

# Kentucky Class Notes

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*859.252.NOTE*

**CLA 135 Visona**  
**Spring 2009**  
**Test #1**

1/15/09

- Today we simply got the syllabus and were told to read over it. Dr. Visona specified that while the reading is extremely necessary, it is important to come to lecture to understand his interpretations of the readings. He said that they can be very confusing and lecture is needed to clarify the meanings of the stories.

1/20/09

- Today we spent the majority of class time to put together a formal definition of the word “myth” and also discussing some background information about mythology.
  - The first definition that we came up with was that a MYTH was a story with a religious nature that dealt with deities (gods and goddesses).
    - Myths that deal with gods and goddesses are called DIVINE MYTHS.
      - Dr. Visona said that in divine myth, the supernatural—the gods and goddesses—are the protagonists.
  - We also decided that myths can be used to explain things such as the nature of the universe.
  - HISTORICAL MYTH was defined as a myth that was used to explain historical events that could not otherwise be explained.
    - Dr. Visona gave an example of the Battle of Marathon in which the Athenians had a surprisingly large victory over the Persians and thus believed that they had been victorious because of the gods.
  - We also concluded that myths could be used to make sense of things that were unknown—they could explain how things are and how things came to be.

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- Today we began by discussing the Hymn to Demeter.
  - Ovid and the Hymn differ in many ways.
- The Hymn deals with issues of life and death.
  - The return of spring and the return of vegetation represent Demeter experiencing pain for loss of Persephone. This also relates to human experiences.
    - Demeter is the goddess of the crops and she makes things grow.
  - Then she experiences the loss of Persephone.
  - Then the pomegranate resembles Persephone being kept in the underworld for 1/3 of the year.
  - Then we experience life while Demeter loses a boy through which she finds some release from her loss. This relief is lost with the appearance of the boy's mother.
    - A fundamental theme to the hymn is the transition from loss to relief; from grief to joy.
  - Then Demeter goes to the temple where she spends one year in the temple.
  - This year in the temple causes a famine which represents death.
  - Zeus then sends messengers to Demeter.
  - Demeter is told that Persephone will return to Earth; Persephone is still very reluctant towards Hades.
  - Zeus then sends Hermes to Demeter to kill her and tells her that she can have any prestige she wants as long as she allows the crops to grow.
  - Then Demeter experiences the joy in afterlife and develops empathy for humans.
- Then we discussed the ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES.
  - We did not learn anything new.
    - The similarities between the hymn and the mysteries are as follows:
      - A journey takes place in both the hymn and the mysteries.
        - There is a shared journey and a shared experience.