

Module 2

For FLCL 271H (Classical Mythology: Honors Section)

Studying the Influence of Classical Mythology on Art

Course

Classical Mythology: Honors FLCL 271H ~~III~~ semester hours

The honors component of Classical Mythology is intended to give students a deeper understanding of the subject and its relationship to other academic areas such as art, music, and psychology. Each student must complete a project that involves reading one or more pieces of Ancient Greek and/or Roman literature in translation.

Module 2 Description

This module teaches students to use basic computer searching strategies to find images on the World Wide Web that pertain to characters or scenes from Ancient Greek and Roman mythology. The student is given the opportunity to create oral presentations that involve the use of technological equipment, including a computer, a printer, a document camera, and an LCD projector. The students may use one of the following software: *Word Perfect*, *Word*, and *PowerPoint*.

One of the objectives of the Classical Mythology course is to develop an appreciation of the influence of Ancient Greek and Roman mythology on art, both ancient and modern. Conversely, the inclusion of works of art in the Classical Mythology course helps the students to identify mythological characters and to remember their stories. The use of technological equipment greatly facilitates this practice.

During the class lecture/discussion of each particular topic or character, the teacher, using a document camera, an LCD projector, and a screen, can easily show pertinent works of art. Having an image on a screen when the students enter the classroom captures the students' attention. The picture may be used to review or to introduce a myth. During the lecture/discussion, the teacher may (1) go to an art website such as *Artcyclopedia*; (2) show slides with a projector—preferably one that shows slides through a computer (very expensive at the present time); (3) show slides that are part of a *PowerPoint* presentation; or (4) show pictures on an overhead projector.

When copying images from an Internet site, copyright law should be followed. To use some images, permission from the source is required. Remember to always indicate the URL of the source with each image.

For showing images during class, the *PowerPoint* presentation is the easiest and least cumbersome method. For each unit, the teacher should select and arrange relevant images. These images can be either slides or pictures that can be digitized and placed in a *PowerPoint* presentation either by the school's technical service's department or, if he or she possesses the necessary skills, by the teacher. Images found on the Internet can also be downloaded as graphics files to a computer and then transferred into *PowerPoint*. The

following are some problems that may be encountered when slides and pictures are transferred into a *PowerPoint* presentation:

- Old slides may lack sufficient sharpness or be out of focus. Unfortunately, the digitizing process can cause a decrease in the quality of the original slide.
- *PowerPoint* is especially good since it allows the addition of the title, the artist's name, etc.; however, sometimes the addition of information results in an image that is too small to be viewed at a distance.
- Sound effects may be added, but they often distract attention from the subject at hand. Much technical expertise as well as time is required to coordinate music and images.
- Pictures that are near the binding of a book cannot be used.
- Whether Internet images, slides, or pictures are being converted, care must be taken to follow copyright laws.
- When planning to show a complete presentation, the teacher needs to have an alternative lesson plan in case the computer is down, working too slowly, or a light bulb fails.

Class Project

As a class project, assign each student to do a study of the influence of a mythological character on postclassical works of art and to share the results of his or her research with the class. Require the student to find at least five works of art featuring the character and to compare the scene represented in each work of art to the description of the same scene in the piece of Ancient Greek or Roman literature that inspired it. In addition, the student should be asked to give a thumbnail sketch of each artist and comment briefly on the style of each work of art. Much of the required information can be found by means of online searches. Websites helpful in locating works of art and information about artists include museum sites and sites such as the following:

- www.artcyclopedia.com/
- <http://geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6946/images/>

The search engines Google and AltaVista feature image searching. The teacher should provide a written list of useful websites, which he or she has tested, using mythological figures. The teacher should also be prepared to help students choose mythological characters and to identify the literary work or works that inspired a particular work of art. Good translations of Ancient Greek and Roman works of literature can be found online (see Module 1).

If the students lack searching skills, the teacher, using a document camera, an LCD projector, and overhead screen, should do a sample search (e.g., an image search), using

the search engine Google. For the benefit of the inexperienced and the forgetful, written instructions, such as the following, should be handed out:

1. Open Google.com.
2. Click on the image tab of Google.
3. Type in the name of the mythological character.
4. Click on search button.
5. Click on the desired image to see the original context of the image. Often there is the option of clicking to see the full-size image.
6. Right-click and select "Save picture as" to save the picture on disk OR Right-click and select Copy to copy the picture to the clipboard. Open *PowerPoint* or *Microsoft Word*. Right-click and paste the picture into *PowerPoint* or *Microsoft Word*.
7. Copy the source:
 - Click on the address bar (the address will be highlighted).
 - Right-click on the highlighted address and select Copy.
 - Return to the *PowerPoint* or *Word* document and paste the address in the document under the picture.

The search engine AltaVista (<http://altavista.com/>) has a similar image search, but there are a few differences from Google.

