madness
Home	Mount Olympus
Symbol	Thyrsus (pine-cone staff)
Sacred Animals	Panther, bull, serpent
Sacred Plants	Grapevine, ivy, bindweed
Retinue	Silenus, Satyrs, Maenads
Other Names	Bacchus, Lyaeus
Roman Name	Liber

- Bacchae or Maenads: female followers
- Satyrs: human + horse/goat

### **Myth of Dionysus' birth, his historical origins, his nature, and his worship - Semele**

- Olympian god of wine, vegetation, pleasure, festivity, madness and wild frenzy.
- Depicted as either an older, bearded god or an effeminate, long-haired youth.
- His attributes included the thyrsos (a pine-cone tipped staff), a drinking cup and a crown of ivy.
- Usually accompanied by a troop of Satyrs and Mainades (wild female devotees).
- Dionysos was a son of Zeus and the princess Semele of Thebes.
- Semele was the daughter of Cadmus.
- During the course of her pregnancy, the god's jealous wife Hera tricked Semele into asking Zeus to appear before her in his full glory.
- Bound by oath, the god was forced to comply and she was consumed by the heat of his lightning-bolts.
- Zeus recovered their unborn child from her body, sewed him up in his own thigh, and carried him to term.
- After his birth from the thigh of Zeus, Dionysos was first entrusted to the care of Seilenos (Silenus) and the nymphs of Mount Nysa.
- And later to his aunt Ino, Semele's sister, and her husband Athamas.
- Hera was enraged when she learned of the boy's location and drove the couple mad, causing them to kill both their children and themselves.

### **Dionysus and his worship in Euripides' Bacchae**

- The Bacchae is an ancient Greek tragedy, written by the Athenian playwright Euripides.
- The play begins before the palace at Thebes, with Dionysus telling the story of his birth and his reasons for visiting the city.
- Dionysus explains he is the son of a mortal woman, Semele, and a god, Zeus.
- Some in Thebes, he notes, don't believe this story.
- In fact, Semele's sisters, Autonoe, Agave, and Ino, claim it is a lie intended to cover up the fact that Semele became pregnant by some mortal.
- Dionysus reveals that he has driven the women of the city mad, including his three aunts, and has led them into the mountains to observe his ritual festivities.
- He has disguised himself as a mortal for the time being, but he plans to vindicate his mother by appearing before all of Thebes as a god, the son

of Zeus, and establishing his permanent cult of followers.

- Dionysus exits to the mountains, and the chorus (composed of the titular Bacchae) enters.
- They perform a choral ode in praise of Dionysus.
- Then Tiresias, the blind and elderly seer, appears.
- He calls for Cadmus, the founder and former king of Thebes.
- The two old men start out to join the revelry in the mountains when Cadmus' petulant young grandson Pentheus, the current king, enters.
- Disgusted to find the two old men in festival dress, he scolds them and orders his soldiers to arrest anyone engaging in Dionysian worship, including the mysterious "foreigner" who has introduced this worship. Pentheus intends to have him stoned to death.
- The guards soon return with Dionysus himself in tow.
- Pentheus questions him, both skeptical of and fascinated by the Dionysian rites.
- Dionysus's answers are cryptic.
- Infuriated, Pentheus has Dionysus taken away and chained to an angry bull in the palace stable, But the god now shows his power.
- He breaks free and razes the palace with an earthquake and fire.
- Dionysus and Pentheus are once again at odds when a herdsman arrives from the top of Mount Cithaeron, where he had been herding his grazing cattle.
- He reports that he found women on the mountain behaving strangely: wandering the forest, suckling animals, twining snakes in their hair, and performing miraculous feats.
- The herdsmen and the shepherds made a plan to capture one particular celebrant, Pentheus' mother.
- But when they jumped out of hiding to grab her, the Bacchae became frenzied and pursued the men.
- The men escaped, but their cattle were not so fortunate, as the women fell upon the animals, ripping them to shreds with their bare hands.
- The women carried on, plundering two villages that were further down the mountain, stealing bronze, iron and even babies.
- When villagers attempted to fight back, the women drove them off using only their ceremonial staffs of fennel.
- They then returned to the mountain top and washed up, as snakes licked them clean.
- Dionysus, still in disguise, persuades Pentheus to forgo his plan to defeat and massacre the women with an armed force.
- He says it would be better first to spy on them, while disguised as a female Maenad to avoid detection.
- Dressing Pentheus in this fashion, giving him a thyrsus and fawn skins, Dionysus leads him out of the house.
- At this point, Pentheus seems already crazed by the god's power, as he thinks he sees two suns in the sky, and believes he now has the strength to rip up mountains with his bare hands.

- He has also begun to see through Dionysus' mortal disguise, perceiving horns coming out of the god's head; they exit to Cithaeron.
- A messenger arrives to report that once the party reached Mount Cithaeron, Pentheus wanted to climb an evergreen tree to get a better view and the stranger used divine power to bend down the tall tree and place the king in its highest branches.
- Then Dionysus, revealing himself, called out to his followers and pointed out the man in the tree.
- This drove the Maenads wild; led by Agave, his mother, they forced the trapped Pentheus down from the tree top, ripped off his limbs and his head, and tore his body into pieces.
- After the messenger has relayed this news, Agave arrives, carrying her son's bloodied head.
- In her god-maddened state, she believes it is the head of a mountain lion; she proudly displays it to her father, Cadmus, and is confused when he does not delight in her trophy, but is horrified by it.
- Agave then calls out for Pentheus to come marvel at her feat, and nail the head above her door so she can show it to all of Thebes.
- But now the madness begins to wane, and Cadmus forces her to recognize that she has destroyed her own son.
- As the play ends, the corpse of Pentheus is reassembled as well as is possible, the royal family devastated and destroyed.
- Agave and her sisters are sent into exile, and Dionysus decrees that Cadmus and his wife Harmonia will be turned into snakes and leads a barbarian horde to plunder the cities of Hellas.

