OUR MYTHICAL CHILDHOOD

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OUR MYTHICAL EDUCATION

Edited by Lisa Maurice

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OUR MYTHICAL EDUCATION

Matylda Tracewska, *Our Mythical Childhood* (2013), artwork symbolizing the Programme.

The following volumes contain the research results of the first stages of the Our Mythical Childhood Programme (est. 2011)

Loeb Classical Library Foundation Grant (2012–2013):

Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *Our Mythical Childhood... The Classics and Literature for Children and Young Adults*, vol. 8 in the series "Metaforms: Studies in the Reception of Classical Antiquity", Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2016, 526 pp.

Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Alumni Award for Innovative Networking Initiatives (2014–2017) and ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021):

Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *Chasing Mythical Beasts: The Reception of Ancient Monsters in Children's and Young Adults' Culture*, vol. 8 in the series "Studien zur europäischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur / Studies in European Children's and Young Adult Literature", Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020, 623 pp.

Forthcoming volumes in the series "Our Mythical Childhood" published by Warsaw University Press

ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021):

Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *Our Mythical Hope: The Ancient Myths as Medicine for the Hardships of Life in Children's and Young Adults' Culture*

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Elizabeth Hale, with Miriam Riverlea, illustrations by Steve K. Simons, *Classical Mythology and Children's Literature: An Alphabetical Odyssey*

Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *Our Mythical Nature: The Classics and Environmental Issues in Children's and Young Adults' Culture*

OUR MYTHICAL EDUCATION

The Reception of Classical Myth Worldwide in Formal Education, 1900–2020

Edited by Lisa Maurice

WYDAWNICTWA UNIWERSYTETU WARSZAWSKIEGO
WUW

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in the series "Our Mythical Childhood", edited by Katarzyna Marciniak (University of Warsaw, Poland)

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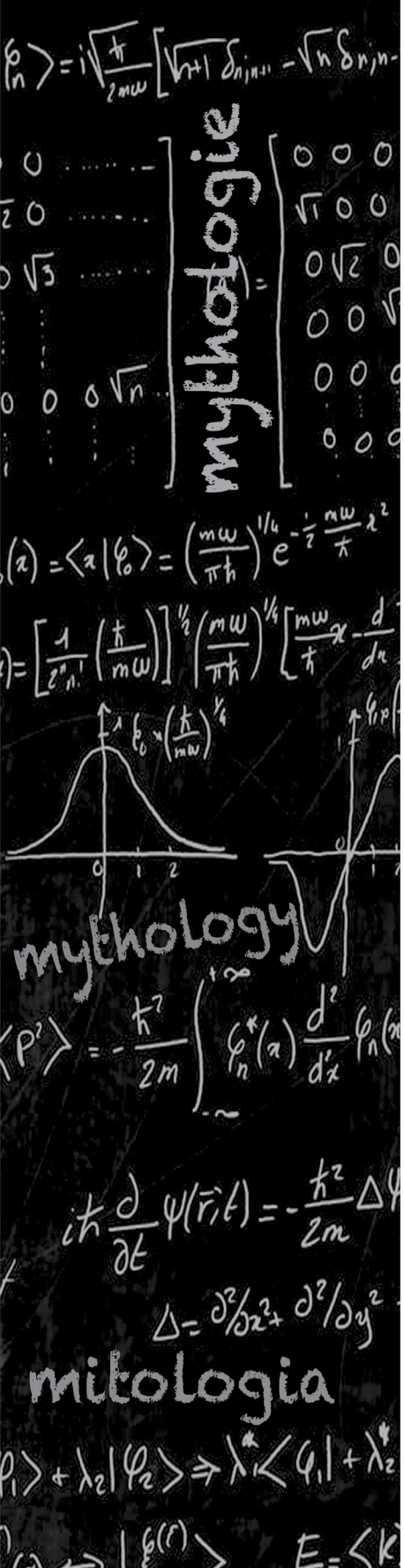

Part IV

OUR AMERICAN MYTHICAL EDUCATION

Emily Gunter and Dan Curley

"THE GREATEST STORIES EVER TOLD": US CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY COURSES IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM*

1. Introduction

In 2005, the academic journal *Classical World* featured a special pedagogy section entitled "Teaching Classical Mythology". In the introductory article, "The Role of Myth Courses on College Campuses", Kenneth Kitchell asserted that mythology was important "to the lifeblood of most Classics departments"[1] and presented testimonials on the capacity of mythology courses to recruit majors and minors.[2] He conceded that the understanding of these courses was, at that time, largely anecdotal, and called for a data-driven approach:

> There is surprisingly little written on what we should be teaching in such courses, how they should be taught, and how all this relates to our role as classicists in the twenty-first century.[3]

Kitchell framed the need for data with a series of questions, noting that "the profession could serve itself well by conducting a survey […] relevant to these issues".[4] Among his questions were the following:[5]

* Thank you to Lisa Maurice for inviting an essay on US myth courses and providing guidance. Thanks also to Skidmore College's Faculty-Student Collaborative Summer 2017 Research Program for supporting our project, and to Kelly Platt (Skidmore Class of 2018), our stalwart third reader. Above all, we express our utmost gratitude to the instructors who so generously shared their time, thoughts, and syllabi with us. Their support and collegiality were invaluable to this project.

[1] Kenneth F. Kitchell, "The Role of Myth Courses on College Campuses", *The Classical World* 98.2 (2005), 187.

[2] Ibidem, 189.

[3] Ibidem, 187.

[4] Ibidem, 191.

[5] Here we paraphrase Kitchell's longer series of questions (ibidem, 191–192).

- Do such classes have discussion sections?
- Is there a writing component?
- What percentage of first-hires are asked to teach myth?
- What percentage of myth classes is taught by adjunct faculty?
- What type of texts are used?
- What percentage of the class features theory?

Heeding Kitchell's call for data and taking guidance from his questions, we have conducted a census of mythology courses after collecting syllabi from institutions of higher learning in the United States. In addition to addressing many of the issues raised above, we consider which departments offer myth courses; the structures of the courses themselves; which Graeco-Roman gods, heroes, and myths are taught; and what themes and motifs are addressed. We also discuss some current and emerging trends that define, or have the potential to define, the twenty-first-century mythology classroom.

