

Course Description

Modern Myths



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Course description

From the perspective of cultural anthropology, myths are stories which are considered in cultures as the narratives of reality. Thus, for a group myths express the "absolute truth".

Myths are not just "mosaic pieces" of a culture, but they do permeate the culture, as they are present in the everyday life, in the seemingly tiny moments of life. In connection with this, a deeper understanding of the cultural components and ideology of modernity can be contributed to the analysis of mythical stories that are accepted by those recipients of myths who consider them to be real stories and stories of reality. That is why it is important interpreting global narratives that have become massively consumed in the cultures of modernity and which have influenced the way of thinking and the ethos of local cultures.

Therefore, in the course we analyse global modern mythological narratives and the meanings expressed in them, such as "beauty", "happiness", "wealth", "freedom", "heroism", "social mobility", "individuality" and "eternity". The analysed narratives will be examined in each of the media that convey them. Thus, we will interpret in detail blockbuster movies, popular series, art works, Internet contents, political and economic ideologies, advertisements, commercials, pop-science writings, and popular literary works.

To sum up, understanding modernity also requires examining myths. The mythical narratives that will be analysed throughout the semester thus seek to contribute to an interpretive understanding of contemporary global and glocal socio-cultural meanings through a number of approaches and case studies.

With this in mind, during the semester we approach thematically the main narratives and significances of modern mythology: after the first introductory classes, we will analyse modern mythological patterns and standards of happiness, beauty, arts, wealth, social mobility, political power and nationalism.

Additional aim of the course, with the help of the critical anthropological thinking, to stimulate the students to understand cultural contexts of the globalization and their significances in a sensitive and interpretative way. As a result, the students of the course will be able to apply their social and cultural anthropological knowledge and skills in their future studies.

Structure of the course

1. lecture: Main terms and theories of myth from an interdisciplinary social science approach
2. lecture: On modern mythology from the perspective of cultural anthropology
- 3-14. lectures: Analysis of specific issues of modern mythology with help of social and cultural anthropological theories, research results, studies and case studies
15. lecture: Summary of the questions and topics of the semester. Discussion

Requirements of the course:

Participation in the lectures

Writing a minimum 10,000 characters' essay linked to questions of the semester. The students are expected to write their essay about one of the related topics of the lectures with examples of modern mythology. They can use books, studies from the reading list of the course but they can also use different theories and writings.

Optional topics of the essay:

- Myths of happiness
- Money / Wealth
- Social mobility/Success
- Cultural memory/History
- Politics/Power
- Nation
- Masculinity/Femininity/Sexuality
- Beauty/Fashion
- Body
- Health
- Individuality / Self-knowledge
- Science/Knowledge
- Travel/Trip
- Meals/Alcohol/Drugs
- Art/The figure of the artist
- Mass culture/Stars, celebrities
- Heroes/Role models
- Nature/Green movements

Module aim

1. Myth and Culture 1. Main terms and theories of myth from an interdisciplinary social science approach

2. Modern myths from the perspective of cultural anthropology

3-5. "Make yourself!" Myths in modernity, modern myths

5-6. "Be happy!". The happiness and eternity of the moment in modern myths

7-8. "Be beautiful!" Myths of Beauty

9-10. "Break on through the other side!" Mythical art, art and myth in modernity

11-12. "You can do it!". Myths of wealth and social mobility

13-14. "We can do it!" Modern myths of politics and nationalism

15. Summary of the questions and topics of the semester. Discussion

Reading list

Bowie, Fiona 2006. *The Anthropology of Religion*. Oxford -Malden, Blackwell Publishing: 267-305

Cassirer, Ernst 1950. *The Technique of Political Myth*. New York, Privately Issue

http://oglethorpe.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Peone_Cassirer-Technique-of-Political-Myths.pdf

Eberl, T. Jason – Decker, S. Kevin (eds.) 2016. *The Ultimate Star Wars and Philosophy*. Oxford – Malden, Wiley, Blackwell

Geertz, Clifford 1993. *Religion as a cultural system* Oxford, University of Oxford

https://nideffer.net/classes/GCT_RPI_S14/readings/Geertz_Religion_as_a_Cultural_System_.pdf

Kapferer, Bruce 1988. *Legends of People, Myth of State. Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*. Washington, Smithsonian Institute Press

Mills, S. Jennifer-Shannon, Amy-Hogue, Jacqueline 2017. *Beauty, Body, and the Media*.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320671751_Beauty_Body_Image_and_the_Media/link/59f3a54eaca272607e291c6b/download

Moissee, Marika 2013. Aliens as an Invasive Reproductive Power in Science Fiction. In: Krassimira Daskalova and Kornelia Slavova (eds.): *Gendering Popular Culture: Perspectives from Eastern Europe and the West*. Sofia, Polis: 239-257

Papp, Richard 2020. *Ephemeral Reality. Many Faces of Culture*. Budapest, Eötvös Publishing

<https://www.elterreader.hu/media/2020/12/WEB.pdf>

Saunders, Peter 2010. *Social Mobility Myth*. London, Civitas

<http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/SocialMobilityJUNE2010.pdf>

Sutton, David – Wogan, Peter 2010. *Hollywood Blockbusters. The Anthropology of Popular Movies*

Vainikka, Vilma 2018. The Portrayal of Female Characters in the Star Wars Film Saga.
https://epublications.uef.fi/pub/urn_nbn_fi_uef-20180653/urn_nbn_fi_uef-20180653.pdf

Wallace, Isabel 2011. Introduction: Contemporary Art and Classical Myth. In: Wallace, Isabel-Hirsh Jennie (eds.): Contemporary Art and Classical Myth. Farnham, Burlington,VT,Ashgate: 1-15

https://www.academia.edu/7327563/Introduction_Contemporary_Art_and_Classical_Myth_co-authored_with_Jennie_Hirsh

Wyatt-Nicol, Heather 2011. The Enduring Myth of the American Dream: Mobility, Marginalization, and Hope. International Journal of Organization and Behavior 2011/2: 258-279

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240052591_The_enduring_myth_of_the_American_dream_Mobility_marginalization_and_hope