This course is designed to introduce you to some of the major myths from the Graeco-Roman tradition and the theories that have been developed to study them. Our focus will be on the relationship between gods and men, in particular how and why was man created? How does man view and propitiate his gods? How and why do the gods reward and punish man? Throughout the course we will discuss various theoretical approaches to myth and determine which of them, if any, provide a means of understanding the larger questions of mythology such as: What are myths? Why do people create them? Are myths still a force in our lives today? How do we adopt and adapt Graeco-Roman myths? This will require you to think critically, which involves the ability to analyze texts and other kinds of aesthetic objects with an eye to their multi-level complexity. Course time will be devoted to lecture and discussion of assigned materials.

Learning Outcomes: Through the successful completion of this course you should have acquired:

• a familiarity with the Greco-Roman gods and heroes, and the ability to recognize them and major narrative patterns in art and literature;
• an understanding of theoretical approaches to mythology and the ability to apply them to new material;
• a familiarity with primary myth sources (literature, art, and architecture) and the ability to analyze them;
• the ability to analyze modern interpretations and retellings of myths in relation to their ancient and modern contexts;
• the ability to synthesize and present mythological narrative and theory.

Textbooks: We will use two main texts in this course, in addition to some supplemental materials available on Canvas. The two texts listed below are available for purchase at the U of U bookstore (https://www.campusstore.utah.edu/utah/home), but you can also find them at other booksellers such as Amazon. Feel free to rent or by ebook editions from where ever you find them to be most cost effective for you. There are also two copies of each text available at the Marriott Library in the course reserve area on the third floor.


N.B.: “Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto.” – Terence, 163 B.C.E. (“I am a human being: I consider nothing human to be different from me”). The subject matter of this course will address how other peoples thought and lived their daily lives. Thus the course contains material that some may find offensive, including content of a sexual nature that may be shocking or titillating. This material will be lectured on as appropriate, and it will also be discussed in class. Therefore you are advised to consider carefully your enrollment in this course beforehand, especially the fact that you will find these peoples to be as noble and vile, as lofty and base, in a word, as inconsistent as the rest of humanity. At no point in the course will you be required to agree with the ways of looking at the world as expressed by these peoples, but you will be required to think carefully about their perspectives.

Questions? Please contact the instructor, Prof. Alexis M. Christensen alexis.christensen@utah.edu