1.1. Designing Our Database

Our first task was to compile a list of colleges and universities in the United States where classical mythology courses are or have been taught. Our initial list was derived from the US Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) website, which encompasses over 7,000 higher-learning institutions. The database tracks seventy-one variables, including the degree(s) an institution offers; its classification as public, private not-for-profit, or private for-profit and as a four-year or two-year institution; an indication if it is a historically Black college or university or a tribal college; its geographic status as city, suburb, town, or rural; and the institution's student population. The IPEDS database also includes different levels of Carnegie Classification data, which recognize the diversity and variety of US colleges and universities. The Carnegie data track undergraduate profiles, instructional programmes, and enrolments, as well as institutional size and setting. Overall, the IPEDS data enabled us to filter our initial list of 7,000 institutions and reduce it to a master list of about 3,000. One important filter was institution type: most focusing on nursing, law, cosmetology, veterinary practice, rabbinical studies, or the like were excluded on the grounds that classical mythology courses historically or practically have not been taught there.

1.2. Typologies of Institutions and Courses

For the remaining 3,000 colleges and universities, we searched online course catalogues for key terms ("myth", "Greek", "Greece", "Roman", "ancient", "hero", "gods", and "legend" – common descriptors in titles or summaries) to identify the presence of myth courses in the curricula. Based on these search results, we categorized each school into one of four types (see Appendix, Table 1). Type 1 schools have independent Classics departments that offer majors and/or minors. These include traditional liberal-arts colleges like Skidmore College as well as research institutions like Columbia University. Type 2 schools house Classics programmes in larger departments or offer only a minor, such as the University of Alabama, where the Classics programme is a part of the Department of Modern Languages. Type 3 schools offer Classics-themed courses, but have no department, programme, major, or minor affiliation. An example is Northwest University in Washington state, which, due to its Christian affiliation, offers Greek language and ancient history courses, but has no formal Classics curriculum; many community colleges also fall into this category. Type 4 schools offer no other courses with substantial classical content, apart from those featuring classical mythology. Ultimately, we identified 1,143 institutions that offer classical mythology courses among all four types.

Reviewing the catalogues, we sorted the mythology courses themselves into three categories: (a) traditional classical mythology surveys, here defined as courses that cover exclusively Graeco-Roman myth and focus on the creation of the universe, major gods and goddesses, major heroes and heroines, and various kinds of saga; (b) classical mythology courses with a specialized focus, such as gender in myth or myth in ancient art; (c) Western and non-Western mythology surveys covering both classical myths and myths from around the world. We discuss each category of course further in sections 2–4, taking stock of content and format.

1.3. Requesting and Quantifying Syllabi

After categorizing schools and sorting courses, we began to request syllabi via email. Requests were addressed to the instructors or (when the instructors themselves could not be identified) to department chairs, administrative assistants, registrars, or divisional deans. Each request shared a brief

overview of the project and asked for the syllabus of a specific course listed in the catalogue. For institutions where no specific myth courses were found, but where there was evidence they might be taught, we requested syllabi of any courses featuring classical myth.

The response from across the country was largely enthusiastic and is reflected in our response rate (54%). Emails were sent out to the first half of our mailing list during Summer 2017, and to the second half during Fall 2017. The response rate remained virtually unchanged between these two terms (55% and 53%, respectively). From these responses, we received 589 syllabi, far more than expected.[6] The syllabi date from the years 1993 through 2018 (Spring), with 398 (68%) from 2016 onward. Thus, the majority of the documents offer very recent information about myth courses at US institutions.

As we received syllabi, we undertook the process of sampling and reading them. We developed a list of 250 distinct variables in order to quantify the documents and to extrapolate the contents of the courses themselves. We refined or added variables throughout the reading process. The list of variables encompasses not only course content, but also other kinds of information, including:

- official listing in institutional catalogues (for example, course rubric, number, and title);
- the sponsoring department and any cross-listed departments;
- the term and year offered;
- assessments, like exams and papers;
- usage of primary (both ancient and modern) and secondary sources;
- which Graeco-Roman gods, heroes, and myths are taught;
- other materials, motifs, and themes addressed in the course.

The variables were entered into a spreadsheet, with numerical values representing our interpretation of the courses' contents and formats, usually (1)s or (0)s. When a variable was unknown, or not easily deduced from the syllabus, we left a blank. Three different syllabi readers were responsible for populating the spreadsheet. The number of readers was small enough to minimize variation of interpretation, but large enough to maximize the

[6] Of the 589 syllabi we received, a substantial number (219 or 37%) were repeats or revisions of prior courses by the same instructors. We incorporated around 40 repeat syllabi into our reading process for control purposes.

number of syllabi read. We made every effort to read syllabi from as many different institutions as possible, and from every region of the country.

1.4. Limitations to Our Approach

First, human error. Though we coordinated the reading process and normalized it among the three readers, quantifying the syllabi was an empirical, and therefore a subjective enterprise. Second, geographical sweep. Our initial goal was to cover mythology courses in all of North America, including Canada and Mexico, but time constraints made this goal too daunting; hence we have limited our focus to the United States. Third, sample size. We performed keyword searches on all 589 syllabi, and read and quantified a significant portion of them (40%). Nevertheless, our data, though helpful for identifying major tendencies and trends, should not be read too prescriptively.

2. Survey Courses

The most common kind of classical mythology course is the survey, an overview of the major stories, characters, and themes of Graeco-Roman myth. The fullest surveys often follow the overarching chronology of the myths themselves, from the creation of the cosmos, to the rise of Zeus and his fellow Olympians, to adventures of heroes and heroines, to various kinds of saga, to the founding of Rome. Surveys are offered at every type of institution, especially Type 1 and Type 2. They are found at Type 3 institutions as well, but in the absence of a Classics department or programme they are (a) likely to be offered as English literature courses; and (b) less common than courses on global mythology (see section 4, below). If a Type 1 or Type 2 institution offers just one classical mythology course, it is likely to be a survey. Typical survey titles, which speak to the broad nature of such courses, include "Classical Mythology", "Greek Mythology", "Graeco-Roman Myth", and "Myths of the Greeks and Romans". Surveys may be cross-listed with other departments or programmes, such as English or religious studies, and they typically fulfil, in addition to Classics major or minor requirements, humanities requirements within their broader institutional curricula.

