Geology 329

Geomythology

Spring 2016

Instructor: Professor Ken B. Anderson
Office: Parkinson 307
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Class Times: M, W, F. 1:00 to 1:50 pm, Parkinson Room 108

Course Description

Myths from many cultures contain descriptions of phenomena or events that bear a striking resemblance to natural phenomena, including natural disasters such as flooding, earthquakes, tsunami, and volcanic eruptions. In this course we will examine the possibility that some of these mythological accounts may be based on actual events and we will explore the ways in which these (initially) oral traditions can preserve and convey information about events that may have occurred in the distant past.

Specific objectives of the course are:

1. To familiarize you with the settings and causes of catastrophic geologic events, their associated phenomena, and the types of evidence these events leave behind.
2. To practice critically reading and analyzing myths from different cultures (including developing an understanding of the cognitive structure of myths) with the goal of appreciating their societal significance and assessing the extent to which they may encode information about actual events.
3. To develop your ability to synthesize information and analysis into logical and well-structured interpretations of various myths and to convey those interpretations as persuasive arguments supporting your interpretation(s).

Readings:

Required readings will be regularly posted on our D2L site. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings every week. It is your responsibility to retrieve and read these materials and to come to class prepared to discuss these as required.

I also strongly recommend “When they severed Earth from Sky” by Elizabeth Wayland Barber and Paul T. Barber, Princeton: Princeton University Press. You can order this from www.amazon.com or other vendors. An audio edition is also available. This is not a required reading but very helpful in understanding how the human mind shapes myths.

Readings may include reference materials containing geology background. These readings are recommended (but not required) and are included to help you to brush up on your geology knowledge should you have gaps. I will indicate these readings when they are posted.
Attendance / lecture discussions / video assignments:
As with all classes, regular attendance and participation in the class discussions is not only essential for your individual success in this course, but also for the success of the class as a whole. Students who miss a significant portion of this class are unlikely to be successful. You are allowed to accumulate 3 unexcused absences. More than 3 absences will lower your final grade by one full point off your final grade for each additional absence. Attendance will be checked and recorded using the “daily question” method. Keep track of your absences. I do not necessarily warn you, if you are about to exceed your allowed absences.

Discussion Papers:
These papers will require you to synthesize knowledge after each of the discussion sessions (2-3 pages, typed, Fond Times 12, double spaced). I will evaluate these based on the strength of the evidence presented and the clarity of the arguments you make regarding the position that you are taking. In essence, I am asking you to state a position with regard to the discussion topic and succinctly summarize evidence that supports your view. More detailed instructions and guidelines will be provided for each topic. There are 5 lecture discussions. Writing discussion paper 1 is mandatory. In addition to discussion paper 1, you need to choose 2 more from the additional 4 discussion topics. I do not recommend to put off writing discussion papers until later in the semester as you will run into timing issues with assignments from other classes and your final project.

Final Project:
In your final project you will examine ways in which regional geology influenced civilizations, and explore the possibility that some of their myths and legends may preserve a record of actual geologic events. The project will be presented to the class during the last week of classes. Form, specific requirements and grading method will be disclosed at a later date.

Honesty:
The work you turn in must be your own. I encourage you to discuss the course material with your classmates and to study and work together on assignments, but a quiz or turned in assignment must reflect your own efforts. Plagiarism is unacceptable. All written assignments must be turned in through D2L and will automatically be run through a plagiarism checker. Make sure that material drawn from other sources is properly cited and acknowledged. If in doubt, cite. Any coursework that shows evidence of academic dishonesty will receive a grade of 0.

