

# Kentucky Class Notes

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859.252.NOTE

CLA 135 Francis  
Fall 2010  
Test 1

8/26/10

- Today, we discussed the syllabus in class. Dr. Francis emphasized that both reading and class attendance are of high importance in this class due to the confusing nature of the subject.

8/31/10

- Today we began to find a definition of the word **MYTH**. A good definition was presented on page 2 of the coursepack.
- **Myth: A traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type of the worldview of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or revealing the psychology, customs, or ideals of society**
  - A MYTH is a story: a sacred story primarily concerning the gods and human relationships with them.
  - MYTHS provide explanations for cosmic and human reality, as well as moral lessons that establish norms for behavior.
  - MYTHS speak with assumed authority: they do not try to persuade, but rather claim that something is so.
  - “Mythos” – “word” or “speech” which seeks to show, display, and appeal to emotions rather than intellect.
  - MYTHS are universally constant and valid, and take place in space and time quite different from our own.

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- Myths are distinguished from other forms of stories, such as:
  - **LEGENDS:** stories which focus on human characters, though divinity may play a part.
  - **SAGA:** a series of legends put together to tell an expanded story.
  - **FOLKTALES:** stories told for the sake of entertainment (fairytales).
- Some concepts from the interpretation of myth (coursepack pg. 3):
  - **ALLEGORY:** sees myth as a series of symbols and metaphors, then tries to understand it by first understanding these metaphors.
    - Example- Aphrodite is not a person; she's symbol for the force of human love and passion.
  - **RATIONALISM:** seeks to explain away myth as an explanation for natural events.
    - Example- stories of Zeus filling the sky with thunder are a primitive explanation for lightning.
  - **ETIOLOGY:** focuses on stories that explain how something started, where it came from, and how it got its name.
  - **SOCIAL CHARTERS:** myths contain social charters if they explain how a particular religious or cultural custom came about.
- **ANCIENT MYTH IS NOT A SYSTEM;** it's a very jumbled series of stories.
  - There are some stories in myth that are told in different versions.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. – Apollodorus tried to compile the stories of myth into an orderly system.
- Myth answers “why”, not “how”.