2.1. Survey Courses: Content

Instructors of survey courses draw heavily from primary and secondary authors. Our study tracked as many Graeco-Roman authors as possible, from staples like Hesiod and Ovid to outliers like Pherecydes and Plautus, in order to get the fullest view of the sources that inform mythology courses at US colleges and universities. The two most popular authors in survey courses are Homer (71%) and Euripides (58%). In addition, half of all surveys (45–55%) incorporate Hesiod, the *Homeric Hymns*, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Ovid. Some survey courses (between 20% and 40% of them) rely on a second tier of primary sources, including Plato, Apollodorus, and Virgil. Primary sources are almost always encountered in English translation. Of course, upper-level Greek and Latin courses will cover the authors and texts mentioned above and many others, but such courses are rarely advertised as mythology courses *per se* (the lone exception in our study is a specialized Latin course: "Ovid and Classical Mythology", Lucas Herchenroeder, University of Southern California, Spring 2017). Note that primary sources are not limited to classical literature: ancient and modern art as well as contemporary screen media (movies and television programmes) are also fixtures of mythological surveys.

Fully half of all survey courses use textbooks, not only for delivery and analysis of primary sources, but also for presentation of the various historical, cultural, and religious topics attending classical mythology. Barry B. Powell's *Classical Myth* (Pearson) is the most frequently used, followed by Mark Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, and Michael Sham's *Classical Mythology* (Oxford University Press). (Table 2 in the Appendix to this chapter ranks the most common textbooks by tiers of popularity.) It is also customary for survey courses to incorporate scholarship: one-quarter of surveys (26%) use scholarship in some way, usually to fuel classroom discussion. Other secondary sources, such as news services, blogs, guest lectures, exhibitions, and educational videos are rarely, if ever, utilized in surveys.

As noted above, the content of survey courses ranges from Greek cosmogony to the foundation of Rome, with particular attention paid to deities, heroes and heroines, and saga. Naturally, the exact ratio of these subjects will vary from course to course. Nevertheless, all surveys explore the Graeco-Roman pantheon (though some deities, such as Ares, Hephaestus, and Pan, are less frequently featured). Similarly, all surveys incorporate Graeco-Roman heroes and heroines to some extent, with the following featured

in more than half of all courses: Odysseus (76%), Jason and Medea (72%), Heracles/Hercules (68%), Oedipus (56%), Theseus and Ariadne (55%), and Perseus (50%). These heroes and heroines usually appear by way of certain authors. Ovid is usually the primary source for Perseus, Theseus and Ariadne, and Heracles; Sophocles for Oedipus; Euripides for Jason and Medea; and Homer for Odysseus. Although these heroes and heroines appear in other authors and works, the aforementioned correlations are strong.

Apart from myths of gods and heroes, the other myth to appear in all surveys is the Cosmogony/Theogony. This is not surprising, since the creation of the universe is a fundamental mythological narrative, the bedrock for the generations of characters that follow. Other common cosmogonic myths are those of Prometheus (45% of surveys), Pandora (38%), and the Titanomachy (31%). Hesiod, of course, is the primary source for all of these stories. Covering vast tracts of mythological ground, either literally or generationally, or both, sagas are especially fertile areas for survey courses. Most popular is the Trojan War (featured in roughly 90% of surveys), followed by the Theban (61%) and Mycenaean sagas (47%). The inclusion of these myths ensures prominent places for Homer and the tragedians on the reading lists. Other common myths in survey courses are Orpheus and Eurydice (43% of surveys), Deucalion and Pyrrha (36%), Daedalus and Icarus (25%), Narcissus and Echo (24%), Pygmalion and Galatea (22%), and Tereus, Procne, and Philomela (18%) – all of whom are featured in Ovid.

While survey courses have great latitude in terms of which ancient myths are included and excluded, or foregrounded and backgrounded, that latitude infrequently goes beyond the classical Mediterranean. A third of surveys (34%) devote attention to material outside Greece and Rome, largely for comparative purposes. Of these, nearly two-thirds (60%) feature Near Eastern texts (such as *Enuma Elish* and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*), and a similar amount (57%) feature biblical texts (such as the Book of Genesis). There is a correlation between the two: if a course incorporates Near Eastern texts, it is quite likely (60%) to incorporate biblical texts as well.

2.2. Survey Courses: Formats

Survey courses with a lecture-only format are rare and are found at larger institutions (10,000 or more students). Most other survey formats incorporate some amount of in-class discussion, to foster both student investment

in the material and peer-to-peer interaction. Of these almost half (44%) are fully discussion-based, while nearly a quarter (23%) balance lecture and in-class discussion, and an eighth (12%) employ large lectures with separate discussion groups. The last is an enduring format at large universities, where graduate students often lead discussions as part of their professional and pedagogical training. A small but growing percentage of surveys (13%) have an online format, whether as distance-learning courses or as courses with "flipped" classrooms, in which lectures are delivered virtually and class time is devoted to discussion and other activities.

The overall means of assessing student performance in survey courses – not including routine course management, such as tracking attendance and class participation – are similar, but specific permutations vary widely. Tests of one kind or another are common. Most surveys (73%) require a final exam, and of these most (88%) require one or more midterm exams, while a minimal percentage (11%) require only a final. Quizzes are also frequent: they are required in over half of surveys (58%), of which a small proportion (24%) are quiz-only, with no other kinds of testing. A surprising number of surveys (38%) at institutions of every size and type require quizzes, midterms, and finals. Nevertheless, there is a tendency for survey courses at larger schools to require less testing – perhaps only quizzes or a final – than at smaller schools.

Expository writing assignments provide another means for assessing student mastery of the material. They take various forms: response papers or journals (one page or less of writing), short essays (two to five pages), long essays (five to ten pages), and term papers (ten to fifteen pages, which usually require in-depth research). Most survey courses (85%) require one or more of the above, and, given that many syllabi imply but do not explicitly mention writing, we suspect the actual percentage is even higher. Short essays are the preferred form (44% of courses), followed by response papers/journals (34%), then term papers (24%), and finally long essays (14%). In addition, over one-quarter of surveys (27%) require more than one form of writing, usually response papers/journals combined with another form. Most surveys strike a balance between testing and writing, though a rare few opt for one or the other. The survey course at New College of Florida (Carl Shaw, Spring 2012), for example, eschews tests altogether in favour of response papers/journals, short essays, and term papers. Conversely, the survey at Eastern Michigan University (James Holoka, Winter 2017) favours all forms of testing but requires no writing. Institution size – the

undergraduate college versus the doctoral research university – might have bearing on these course configurations. As with testing, surveys at larger schools tend to require less writing.