Desire to Learn:
Announcements, class notes and assignments will be posted on D2L, and assignments to be completed by you will be required to be turned in through D2L. Please check daily.
Grading:
Two exams (1 Mid-term and 1 Final, equally weighted) 20%
Discussion papers (choose 3 out of 5 topics, but must include topic 1) 30%
Attendance 10%
Lecture discussion assignments 10%
Video assignments, lecture activities, homework 15%
Final Project 15%

Grade scale
100 – 90 % = A
89 – 80 % = B
79 – 70 % = C
69 – 60 % = D
59 % and lower = F

University Honors Program
Students participating in the University Honors program and who wish take this course to receive credit for that program, should contact me regarding contracting as required by the Honors program. In addition to all regular required assignments, students that are registered for honors credit must also complete a project relating to natural phenomena that may provide potential explanations for the origins and basis for a specific myth (or family of myths). The form of the project and the myth to be investigated will be agreed upon between the student and the instructor. The project may draw on available sources, but must include an original synthesis by the student. That is, the student must provide and justify a potential explanation for the origin of the chosen myth, and must explain why this explanation is preferable over other possible interpretations of the myth’s origins. Projects will be graded on the depth of the analysis presented as well as clarity, organization and use of proper English.
Approximate Course Outline

(Note: due to the restructuring of this course this year, due to the change in instructor, the follow list may be subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Course Topic</th>
<th>Readings:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Origins of the Universe and the Earth. Origins Myths</td>
<td>To be assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Structure of the Earth and Tectonics. Mediterranean Geology. Old World Civilization and Mythology</td>
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Topics to be covered in subsequent weeks may include the following. The relative weighting of these topics will be determined during the course of the semester and will be based in part on student input. Topics associated with specific discussion topics (and hence discussion papers) will be included.

- Greek Mythology: River Gods and the Environment
- New World Civilization and Mythology
- Holocene Culture and Climate
- The Garden of Eden and related myths
  - Discussion 2: The Garden Eden and the Golden Age
- Flood Myths
  - Discussion 3: Flood Myths
- Earthquake Myths
  - Discussion 4: Destruction of Jericho and Sodom and Gomorra
- Volcano Myths
- Mythical Creatures and Dragons
- Oracle of Delphi
- Comets and other celestial phenomena
- The Eruption of Santorini/Thera
- Atlantis
  - Discussion 5: Atlantis – Fact or fiction?
- The Exodus Myth
SAFETY AWARENESS FACTS AND EDUCATION
Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: http://safe.siu.edu

SALUKI CARES
The purpose of Saluki Cares is to develop, facilitate and coordinate a university-wide program of care and support for students in any type of distress—physical, emotional, financial, or personal. By working closely with faculty, staff, students and their families, SIU will continue to display a culture of care and demonstrate to our students and their families that they are an important part of the community. For Information on Saluki Cares: (618) 453-5714, or siucares@siu.edu, http://siucares.siu.edu/index.html

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. We ask that you become familiar with the SIU Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) programs. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT’s website at www.bert.siu.edu. Department of Safety’s website at www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and the Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency.

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE
SIU contains people from all walks of life, from many different cultures and sub-cultures, and representing all strata of society, nationalities, ethnicities, lifestyles, and affiliations. Learning from and working with people who differ is an important part of education as well as an essential preparation for any career. For more information please visit: http://www.inclusiveexcellence.siu.edu/

LEARNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES
Help is within reach. Learning support services offers free tutoring on campus and math labs. To find more information please visit the Center for Learning and Support Services website:
 Tutoring: http://tutoring.siu.edu/
 Math Labs: http://math.siu.edu/courses/course-help.php

WRITING CENTER
The Writing Center offers free tutoring services to all SIU students and faculty. To find a Center or Schedule an appointment please visit http://write.siu.edu/

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
Our office’s main focus is to ensure that the university complies with federal and state equity policies and handles reporting and investigating of discrimination cases. For more information visit:
http://diversity.siu.edu/

Additional Resources Available:

SALUKINET: https://salukinet.siu.edu/cp/home/displaylogin

ADVISEMENT: http://advisement.siu.edu/

PROVOST & VICE CHANCELLOR: http://pvcaa.siu.edu/
SII ONLINE: http://online.siu.edu/

Spring 2016 R O’Rourke