### **Dionysus & Apollo**

- These two gods can be seen as representing rational (Apollo) and irrational (Dionysus).
- Dionysus and Apollo are both the sons of Zeus and are gods of the creative arts in the Greek tradition.
- Apollo is the god of the sun, of rational thinking and order, and appeals to logic, prudence and purity.
- Dionysus is the god of wine and dance, of irrationality and chaos, and appeals to emotions and instincts.
- Apollo was associated with the Sun; he was the god of light, though his association with light, Apollo comes to represent justice, prophecy, and mental and moral purity, and is the god of healing.
- Because of his own salvation and stories about bringing Semele back to life, Dionysus is associated with death and resurrection.
- Apollo, like Dionysus, inspired poetry and music; unlike Dionysus, however, Apollo's poetry and music are elevated and orderly. He is sober, elegant, and eloquent; he plays the lyre; he is never ecstatic.
- More to add...?

### **Dionysus & Ariadne**

- Ariadne was the immortal wife of the wine-god Dionysus.
- Ariadne, a daughter of King Minos of Krete (Crete), assisted Theseus in his quest to slay the Minotauros (Minotaur) and then fled with the hero aboard his ship.
- When they landed on the island of Naxos Theseus abandoned her as she slept.
- It was then that Dionysos discovered her and made her his wife.
- More to add...?

### **Midas, Silenus, the Golden Touch**

- more of something here.

### **Pan and Echo**

- more of something here.

### **Echo & Narcissus**

- more of something here.

## **Artemis**

### **births of Artemis and Apollo**

- more of something here.

### **Niobe & her children**

- more of something here.

### **Actaeon**

- more of something here.

### **Callisto & Arcas**

- more of something here.

## **Orion**

- more of something here.

## **character, appearance, and origins of Artemis**

- more of something here.

## **Artemis vs. Aphrodite in Euripides' Hippolytus.**

- more of something here.

## **Apollo**

### **Apollo & Delphi**

- more of something here. ### Pythia
- more of something here. ### Cassandra
- more of something here. ### Daphne
- more of something here. ### Coronis
- more of something here. ## a. Asclepius
- more of something here. ### Alcestis of Euripides
- more of something here. ### Apollo and Marsyas
- more of something here. ### Apollo and Pan
- more of something here. ### Nature of Apollo
- more of something here.

## **Underworld**

### **Ovid's Metamorphoses**

- something

### **Orpheus & Eurydice**

- something

### **Accounts of the underworld (Homer, Vergil, Plato)**

- something

### **The sinners**

- something

### **Geography – Tartarus, Elysian fields**

## **Heroes/Sagas**

### **The hero is saga & folktale**

- something

### **Bellerophon**

- something

### **Meleager**

- something

### **Atalanta**

- something

### **Gilgamesh & Enkidu**

- something

### **Humbaba,**

- something

### **Ishtar and the bull of heaven**

- something

### **Ut-napishtim**

- something

## **Perseus**

### **Graeae**

- More of something here

### **Medusa – gorgons**

- more of something here.

### **Andromeda**

- more of something here.

## **Jason & Medea**

### **Golden Fleece**

- more of something here.

### **Jason, Aeson, & Pelias**

- more of something here.

### **Voyage of the Argonauts**

- more of something here.

### **Hypsipyle, Harpies, clashing rocks, etc.**

- more of something here.

### **Colchis – deeds & the dragon/serpent**

- more of something here.

### **The return**

- more of something here.



### **Medea scorned**

- more of something here.

## **Heracles**

### **Amphitryon, Alcmena, Zeus**

- more of something here.

### **Madness of Heracles**

- more of something here.

### **12 labours/athloi**

- more of something here.

### **Heracles the avenger**

- more of something here.

### **The death of Heracles – Nessus, Deianira, Iole**

- more of something here.

## **Theseus**

### **Labours of Theseus (6)**

- more of something here.

### **Bull of Marathon**

- more of something here.

### **Pasiphae**

- more of something here.

### **King Minos & the Minotaur**

- more of something here.

### **Daedalus & Icarus**

- more of something here.

### **Theseus & Ariadne**

- more of something here.

### **Other myths of Theseus**

- more of something here.

## **Oedipus & Thebes**

### **Oedipus, Laius, Jocasta/Iocasta**

- more of something here.

### **The Sphinx & the riddle**

- more of something here.

### **Antigone**

- more of something here.

## Trojan War & the Odyssey

### Sack of Troy – death of Achilles, wooden horse

- more of something here. ### The Aeneid – Aeneas' escape from Troy
- more of something here. ### Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia
- more of something here. ### Orestes, Electra
- more of something here. ### Odyssey – life of Odysseus
- more of something here. ### Final episode of Netflix's Troy – reception of the war
- more of something here.