Additional assessments in survey courses include co-curricular activities, such as museum visits or cultural events, both on- and off-campus; in-class presentations; group- or teamwork; and creative projects. Co-curricular activities, dependent on local resources and robust campus life, seek connections with course material beyond the classroom. Whereas museum visits tend to occur in larger metropolitan areas and at colleges and universities with their own museums, cultural events like dramatic performances or film screenings are common at institutions of every size and locale. In-class presentations in surveys, although uncommon (required in 22% of courses), typically provide brief but significant moments of peer-to-peer instruction. Examples include reports on deities (Ellen Finkelpearl and Michelle Berenfeld, Scripps College, Spring 2016; Renae Mitchell, University of New Mexico-Los Alamos, Fall 2017) and receptions of myth in the post-classical world (Cory Hackworth, University of Iowa, Spring 2017). Group- or teamwork is rarely required in surveys (6% of courses), perhaps due to the typically rapid pacing or large class size. Such work is often combined with in-class presentations, such as the deity reports noted above, or with other activities like debates (Robert Groves, University of Arizona, Spring 2017; Evi Gorogianni, University of Akron, Fall 2017). Nevertheless, it is likely that many surveys feature impromptu group- or teamwork not listed on their syllabi.

Distinct from testing, expository writing, and other instruments, creative projects are an uncommon (less than 20% of surveys) but significant means of assessing student learning. They take many forms, from performances to artwork to creative writing. Examples of the last, which is arguably the most common kind of project, include creating a metamorphosis story for a local object or landmark (Carolin Hahnemann, Kenyon College, Fall 2016), embedding a new episode into an extant mythic cycle (Aaron Wolpert, Wright State University, Spring 2018), or writing an original myth based on ancient themes and motifs (Michael Overholt, University of Iowa, Spring 2017). The balance between creative projects and testing or expository writing can be a delicate one. Although projects are sometimes required in testing-intensive surveys (University of Iowa, again), generally speaking, the greater the number of tests, the less likely a project is to be required. The same is more or less true in surveys with greater numbers of expository writing assignments. Regardless of how they are mixed with

other assessments, creative projects engage students in the mythographic process, offering opportunities to encode rather than decode.

3. Specialized Courses

The other most common kind of classical mythology course is the special-topics or specialized course, which favours thematic approaches over broad surveys. Themes cohere not only around particular characters or particular clusters of myth, such as the Trojan War, but also around story patterns, genres, or media. Regardless of theme, specialized courses are somewhat more interdisciplinary than surveys, bringing various authors, materials, and modes of inquiry to bear on their topics. Unsurprisingly, these courses are found mostly at Type 1 institutions, whose Classics departments and programmes have the curricular infrastructure to support them; hence, they are infrequently cross-listed. Unlike surveys, their core audience is Classics majors, minors, and other students with prior experience of Classical Antiquity, and they often fulfil specific departmental and programmatic requirements apart from general education requirements. Perhaps due to their concentrated nature, specialized courses are seldom the only myth courses available: institutions that offer them usually offer surveys as well.

A selection of specialized course titles demonstrates the diversity and richness of this approach:

- "Female Figures in Classical Myth, Literature, and Religion" (Margo Kitts, Hawaii Pacific University, Fall 2015);
- "Ovid and Classical Mythology" (Lucas Herchenroeder, University of Southern California, Spring 2017);
- "The Good Life: Individual and Community in Ancient Greek Myths" (Emily Katz Anhalt, Sarah Lawrence College, Fall 2016);
- "Classical Myth on Screen" (Dan Curley, Skidmore College, Fall 2016);
- "Classical Mythology in Western Art" (Alyson Hanson, Central Arizona College, Fall 2017);
- "The Mythology of Hercules" (Vincent Tomasso, Ripon College, Spring 2015);
- "Greek Myth in Opera, Ballet, and Modern Dance" (Grace Ledbetter, Swarthmore College, Spring 2009);
- "The Ancient Greek Hero: Mythology and Facing Death" (Gregory Nagy, Harvard University, Fall 2017);

- "Women Writers and Classical Myth" (Marsha Bryant and Mary Ann Eaverly, University of Florida, Spring 2015);
- "Gods and Heroes in Greek Literature" (Timothy Wutrich, Case Western Reserve University, Fall 2016);
- "Epic, Lyric, and Tragedy" (Achim Kopp, Mercer University, Spring 2017).

Evident in these titles is the customary interdisciplinarity of specialized courses, with the study of myth meeting gender studies, media studies, the performing arts, and other disciplines. Also evident, or at least implicit, is a certain degree of depth, as opposed to the breadth inherent in survey courses.

3.1. Specialized Courses: Content

Because the topics of specialized courses vary, it is difficult to identify overarching trends. Nevertheless, a few generalizations are possible. Homer and Euripides, the two most popular primary sources in surveys, remain so in specialized courses (55% and 60%, respectively). The second tier of primary sources in surveys – Hesiod, the *Homeric Hymns*, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Ovid – also obtains here, with the addition of Herodotus. The difference is one of degree: the use of the above authors and texts decreases in specialized courses (by roughly 25% to 50%). This overall decrease owes to the focused nature of the topics, which in turn require a more eclectic remit of materials. Textbook use also becomes more diverse in specialized courses. Although nearly half require textbooks (40%), survey mainstays like Powell or Morford, Lenardon, and Sham are no longer clear favourites. (See Table 3 for a breakdown of specialized-course textbooks by popularity.) Finally, as might be expected, the use of scholarship increases versus surveys: one-third (33%) of specialized courses incorporate scholarship.

