

## **Module 8**

### **For FLCL 271H (Classical Mythology: Honors Section)**

### **Psychological Interpretations of Myth**

#### **Course**

Classical Mythology: Honors FLCL 271H 3 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 8: Description**

This unit is designed to familiarize students with various psychological interpretations of myth. Videos can be used to deepen understanding of both the myths and the psychological interpretations based on them. Students are encouraged to develop computer searching skills so that they may find information on psychological matters that interest them.

Though Oedipus is one of the most famous characters in Ancient Greek mythology, students frequently do not have a thorough understanding of his myth and its influence. To place the Oedipus myth in its proper place in the Theban cycle, review the stories of Cadmus and Harmonia and their children, particularly Semele. To prepare the students to read and/or view a video of the translation of the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, the teacher should reveal to the class in chronological order the events in Oedipus' life from his birth to the point at which Sophocles' tragedy opens. Then, assign the students to read and/or view a dramatic production of the play and to discuss the work. (Many school libraries have a video version of *Oedipus Rex*.) After several class sessions on the rest of the Theban saga, at least one class should be devoted to the mythically based theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Explain the Oedipus Complex and the Electra Complex. If necessary, review the myth of Electra. Then, have the students read a translation of the passage in *The Interpretation of Dreams* in which Freud refers to the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles to explain the Oedipus Complex. The passage may currently be found on the following websites:

[www.utexas.edu/courses/ccmyth/freud.html](http://www.utexas.edu/courses/ccmyth/freud.html)

[www.psychwww.com/books/interp/chap05d.htm](http://www.psychwww.com/books/interp/chap05d.htm)

The teacher may choose to place a copy of the passage on reserve in the library or, if available at the school, on electronic reserve.

Next, point out that Carl Jung, building on Freud's work, postulated the theory of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. To make sure that the students understand what an archetype is, mention a few of the archetypes that Jung identified and explain their

significance. Some of Jung's comments on archetypes may be found on the following website:

*Carl G. Jung (1865-1961): Description of the Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*  
[www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/3976/Jung2.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/3976/Jung2.html)  
[www.timestar.org/collective.htm](http://www.timestar.org/collective.htm)

Students usually enjoy listing titles, names, sayings, etc., that contain an archetypal number such as three. Emphasize that adherents of Jung's theory believe that archetypal figures can be used as guides to living—for example, as warnings in their terrible aspects. Finally, mention that Joseph Campbell, a well-known scholar of comparative mythology, provided a Jungian interpretation of myths in his writings (videos on Campbell and his works are available). On the following website is a Jungian analysis of a few mythical characters in astrology (see Module 7):

*Mythology and Astrology*  
<http://astrology.about.com/library/weekly/aa062201a.htm>

In each unit of the course, the teacher should mention important pertinent psychological interpretations of myth such as the Medusa Complex in connection with the myth of Perseus and Medusa.

For the mythology project, divide the students into three groups. Each student in one group studies a particular archetype (e.g., *animus*). Each student in another group reads a book in which the author gives a psychological interpretation of myths such as *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell or *Goddesses in Everywoman* by Jean Shinoda Bolen, a psychiatrist who writes about archetypes. (The teacher should be prepared to suggest readings.) Each student in a third group researches a specific psychological complex or condition (e.g., Oedipism). After his or her research has been completed, each student writes a report to be handed in and attends a seminar with the members of the group and the teacher to discuss problems and findings. Finally, each group presents a panel discussion of research results to the whole class.

### **Transferability**

This module could be used in a psychology class or in a literature or art class that focuses on archetypes.

### **Faculty Technology Skill**

- Ability to search the Internet
- Ability to use an LCD projector and a screen
- Ability to operate a videocassette player

### **Student Technology Skill**

None, but the ability to do an Internet search would be helpful.

### **Faculty Equipment**

- Computer with Internet access
- Videocassette player
- LCD projector and a screen (optional)

### **Student Equipment**

- Computer with access to the Internet
- Printer

### **Benefits of Technological vs. Traditional Presentation**

The viewing of a video followed by a discussion of the psychological themes in the work seen reinforces and adds to what the students have read in the textbooks and learned in class.

To find books and periodicals on psychology, it is essential for students to know how to search library catalogues (see Module 1). The ability to perform a simple search of a specialized database in his or her area of expertise enhances the quality of a student's research.

### **Language Resource Center Usage**

During the session in the language resource center, the students could search the World Wide Web for information about Freud and Jung and about various psychological complexes and conditions as well as for information directly pertaining to their individual projects. In order to find general information, the students would use a search engine such as Google. If there are a number of students who do not know how to search the Internet, the teacher, using an LCD projector and a screen, should demonstrate the process and then let the students attempt a search. It is a good idea to have the students print each screen of the trial search to use for future reference. To enable the students to find more scholarly and more specific material on psychological matters, the students should be introduced to the specialized database *PsycINFO* ([www.apa.org/psychinfo](http://www.apa.org/psychinfo)). In addition to bibliographic information, this database provides an abstract or, in the case of some journal articles, the full text of the article. If the school library has the end user service called *OVID* ([www.ovid.com](http://www.ovid.com)) (or, in some cases, the end user service *FirstSearch* [[www.oclc.org](http://www.oclc.org)]), the students may be able to search *PsycINFO* in the language resource center. A librarian (preferably) or the teacher, using an LCD projector and a screen, should demonstrate a very basic search on the database. Some information on certain subjects related to psychology and pop psychology, for example, the Pygmalion Effect, may be found on the database *ERIC*, which is primarily concerned with educational matters. Since this specialized database is set up in the same way as *PsycINFO*, the student would be able to do a very basic search on this database. It goes without saying that if a comprehensive search of a specialized database is desired in order to locate information on a subject, a librarian should be requested to do the search.

### **Internet Resources**

*Freud*

[www.utexas.edu/courses/ccmyth/freud.html](http://www.utexas.edu/courses/ccmyth/freud.html)

*Interpretation of Dreams*

[www.psychwww.com/books/interp/toc.htm](http://www.psychwww.com/books/interp/toc.htm)

*Sigmund Freud*

*Carl G. Jung (1865-1961)*

[www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/3976/Jung2.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/3976/Jung2.html)

*Description of the Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious Concept*

[www.timestar.org/collective.htm](http://www.timestar.org/collective.htm)

*Mythology and Astrology*

[astrology.about.com/library/weekly/aa062201a.htm](http://astrology.about.com/library/weekly/aa062201a.htm)

*PsycINFO*

[www.apa.org/psychinfo](http://www.apa.org/psychinfo)

*OVID*

[www.ovid.com](http://www.ovid.com)

*FirstSearch*

[www.oclc.org](http://www.oclc.org)