Course Name: Mapping Cultural Identity in Story and Legend
Instructor: Elizabeth Murrell, Ph.D., Comparative Literature (U/Minnesota, 1993)
Office Hours: to be announced (e-mail: emmurrel@mtu.edu)

Required Readings:
Homer. *The Odyssey*
Sophocles. *Oedipus Rex*
Gawain and the Green Knight
Selections from *1001 Nights*
Selections from Bullfinch's Mythology

Suggested Readings:
Deng, Deng, and Ajak. *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky: the true story of three lost boys of Sudan*
Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*

Also recommended:
A good dictionary, maps in all forms, and your own sense of adventure

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The works we will read for this course have been translated from various languages into modern English and represent highly influential "stories" that reflect the development of the unique Western way of seeing and understanding the world. During this semester, we will be reading about, discussing, and writing about the notions of myth, legend, and how a society or culture maps its identity through the stories it tells about itself.

COURSE GOALS:
To broaden our understanding of the development of Western thinking by reading and writing about influential pieces of literature from the Ancient and Medieval worlds.
To make some useful comparisons between what we see represented in these narratives and what we have experienced or what we might learn in any classroom.
To compare the issues and themes that are represented in classical narrative with current film narrative and our own personal histories in order to help make sense of how diversity of experience functions to shape identity.
To come to an understanding of how the narratives of long ago have helped shape the world and the worldviews of today.

Questions we will address:
1. What is the overall organization of the story?
2. Mapping the story: who, what, where, when?; relationships between characters; chronology; style. What can you find out about the location of the action or the circumstances of the text’s writing in our selection of stories, in the library, on the Internet, from your bookshelf at home, etc., that will provide a more comprehensive reading experience for you? How has the impact of the story on the audience changed over the centuries?
3. Voice: Whose story is it? Who is the narrator, what is the point of view, how is the reader/audience implicated in the narrative then and now, what voices do we hear, how does memory (personal and cultural) work?
4. How do representations of diverse experience in an ancient text engage our own experience? What makes a story believable? Must it be in order to impact our way of thinking? What, in old stories, do we find useful in order to understand how the world works?
6. What role does the audience play in establishing the meaning of a story?
7. What effect does the structure, content, and presentation of a narrative have on how people read and respond to its message? Does how we respond to visual media differ from how we respond to printed or recited stories?
8. How do "classical" narrative variations affect how identity is shaped for individuals and for societies?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Reading responses, participation in or leading class discussion, group work, formal critical essays, visual argument project

METHODS OF EVALUATION: Your grade for this course will be based on the following:
40%: Participation: in-class speaking, writing and homework - including short, in-class or take-home writing assignments, reading responses (both written and oral), class notes, question generation, oral presentations and group discussion in class.
10%: Visual Argument Project
25%: Mid-term essay
25%: Final essay (MTU GRADING STANDARD for all: A, AB, B, BC, etc.)

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
Students are allowed two unexcused absences per semester without penalty in courses that meet 2 times per week. (all classes: equivalent of 1/14th of scheduled class periods). Subsequent absences will adversely affect your final grade. Please note, however, that participation points cannot be earned if you are not present in the classroom. If you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out from someone else in class what you missed and for making up any work you missed. Lateness may not be accepted or may lose points, at the discretion of your instructor.

NOTE: Excused absences are only possible from your instructor with a written note from your doctor (if you are ill) or by PRIOR arrangement, and at your instructor’s discretion, if you must be away from campus during the semester. Students are always responsible for turning in any assigned work ON TIME, and missed exams will not be allowed to be made up unless individual arrangements are made with the instructor. The instructor has the right to assign a zero grade to any assignment that is not turned in by the deadline. Final exams may not be made up after the officially posted testing time and date.

PLEASE NOTE ➔
Policy on Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. Plagiarism means "knowingly copying another’s work or ideas and calling them one’s own or not giving proper credit or citation." This includes copying sections or entire papers from printed or electronic sources as well as handing in papers, homework or assignments written by others for you, or by students for other classes, or purchasing academic papers. It also includes any attempted copying from fellow classmates inside or outside of the classroom, or allowing another student to copy or use your work. Plagiarism and cheating are not only dishonest but cheat you out of learning, the primary reason you are here, and will not be tolerated at Michigan Tech. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating may be subject to sanctions ranging from receiving a failing grade for that assignment to permanent dismissal from the college. If you ever have any questions about this issue, please refer to the "MTU Student Code of Conduct", talk to your instructor and/or consult the Academic Dean or other MTU academic advisors.
COURSE CALENDAR:

Week 1: Tuesday, September 4
Intro, revisiting the Summer reading, purpose of heroes to cultural identity, reviewing what we know: story, time and place (Iliad/Odyssey; N.Africa, Greece). Personal writing: 1 page (where do you come from?)

Thursday, September 6
Using Turn-it-in.com. Reading: Odyssey

Week 2: Tuesday, September 11
Lit. as an expression of cultural identity; Homer’s hero/predicting behavior

Thursday, September 13
Language, myth and meaning; communicating with the gods. Personal writing: 1 page (what’s the question?)

Week 3: Tuesday, September 18
Ways of reading history: distinctions of film narrative

Thursday, September 20
Reading: Oedipus Rex

Week 4: Tuesday, September 25
tba: student led discussion

Thursday, September 27
Reading: Beowulf. Personal writing: 1 page (defining the monstrous)

Week 5: Tuesday, October 2
Using the library; documenting resources

Thursday, October 4
Society’s health: Oedipus’ plague, the Black Death, AIDS

Week 6: Tuesday, October 9
Grendel then and now; hearing vs seeing the story; voice of the translator

Thursday, October 11
Reading: Beowulf

Week 7: Tuesday, October 16
Drama vs. epic poem

Thursday, October 18
tba: student led discussion

Week 8: Tuesday, October 23
Storytelling in the midst of death, preserving the “normal”

Thursday, October 25
Mapping the Beowulf

Week 9: Tuesday, October 30
Mid-term essay; Visualizing history; print and picture narrative

Thursday, November 1
Engaging all senses with storytelling

Week 10: Tuesday, November 6
Visual Argument Project Prep; revisiting public health: the Black Plague

Thursday, November 8
Reading: Gawain and the Green Knight (NAFSA)

Week 11: Tuesday, November 13
Storytelling as protection; journalists today (back to “They poured fire...”)

Thursday, November 15
Visual Argument Project DUE

Tuesday, November 20
Thanksgiving Break

Thursday, November 22
Thanksgiving Day

Week 12: Tuesday, November 27
Arab influences on the Grail cycle (Reading: 1001 Nights)

Thursday, November 29
Monty Python does history-film

Week 13: Tuesday, December 4
Lecture: MP and the HG (again)

Thursday, December 6
Discussion: writing about history, telling stories

Week 14: Tuesday, December 11
Revisiting Major Themes

Thursday, December 13
Final essay draft research and writing

Final Essay DUE: before 5pm, Monday, December 17, HU dept., Walker 3rd floor. Extra credit points available for early submission (by 5pm, Friday, Dec. 14)