The coverage of specialized courses is as eclectic as their source materials. The Graeco-Roman pantheon is still important, but broad survey gives way to more selective portraits. For example, in "Female Figures in Classical Myth, Literature, and Religion" (Hawaii Pacific University, above), attention is given to Athena, Aphrodite, Artemis, Demeter, and Hera in addition to lesser goddesses, like Leto, Metis, Themis, and Hecate. Trends for heroes and heroines are similar. Perseus, Oedipus, Theseus and Ariadne, Heracles/Hercules, Jason and Medea, and Odysseus remain prominent across the board, but courses tend to highlight only one or two. "The Mythology of Hercules"

(Ripon College, above) exemplifies this tendency, locating the hero in contexts as diverse as tragedy, epic, comedy, philosophy, politics, Christianity, and modern screen media. This said, certain specialized courses favour a survey approach. For instance, "Classical Mythology and Western Art" (Central Arizona College, above) covers the same myths, characters, and topics as traditional surveys, as well as works of art and architecture inspired by them. Other myths conform to these trends. Some, like the sagas, continue to bulk large in specialized courses. This is especially true of the Trojan War, which can have entire courses devoted to it (for example, "The Mythology of Troy", Vincent Tomasso, Ripon College, Spring 2015), or which will naturally factor into certain genre-oriented courses (for example, "Myth and Epic", Ted Ruml, California State University-San Bernardino, Spring 2017). Finally, as was the case for surveys, material from outside the classical world rarely appears in specialized courses, with the exception of Near Eastern myths.

3.2. Specialized Courses: Formats

Given the inherent depth of specialized courses, one might expect a greater degree of discussion versus surveys. Such is the case: almost all specialized courses (87% – the remaining 13% are online courses) incorporate in-class discussion, with a sizeable majority (65%) being fully discussion-based, seminar-style experiences. One might also expect testing to be less common than in surveys, but this is not the case. Although about one-fifth of specialized courses (19%) require all forms of tests (quizzes, midterms, and finals – compared to nearly 40% of surveys), other testing permutations are viable. For example, nearly two-thirds of specialized courses (64%) require a final exam, and of these three-quarters (77%) also require one or more midterms. In addition, almost half of specialized courses (45%) require quizzes. Demonstrated mastery of the material, therefore, remains a priority, however much the format of tests in specialized courses might differ from their survey counterparts.

A third expectation regarding specialized courses involves the amount of writing, which one might anticipate to be higher than in surveys. Again, this is the case: the overwhelming majority of specialized courses require one or more of the forms of writing described above. Of these, roughly half require only one form: short essays (47% of courses), followed by term papers and response papers/journals (24% each). The other half require more

than one form, including long essays, although no single combination is preferred to any other. One of the most preferred forms of writing is the term paper (50% of all specialized courses). This preference is consonant with the seminar style of specialized courses, which affords room for students to develop and explore a research topic over the course of many weeks.

In other kinds of assessments, particularly those involving peer-to-peer interaction, specialized courses differ somewhat from surveys. Although group- or teamwork, for instance, is marginally more frequent (10% of courses), presentations are by far more common than in surveys: over half of specialized courses (51%) require in-class presentations, often as preludes to term papers. Still other activities, such as co-curricular events and creative projects, are on a par with those of surveys – further testimony that the study of myth lends itself to hands-on experiences, even in the more focused environs of specialized courses.

4. Global Courses

The rise of multiculturalism over decades in US post-secondary curricula has seen an increase in courses that survey myths from around the world, hence our term "global courses". Offered under titles like "World Mythology" or "Comparative Mythology", or even "World Literatures", they cover Graeco-Roman myth as part of a sweeping mythological agenda that incorporates material from other cultures, particularly the non-Western. Whereas classical survey and specialized courses usually glance at myths outside the Greek and Roman tradition, such as Near Eastern creation myths and epics, global courses tend to make considerable room for classical myth. A culture-by-culture survey, for example, might contain a full-fledged unit on Greek mythology – essentially a classical survey in miniature – situated alongside similar units on Sumerian and Norse mythology. Alternatively, in a thematic survey, a unit on afterlives might place Greek, Egyptian, Japanese myths, and Judeo-Christian tradition side by side. The vast majority of global courses are offered at Type 3 and 4 institutions, which (a) often renders these courses the sole option on campus for sustained engagement with Graeco-Roman antiquity; and (b) routinely places them under the purview of English departments and programmes, particularly when a "great books" approach is followed. That said, it is not uncommon to see both survey and global courses listed in institutional catalogues.

4.1. Global Courses: Content and Formats

The general format of global courses encompasses means and methods similar to those of classical surveys – hybrids of lecture and discussion, varieties of testing, writing assignments, creative projects, and so forth – and so need not be described at length. Moreover, since the content of these courses is to a large degree un-classical, only a few observations in light of our previous discussion are necessary. First, other cultures with which Greece and Rome are frequently juxtaposed include (but are not limited to) those of the ancient Americas (49% of courses), India (40%), ancient Egypt (30%), Scandinavia (30%), and Africa (30%). The rich mythological legacies of these cultures offer many points of comparison and contrast with classical myth, particularly in regard to cosmogonies, pantheons, heroes and heroines, and afterlives; the Trojan War also receives substantial treatment in global courses as a topic in and of itself. Second, given the compendious nature of global courses, textbook usage is quite common (53% of courses), with Eva M. Thury and Margaret K. Devinney's *Introduction to Mythology: Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths* (Oxford University Press) being the most popular. (See Table 4 for a breakdown of global mythology textbooks by popularity.) Third, where classical primary sources are used, Homer, Hesiod, the *Homeric Hymns*, the great tragedians, and Ovid remain the most important authors and texts. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, global courses tend to devote a remarkable amount of attention to essentializing theories of myth, such as Jungian archetypes or Joseph Campbell's monomyth (both occurring in 34% of courses). Such topics used to be staples of classical surveys and even specialized courses, but are now largely passed over or minimized (10% or less in both surveys and specialized courses) in favour of other theories and trends.

5. Personnel

Our census makes it possible to address and expand on the queries of Kitchell regarding the teaching personnel of myth courses. Our own institutional typology, although useful for describing pedagogical issues, is insufficient for personnel matters. The following discussion, therefore, draws upon the 2000 Carnegie Classification index from the IPEDS website, which ranks institutions according to the highest degree granted: doctoral, master's,

baccalaureate, and associate's. These classifications correspond, more or less, to the vernacular designations research universities, state universities, liberal-arts colleges, and community colleges, respectively – the terminologies most widely used in discussions of academic hiring in the United States.

