

ENGLISH 104 SYLLABUS, FALL 2006
CONTEMPORARY MAGICK AND WITCHCRAFT

Course: English 104 (035 & 062)
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(or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As human beings, we all have a deep psychological need for the mysterious; a need to connect our consciousness to ideas that are larger than us, and to realms that lie beyond our limited understanding. In the not-so-distant past, our ancestors filled this need by drawing from a collective matrix of myths and rituals passed down from generation to generation. But as our culture becomes more fast-paced and technologically sophisticated, it becomes increasingly difficult to draw from that ancient psychological well. In an influential essay titled "Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art," Joseph Campbell argued that the advances in science and technology that have transformed world culture in the past century, have also left us psychologically impoverished by eroding the power of our myths and religious institutions to instill in us a sense of awe, humility, and respect at the wonder and mystery of the universe. According to Campbell, society has become schizophrenic, with individuals feeling increasingly cut off from one another and disenchanted with the official structures and institutions that are supposed to provide direction in life. Even our most fundamental religious beliefs--once accepted on faith alone--have been stripped of their ancient mysteries and subjected to the rigorous demands of science. We scour the mountains of Turkey for physical evidence of Noah's Ark, and dig beneath the streets of the Holy Land for proof that Jesus lived, all in a desperate attempt to align our religious beliefs with the model of the universe provided us by science. Even the stories of Genesis are now explained "rationally" using the rubric of "Creation Science." To paraphrase Campbell, we have tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and have lost our innocence.

In an attempt to fill the psychological void left by our technological culture, we turn to other fantasy stories set in worlds not so easily explained; stories in which individuals can draw from themselves hidden powers to control their own fate and attain their destiny. One need only look to recent popular culture for examples: in television programs like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed*, and in books and films like *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* to name only a few. Moreover, ever increasing numbers of people are also embracing old religions to regain a connection to our ancient past; religions that have at their core the practice of magic. Of course, this leads one to ask: in the face of all we know from science, what possible relevance could the study of magic have today?

Magic is a highly symbolic form with its origins buried deep within the psyches of individuals and cultures. It communicates in a language of what psychologist Carl Jung described as "archetypes," universal primordial images passed down from our ancestral past that reside in the "collective unconscious" of all human beings. Moreover, magic shares close connections to religion; belief in unseen powers and beings in devotional contexts carries easily over into situations in which those powers are tapped for practical purposes. In fact, one might even think of magic as a kind of applied mythology in which the symbols and deeds of myth are acted out in ritual for practical benefit.

In this course we will critically examine the relationships between people and the supernatural forces in which they believe. How have societies used magic to create, preserve, and transmit their cultural values? What is the relationship between dreams and magic? Magic and culture? We will address attitudes toward such subjects as sex, gender identity, good and evil, as well as other subjects or attitudes which we might discover as we proceed.

Because this is a writing course, our primary purpose will be to hone your critical reading and writing abilities and to prepare you for writing demands of the university. We'll devote lots of time to the writing process with special emphasis on style, structure, and revision. Your grade will not depend in any way on the positions you take, but it will depend on the effort you invest in openly exploring the issues, analyzing the strength of your own and others' essays, and refining your own technique through writing.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

A course packet of readings available at Johnny Print, 547 S. Limestone.
The Penguin Handbook. By Lester Faigley. (New York: Pearson-Longman, 2006.)
The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge. By Carlos Castaneda. University of California Press, 1998.

GRADING

Grades are based on the following formula:

A=3.50-4.00; B=2.50-3.49; C=1.50-2.49; D=0.50-1.49; E=0.49 or below.

Your final course grade will be derived from the following components:

20%	Homework, quizzes, in-class work, class participation
15%	Essay 1, 5p. (due Sep. 25)
20%	Essay 2, 5p. (due Oct. 16)
25%	Essay 3, 10p. (due Nov. 20)
20%	Essay 4, 5p. (due Dec. 13)

GENERAL POLICIES

Please note: The course Web page contains a complete listing of course policies, assignments, schedules, grading criteria, and other supplemental material for this course. It will be updated regularly and you are responsible for all information contained on it. In addition, we will have a class listserv that will act as an electronic bulletin board for the entire class. Membership on the class listserv is mandatory. It will serve as the preferred medium for class announcements.

Class begins when I take roll. If you aren't in class then, you're absent. All written assignments must be on my desk before then or they will be considered late and will be subject to the specific penalties outlined below.

All written assignments must be submitted to me in class. Do not leave assignments in my office unless I am there to take them from you. Assignments submitted late due to computer, printer, or disk problems will not be excused.

Unless you plan on feeding everyone, no food of any kind allowed in class.

Turn off your cell phones. If I hear a cell phone ring, or catch you using one in class, you will be asked to leave and counted absent.

Feel free to come to my office during the above hours if you have any concerns about the class. If you cannot make it during scheduled office hours, let me know and we'll make other arrangements. You can also send me email whenever you want; I'll try to respond quickly, but keep in mind that I'm usually only in the office two or three days per week.

Regular attendance is essential in all classes and you are held accountable for every class meeting, whether absent or present, for whatever reason. Three consecutive unexcused absences will reduce your course grade by one letter-grade, whereas missing six times total for whatever reason will deny you credit for the course. This policy is not negotiable under any circumstance. On the other hand, why you're gone is your business, not mine, and you are not obligated to explain your absence in any way. In any event, no absence can be designated "excused" until documentation has been provided and verified. See the "Writing Program Guidelines" or *Student Rights and Responsibilities* for the University's policy on absences.

Essay assignments will lose 1/4 point (on a 4-point scale) per day credit for each calendar day they're late up to one week, after which the essay will no longer be accepted for credit. Failure to turn in drafts of essay assignments on due dates will result in a 1/2 point penalty on the essay grade. Homework assignments are not accepted late.

STANDARD FORMAT FOR HOMEWORK & WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

All out-of-class writing assignments—including homework—must be typed in a 12-point font. NO HAND-WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED. The following is an example of the correct format:

Your name

Mr. Anthony Ubelhor

Eng. 104, Sec. xxx

20 Aug. 2006

The Format for my English 104 Assignments

This is an example of the format in which I need to submit my English 104 assignments. I know that any assignment not submitted in this format will be penalized. It is rather ridiculous to lose points just because I didn't follow the format instructions, so I will be sure to use the correct format on all assignments and thus improve my overall grade for the course.