

SSP 100: MythConceptions

Visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York September 25 – October 5, 2019

LEARNING GOALS

- To think critically about the intersection of myth and the visual arts;
- To consider myth as a trans-media phenomenon, beyond the confines of the page;
- To experience myth as an index of “high culture” within a museum context; and
- To craft and deliver brief but informative presentations on a series of objects.

OVERALL PROCESS

1. Divide into teams of four or five.
2. Each team will select a substantial body of myth from a predetermined list.
3. Teams will search the Met.’s online collections and select objects relevant to their myth.
4. Teams will prepare presentations about their objects in advance...
5. ...then hone them in the galleries when we arrive. The instruction team will evaluate presentations and provide feedback.

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STEP 1: TEAMS (September 25, in class)

- TEAM 1: Cole Darby, Sarah Franzel, Aries Lising, Taimur Sajed
- TEAM 2: Owen Fitzhugh, Laura Hoffman, Arthur Li, Livi Schmahmann. Hunter Wasser
- TEAM 3: Liz Cohen, Sam Nelson, Jarode Ratsimbazafy, Brooke Slesh
- TEAM 4: Caroline Forte, Jacob Kelly, Ethan McNamara, Danielle Peralta

STEP 2: MYTHS (September 25, in class)

- Each team will select one body of myth from the list below. Each myth encompasses a broad array of characters, situations, and motifs.
- The list of myths:
 1. Perseus
 2. Heracles/Hercules
 3. Theseus
 4. Jason and the Argonauts
 5. The Trojan War

STEP 3: OBJECT SELECTION (September 27, in class)

- On Friday, September 27, bring your laptops to class and search the Met's website (www.metmuseum.org) for three (3) objects related to your myth.
- Your objects should
 1. Come from three (3) different galleries — that is, three different periods and cultures (and one (1) MUST be from the Greek and Roman gallery on the first floor);
 2. Depict no more than two (2) of the same scenes or characters (if they overlap, there should be good reason);
 3. All be of different media, if possible;
 4. Be currently on display; and
 5. Be suitable for group presentations — that is, large enough for a group of 19 people to view from several yards away.
- Use the breadth of your myth to your advantage and select an array of characters and situations. As noted above, some overlap is permissible, but try to branch out.
- The instruction team will approve your three objects and make recommendations as necessary. Students' selections will determine the itinerary on October 5.

STEP 4: PREPARING PRESENTATIONS (September 27 – October 4)

- Teams will spend the next week researching their objects and preparing talking points. In each of the three presentations, every team member must have something to say.
- Each object presentation should last about five minutes and strive, at a minimum, to answer the following questions:
 1. What is the object? What material(s) has (have) gone into its making?
 2. Who is the artist, if known? What is the date, if known? What do you know about the artist and their place in art history?
 3. What scene from your myth is represented? How can you tell who's who?
 4. How was the object used in its society and culture?
 5. Who would have owned or commissioned such an object?
 6. How has the artist adapted the myth to the medium? Have they upheld tradition or made radical changes?
- The Met's website will help you answer these questions, but some supplemental research will be needed to help you contextualize your objects. Here are three strong suggestions for substantial fact-finding BEYOND *Wikipedia*:
 1. *The Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/Heilbrunn_Timeline_of_Art_History). Use the Thematic Essays to identify larger trends across time and distance.

STEP 4: PREPARING PRESENTATIONS — *continued*

2. Reid, J. D. *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1990s* (on our reserve shelf in Scribner Library, 1st floor). This encyclopedia of Greco-Roman myth not only summarizes every major story and legend, but also tracks how those stories appear in fine art (visual, literary, and dance) from 1300 CE onward. Excellent for learning more about mythical characters and for gauging how common certain motifs are across the centuries.
 3. The Art History reference section (Scribner Library, 1st floor, call numbers M–NK). A wealth of encyclopedias and dictionaries on artists and art movements. Indispensable for situating persons and objects in the context of their times.
- During the week of October 2, each team will meet with the MythConceptions Peer Mentor and give a dry run of one (1) presentation (any object). The presentation should be complete in every particular and should utilize a visual aid, such a laptop with an image (ideally plugged into a projector), to give presenters something to focus on. The Peer Mentor will offer advice, which teams should use to modify the current presentation, and to complete the other two. TIME AND PLACE TBA, RSVP required.

STEP 5: PRESENTATION DAY (Saturday, October 5)

- !! Remember your earbuds and your notes !!
- Board bus at Case Center by 7:15 a.m., 7:30 departure. We will leave you behind.
- The bus will make one rest stop each way for bathroom breaks and food. Please use the garbage bags provided. Be sure to eat something BEFORE we enter the museum.
- Once we have arrived at the Met., gotten our tickets, and gone through security, proceed as a team to your galleries and find your objects.
- Take what you need for the day with you. However, the driver will be with the bus all day, so you can leave larger items (pillows, blankets, laptops) behind.
- !! The Met. will make you check large bags, but will not allow you to check suitcases !! If your bag is judged to be a suitcase, you will *not* be allowed to check it.
- Once in the galleries, hone your presentations as a team, then rejoin the group at our starting point. You will have the better part of an hour to visit all three objects.
- We will tour the galleries and hear presentations in a logical fashion, with some stops along the way for some instructional team instructing.
- Our tour should end around 3:00 p.m. Enjoy the rest of your day until the bus leaves!
- Bus departs from the Met. for Skidmore in the evening, time TBD. Again, we will leave you behind.