

Scuola Superiore di Catania

Programma Corso

“ The Ancient Mythology and its Reception in Literature and Art”
a.a. 2009-2010

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Introduction

- The concept of muthos (mu'qo") in antiquity and modern attempts to define myth(s).
- Myth and Mythology - Fundamental theories of Myth
 - The recovery of myth – the development of scientific mythology (e.g. Giambattista Vico; Christian Gottlob Heyne, Karl Otfried Müller; German Romanticism)
 - The 20th century - new approaches to myth: Psychoanalysis; Myth and Ritual (Cambridge Ritualists); Structuralism (Claude Lévi-Strauss)
- Reception studies – methodological questions:
 - myths as texts: the double tradition of myth and artistic medium (genres, art forms)
- “How do we know?” Sources for mythology
 - ancient sources (literature, handbooks, art) and modern retellings of mythology (from Boccaccio to Calasso); visual traditions

Central Myths and their reception

The main part of the Lecture will comprise an overview of some central myths (mainly from Greek mythology) and their respective reception in art and literature; in different myths emphasis will be given on special aspects which elicit specific interests in modern artists, as, e.g., political relevance (both self-representation and criticism), questions of gender, reflections of the artist (poetics, theory of art), analysis of human nature, philosophical positions

- The beginnings – The world and Underworld of the Olympic Gods, with e.g.
 - Myths of Creation: Prometheus
 - Topography of the Underworld: Sisyphos and Tantalos
 - Aphrodite
 - Dionysos
 - Heracles: from philosophy to body-building
- The great stories:
 - Argonauts (e.g. Medea)
 - Thebes (e.g. Oedipus, Antigone)
 - Troy (e.g. Helen and Kassandra, Achilles, Odysseus; Atridae) (myths on the screen)
 - Athens (e.g. Theseus and the Amazons)
- Ovid, the “Bible of Mythology” with Icarus; Orpheus and Pygmalion – the artists; Actaeon or “On vision”; Europa
- Amor and Psyche – with Palazzo del Te at Mantua – a case study
- Myths of Rome - Aeneas

Conclusion

- Overview of epochs and forms of reception – the dominant media
- The appeal of myth to the modern mind – an ancient story