At all US colleges and universities, tenured faculty (full and associate professors) deliver almost two-thirds of survey, specialized, and global courses combined (62%). At master's and baccalaureate institutions, they deliver three-fourths or more of courses (75% and 88%, respectively). Tenure-track faculty (assistant professors) deliver an additional tier of myth courses nationwide (14%), with the strongest contributions at doctoral and baccalaureate institutions (21% and 14%, respectively). Thus, the overwhelming majority of myth courses across the Unites States (76%) are taught by faculty hired, or on a track to be hired, into permanent positions. Those hired into temporary positions, or so-called contingent faculty, deliver roughly a quarter (22%) of all myth courses nationwide. The figure for contingent faculty at doctoral institutions is similar to this nationwide average (23%). Figures for contingents at master's and baccalaureate institutions, however, are lower (17% and 15%, respectively). At associate's institutions, the figure is also near the national average (25%), but we suspect it is much higher (perhaps as high as 58%).[7] The latter figures are reflected in national trends: baccalaureate institutions tend to hire fewer contingent faculty, while associate's institutions tend to hire more.[8]

The gender distribution of teaching personnel nationwide is robust, with male and female instructors sharing responsibility for nearly every type of myth course at doctoral, master's, baccalaureate, and associate's institutions. Overall, male instructors deliver over half of myth courses in the United States (54%), while female instructors deliver just under half (42%). (No faculty member on the syllabi we collected self-identified for non-binary gender expression.) That said, our data show some gender clustering. At doctoral institutions, for example, male instructors deliver most classical surveys (66%), while at baccalaureate institutions female instructors deliver most specialized courses (73%). On the one hand, these figures reflect broader gender distributions: at doctoral institutions, male instructors teach

[7] Instructors were not always listed in the syllabi we obtained from associate's colleges. The figure 58% assumes the unnamed instructors are contingent faculty. If none of them are contingents, the figure remains 25%.

[8] Steven Hurlburt and Michael McGarrah, *The Shifting Academic Workforce: Where Are the Contingent Faculty?*, Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2016, 7, 11.

nearly two-thirds (64%) of all myth courses overall, while at baccalaureate institutions females teach just over half (51%). On the other hand, the figures are doubtless affected by our response rate and our sample size. Generally, it seems a safe assumption that specific gender distributions for any given type of course owe more to the vicissitudes of institutional staffing than to any one design or system.

6. Twenty-First-Century Trends

As we bring our discussion to a close, we would like to address three current or emerging trends in US myth courses: (a) the prevalence of screen media in the classroom; (b) the use of gaming to create more immersive experiences; and (c) the increased application of gender and sexuality theory, and how it is handled on the syllabi. Not only have these trends begun to transform the teaching of mythology in the United States, but they are also purely twenty-first-century phenomena from the standpoints of technology and student culture. As such, they clearly demarcate the courses in which they appear from prior generations of mythology courses, and point the way to the future.

6.1. Screen Media

Teaching with screen media (film and television shows) continues the venerable enterprise of classical reception, which, although ongoing since antiquity, has become a full-fledged sub-discipline in recent decades. Nearly half of all myth courses (45%) rely on screen media, whether as companions to ancient sources (often the case with surveys) or as objects of study in and of themselves (typically in specialized courses). Regardless of approach, screen media afford opportunities to consider a range of mythographic issues, such as tradition versus innovation, presentation and narrative, and the sociopolitical concerns underlying the choices of screenwriters, producers, directors, and actors – all in addition to mining a rich vein of popular and (sometimes) timely representations of myth.

What makes screen media a twenty-first-century trend is less the concept of using film and television to illuminate classical myth than the ubiquity of these media in the digital age. Indeed, courses of the "Screening

Myth" variety are hardly new; James J. Clauss (1996) offers a late twentieth-century epitome of the approach.[9] Nevertheless, due to the ease with which screen media can be accessed over streaming platforms and deployed in the classroom, either in full-length form or in clips, the once cumbersome process of isolating relevant scenes and sequences has become far more manageable. The result is that screen media are now commonplace in the mythology classroom, even as new films and television shows based on classical myth continue to be produced.

6.2. Gaming

Gaming in the mythology classroom is still an emerging trend, but one with enormous potential for harnessing student engagement. Video games are the form of gaming most frequently mentioned in mythology syllabi. A third type of screen media, they are often assigned for reception-based exercises, with students invited to compare and contrast the mythical scenarios in games with ancient sources, just as they might do for a film or a television show. Such assignments acknowledge the reality, reported by Paul Christesen and Dominic Machado, that "video games are the medium through which a large and growing percentage of students get their primary exposure to the ancient world"[10] – even more than from other screen media.

At least three courses in our survey leverage the interactive potential of video games as "tool[s] for stimulating students' curiosity about the ancient world".[11] Vincent Tomasso (Trinity College, Fall 2016) required students to play the retro game *Don't Look Back* (Kongregate, 2009), inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Meanwhile, Amy M. Green (University of Nevada, Spring 2018) has assigned more recent games, such as *Final Fantasy XV* (Square Enix, 2016), asking that students also write journal entries following gameplay to generate topics for in-class discussion. In these examples, students move from being observers of mythical games to being players. The fullest manifestation of this arc is *Mythos Unbound*, a combined video game and myth course overseen by David Fredrick (University

[9] James J. Clauss, "A Course on Classical Mythology in Film", *The Classical Journal* 91 (1996), 287–295.

[10] Paul Christesen and Dominic Machado, "Video Games and Classical Antiquity", *The Classical World* 104 (2010), 107.

[11] Ibidem, 109.

of Arkansas, Summer 2017). Developed at the University of Arkansas Tesseract Center, *Mythos Unbound* immerses students in ancient social and mythological narrative as they take on the role of a Pompeiian slave, circa 65 CE. Students advance through the game's levels not only by exploring virtual-reality depictions of Pompeii, but also by completing readings, answering brief questions, and writing essays. As Fredrick affirms in his syllabus,

> *Mythos Unbound* does not have any intention of replacing reading classical texts […] with video game action […]. Rather, the course aims to bring out the wealth of comparisons that can be made between the two forms, recognising that video games are moving into a new phase of deeper emotional engagement and narrative elaboration.