Some problems the students may encounter while searching include the following:

- An inability to print a copy of an artwork
- An inability to enlarge an image (Many sites do give directions for enlarging and/or zooming in.)
- Limited searching ability (e.g., the ability to search by title or artist but not by subject)
- An inability to access a site previously accessed (The site may have moved or become a commercial site, e.g., www.groveart.com.)

After their research has been completed, the students should hold a seminar both to give oral presentations of their findings and to discuss their problems and reactions. For their presentations, students with enough technological skill may wish to prepare *PowerPoint* presentations; others can use an overhead projector to show the works of art. Each student should hand out a summary/outline of his or her findings to the other members of the class. Most of the students will use a computer software program such as

WordPerfect, to produce the handouts. In studying the influence of the literature on the art, the students will find that sometimes . . .

- the artist reproduces very closely a scene found in a piece of literature.
- the artist changes details, even significant ones, of the scene and/or the characters.
- the artist portrays the mythological figures with their proper attributes, but puts them in a new, quite often contemporary, setting.
- the artist confuses or blends myths.

Field Trip

There could be a field trip in connection with the project. For example, students in the Chicago area could visit the Art Institute of Chicago. Before the trip, have each student do an online search of the Art Institute of Chicago's website (www.artic.edu/) to find works of art of interest to him or her. Insist that the students complete the research on the works of art, the artists, and the pieces of ancient literature before the field trip. Having become familiar with the mythological figures that appear in works of art at the museum, the teacher can provide research guidelines to the students. The teacher should provide written directions for accessing the site as well as for searching for works of art on it and preferably should demonstrate the process, using a document camera, an LCD projector, and screen.

Some challenges that the students may face are as follows:

- Since there is no subject searching, the student must search by entering the character name in the title search.
- Sometimes the Greek name of a mythological character is used; sometimes the Latin name is used (e.g., Zeus [Greek], Jupiter or Jove [Latin]).
- Since there is no way to enlarge images, some images are too small to see clearly.
- Since the website may not indicate whether a piece of art is currently on display, the student, when he or she visits the museum, may find that the work of art is not on display.
- Since works of art featuring characters from Ancient Greek and Roman mythology are scattered throughout the museum, finding a particular work may prove challenging.

After the field trip, arrange a time for the students to meet to give their presentations and to discuss their reactions to seeing the actual works of art.

Transferability

The module, with or without modification, could be used in an art appreciation class. With little change, the module could be used to study the influence of a historical personage or a character from another area of literature on works of art. The module

fosters interest in both classical mythology and art. By providing students with the necessary searching skills, it encourages them to make online visits to art museums to search for a subject, artist, or painting that especially appeals to them.

Faculty Technology Skill

- Ability to use a computer, an overhead projector, and/or an LCD projector
- Ability to use a copy machine and a printer
- Ability to search the World Wide Web, using a search engine
- Ability to copy and paste material found on the Web
- Ability to work with a technology specialist or ability to use *PowerPoint* and *Adobe Photoshop* or similar software

Student Technology Skill

None, but the ability to use computer search engines would be helpful.

Faculty Equipment

- Copy machine
- A projector
- Document camera such as ELMO
- LCD projector
- Computer
- Printer
- Slide projector
- Screen
- Slide scanner (optional)
- *PowerPoint* presentation equipment:
 - Computer
 - Scanner
 - Digital camera
 - *PowerPoint*, *Adobe Photoshop*, or similar software

Benefits of Technological vs. Traditional Presentation

The ability to show pieces of art in museum collections throughout the world while one is teaching a classical mythology class is wonderful. Integration of visual images into a

lecture or discussion facilitates both memorization of the myths and review of them. It allows the students to study an artist's rendering of a character or myth as well as to compare artists' renderings, especially ancient and modern ones. Departures from literary tradition can be noted. As a bonus, the students learn a little about art, particularly Ancient Greek and Roman art. For example, they discover that marble statues, which are now white, were originally painted.

Doing an online search for a work of art is much easier than searching through art books, which are often cumbersome and must be returned to the library or sometimes are on reserve. A website often allows enlarging or zooming in on an image. By printing the images, a teacher can develop a collection of images specifically suited to a mythological topic. If the school has a cooperative technical service department or the teacher has the requisite skills, the images can be placed in a *PowerPoint* presentation along with slides and pictures from books. It must be noted, however, that occasionally images do not transfer well, even when an expert is doing the work. Placing slides in a *PowerPoint* presentation not only saves wear and tear on the slides but also allows more than one faculty member at a time to use the slides.

Language Resource Center Usage

In order to carry out the class project outlined in this module (see above), the students will do a sample search simultaneously with the teacher and then proceed with their individual research with an expert at hand for assistance in matters mythological and technical. In addition to the sample Google image search, it probably would be useful to do a sample AltaVista image search and a sample search on some other site such as *Artcyclopedia*. Written instructions should accompany the sample search.

Internet Resources

Artcyclopedia

www.artcyclopedia.com/

Google

www.google.com/

AltaVista

www.altavista.com/

Images

<http://geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6946/images/>

Art Institute of Chicago

www.artic.edu/