Another form of gaming – one well established in classical history and culture courses, but still in its infancy in classical myth courses – is role-immersion, whereby students are given detailed, carefully researched scenarios with particular objectives and take on the personae of specific characters, usually historical. Designed to last as little as one class period or as much as an entire term, role-immersion games have been hailed for their transformative effect on traditional humanities pedagogy, integrating both oral and written argumentation, as well as close reading, with competitive strategy.[12] Best known to classicists is the *Reacting to the Past* series of games, beginning with *Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.*, created by Mark C. Carnes and Josiah Ober in the 1990s.[13] *Threshold of Democracy* has since spawned other games set in antiquity and beyond, with more under development and no signs of abating.[14]

Given the orientation of *Reacting to the Past* series towards political and social history, its utility in myth courses would appear limited. Nevertheless, Martha J. Payne has used the microgame *Athens Besieged: Debating Surrender* (by Mark C. Carnes and Naomi Norman) in her survey (Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis, Spring 2017). Set during the

[12] Mark C. Carnes, *Minds on Fire: How Role-Immersion Games Transform College*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

[13] Bret Mulligan, "*Coniuratio! Ethopoeia* and 'Reacting to the Past' in the Latin Classroom (and Beyond)", *The Classical Journal* 110 (2014), 107–108, offers a brief but useful history of the genesis of *Reacting to the Past* series.

[14] See Christine L. Albright, "Harnessing Students' Competitive Spirit: Using 'Reacting to the Past' to Structure the Introductory Greek Culture Class", *The Classical Journal* 112 (2017), 364–365, for a recent update on the series and its horizons.

Spartan blockade of Piraeus in 405/404 BCE, the game puts players in the Athenian assembly to weigh possible terms of surrender. Payne's goal was for students to confront first-hand the realities of Greek myth and religion – which can be overlooked in the rush to cover as many stories and characters as possible – at a particularly fraught moment in Athenian history. Payne also used *Athens Besieged* as a prelude to her own experimental microgame, *Happy Ending? Medea and Jason's Divorce Trial*, which takes place within the literary milieu of Euripides' *Medea*.[15]

In what is perhaps the most sustained effort at mythological role-immersion, Kyle C. Helms has developed a game entitled *The Fate of Heroes: Words, Deeds, and Undying Glory*, using the *Reacting to the Past* curriculum as a template (University of Puget Sound, Fall 2017). Players, assuming the roles of Underworld souls and judges, debate the ultimate fate of Theban characters, such as Actaeon, Pentheus, Oedipus, and Antigone. Helms reports that students "engaged much more deeply with the core texts" and key issues in both spoken and written modes, especially those students "who otherwise had not been strong participants in the more traditional lecture-discussion format".[16] Whether other myth instructors will follow suit and harness the creative and competitive energy of role-immersion games remains to be seen. But, like video games, they show promise for diversifying and transforming the mythology classroom, particularly at institutions that incentivize gamified classrooms.

6.3. Gender, Sexuality, and Trigger Warnings

Incorporating gender and sexuality theory, whether applied to individual myths in surveys or made the topic of a specialized course, is the most persistent trend across all mythology courses (43%). Its persistence correlates with the emergence of gender studies, following the genesis of women's studies in the 1980s and 1990s, as a formal academic discipline at US colleges and universities. It has long been recognized that Graeco-Roman myth, born of patriarchal cultures and (at its most extreme) laden with episodes of rape and other forms of violence, offers case studies for intersections of gender and power. The formalization of gender studies, however, has

[15] Martha J. Payne, personal communication, 30 May 2018.
[16] Kyle C. Helms, personal communication, 9 July 2018.

provided a convenient disciplinary platform for instructors to interrogate classical mythology, even to the point of cross-listing courses with gender studies departments and programmes. Such courses, in turn, have the potential to interest populations of students with no prior experience of myth.

Even as instructors of myth have more theory at their disposal for teaching sensitive narratives and images, focusing on such material is not without hazards, particularly where it impacts the personal lives of students. There is, for example, ongoing controversy over whether syllabi should feature so-called trigger warnings – advisories to students about potentially disturbing content. The notion of trigger warnings has gained traction in the years following the Obama administration's application of US Title IX Law (also known as the Education Amendments of 1972) towards ending sexual harassment and violence at institutions of higher learning. With colleges and universities prioritizing students' physical safety, concern for their emotional safety has also become a priority, especially on the part of the students themselves. In an example relevant to classical studies, students at Columbia University published an op-ed piece decrying the Ovid unit of a core Literature Humanities (Lit Hum) class. The unit featured the rapes of Daphne and Persephone and triggered traumatic memories for a student, a sexual-assault survivor. "Having difficult experiences in a Lit Hum or Contemporary Civilization class", they suggested, "may actually be part of the norm. Unfortunately, not all professors seem equipped to be effective facilitators in the classroom".[17]

Academics have debated the merits of trigger warnings. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a statement against them, criticizing "the presumption that students need to be protected rather than challenged" as both "infantilizing and anti-intellectual".[18] Similarly, jurisprudence professor Brian Leitner, exploring the legal implications of providing trigger warnings to students with trauma, has noted that "[t]he whole point of trigger warnings – as the real PTSD cases show – is to enable students to avoid engagement with materials. But how can that be

[17] Kai Johnson, Tanika Lynch, Elizabeth Monroe, and Tracey Wan, "Our Identities Matter in Core Classrooms", *Columbia Daily Spectator*, 30 April 2015, https://www.columbiaspectator.com/opinion/2015/04/30/our-identities-matter-core-classrooms (accessed 30 May 2018).

[18] Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, "On Trigger Warnings", American Association of University Professors, August 2014, https://www.aaup.org/report/trigger-warnings (accessed 30 May 2018).

compatible with the ethical imperative of educating young people?"[19] Yet some see trigger warnings differently. In their review of the *Feminism and Classics VII: Visions* conference (Seattle, 2016), Catherine Connors and Elin Rummel report "a collective emphasis [among papers] on the value of context and discussion, and on facilitating intentional and thoughtful processes of curricular planning around texts and images depicting sexual violence".[20] They further cite Angela Holzmeister's conference paper on contextualizing imagery in mythology courses and her caution "against becoming desensitized to images of sexual violence"[21] in the classroom. An alternative take on trigger warnings underlies comments like these, in which advisories could be deployed both to build trust between instructors and students, and to promote leaning into discomfort. That is, warnings might serve as invitations, not obstructions, to critical thinking.

Of the 589 syllabi we collected, 53 (almost 10%) featured some form of trigger warning. The majority were attached to survey courses (55% classical, 32% global), whose general audiences, possibly having little or no background in Graeco-Roman culture, would seem to benefit from content advisories. Conversely, a relative fraction of warnings (13%) were attached to specialized courses, presumably because their audiences, being more familiar with classical patriarchy and its motifs, require less guidance. Perhaps most telling, almost half of all trigger warnings (49%) appeared in syllabi from 2017, more than double the totals from the years 2016, 2015, and 2014 combined (19%, 21%, and 2%, respectively, or 42% total). Clearly, instructors of myth courses, whether of their own volition or mandated by institutional policy, have begun to make issuing trigger warnings standard practice. In the wake of the worldwide #YesAllWomen and #MeToo movements, which have sought to raise public awareness of sexual harassment and violence against women, we postulate that syllabi will continue to give content advisories.

[19] Brian Leitner, "Academic Ethics: The Legal Tangle of 'Trigger Warnings'", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 13 November 2016, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Academic-Ethics-The-Legal/238356 (accessed 30 May 2018).

[20] Elin Rummel and Catherine Connors, "Visions, Voice, and Experience: A Report from Feminism and Classics VII", *The Classical Outlook* 91.3 (2016), 81.

[21] Ibidem.

7. Conclusions and Future Directions

We have arrived at some answers to Kitchell's series of questions. We have found discussion, writing, and theory to be important instructional components across all myth courses. We know which authors and texts are the most popular in these courses. We have seen that faculty of all ranks teach myth courses, including adjunct professors and lecturers, but most of all those with tenure. Moving beyond Kitchell's inquiries, we have noted the persistence of certain authors and myths across all varieties of courses, as well as some established and emerging trends. Though further questions remain, the data we collated have yielded more information about mythology courses in the United States than previous anecdotal efforts.

Nevertheless, there is only so much to be gleaned from our approach. For this reason, a supplemental survey of faculty would be helpful. The survey might address factors like class size and enrolments, frequency of offerings, and the potential to attract Classics majors and minors. The last factor is extremely important. It is an article of faith, according to Kitchell, that mythology courses – in addition to serving all-college or university-wide curricula – are gateways to other Classics courses.[22] In other words, a putative motive for teaching myth is departmental or programmatic self-interest, if not self-survival. It would be enlightening to know how much purchase this motive has in reality.

Regardless of how mythology courses fit their institutional profiles, the syllabi radiate contagious enthusiasm for the material, suggesting that the best reason for teaching myth is myth itself. It is appropriate, then, to close by letting instructors speak for themselves. The following selection of course descriptions, taken directly from the syllabi, testify to the modern era's ongoing delight and fascination with the mythical legacies of Greece and Rome:

> Welcome to […] some of the greatest stories ever told. (Roger Travis, University of Connecticut, Spring 2017)
>
> [Mythology] brings to light unconscious and preconscious roots of our development. Our development into conscious beings mirrors in profound ways our mythic inheritances. (Marcia Dobson, Colorado College, Block 5 2014)

[22] Kitchell, "The Role of Myth Courses", 189.

Myths might set codes or rules by which individuals can orient themselves, establishing a template for what it means to be a human, to be a citizen, or to live with certain choices. (Alex Purves, University of California, Los Angeles, Spring 2017)

Myths teach us in symbolic ways, helping us to feel or sense our way to realms of knowledge and experience that might otherwise be inaccessible. (Jane Caputi, Florida Atlantic University, Summer 2017)

These are some of the more powerful stories that humans tell and retell. Some of them are stories that structure the universe, […] some of them are stories that remind us not to sleep with wolves. Some of them are stories which inform almost every aspect of our lives, from the books we read or films we watch to the names of towns, or shoes, or minivans. And some are just good stories. (Jeremy Downes, Auburn University, Spring 2011)

Appendix

Table 1: Typology of institutions with Classics curricula.

Type	Classics curriculum	Example institution
1	Independent Classics department	Skidmore College (Saratoga Springs, NY)
2	Embedded Classics programme	University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL)
3	Some Classics/Western surveys	Northwest University (Kirkland, WA)
4	No Classics courses	The Juilliard School (New York, NY)

Table 2: Textbooks used in survey courses, ranked by popularity.

Popularity	Author, title, and publisher
1	Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth* (Pearson)
2	Mark Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, and Michael Sham, *Classical Mythology* (Oxford University Press)
3	Richard Buxton, *The Complete World of Greek Mythology* (Thames & Hudson) Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* (Mayfield Publishing)
4	Thomas Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (Thames & Hudson) Helen Morales, *Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press)
5	Carolina López-Ruiz, *Gods, Heroes, and Monsters* (Oxford University Press)

Table 3: Textbooks used in specialized courses, ranked by popularity.

Popularity	Author, title, and publisher
1	Mark Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, and Michael Sham, *Classical Mythology* (Oxford University Press)
2	Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* (Grand Central Publishing)
3	Susan Au, *Ballet and Modern Dance* (Thames & Hudson) J.F. Bierlein, *Parallel Myths* (Ballantine) Jane Caputi, *Goddesses and Monsters: Women, Myth, Power, and Popular Culture* (Popular Press) Eric Csapo, *Theories of Mythology* (Wiley-Blackwell) Fritz Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction* (Johns Hopkins University Press) Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* (Mayfield Publishing) Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth* (Johns Hopkins University Press) Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsch, *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth* (Routledge) Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth* (Pearson) Nigel Spivey, *Greek Art* (Cambridge University Press) Ytasha Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* (Chicago Review Press)

Table 4: Textbooks used in global courses, ranked by popularity.

Popularity	Author, title, and publisher
1	Eva M. Thury and Margaret K. Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology: Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths* (Oxford University Press)
2	Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* (Grand Central Publishing) Scott A. Leonard and Michael McClure, *Myth and Knowing: An Introduction to World Mythology* (McGraw-Hill Education) Donna Rosenberg, *World Mythology* (McGraw-Hill Education)
3	Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (Canongate U.S.) Richard Buxton, *The Complete World of Greek Mythology* (Thames & Hudson) Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology* (Canterbury Classics)
4	J.F. Bierlein, *Parallel Myths* (Ballantine) Lucilla Burn, *Greek Myths* (University of Texas Press) Ioan Petru Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (HarperCollins) Kenneth C. Davis, *Don't Know Much About Mythology* (Harper Paperbacks) Jane F. Gardner, *Roman Myths* (University of Texas Press) Mark Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, and Michael Sham, *Classical Mythology* (Oxford University Press) Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth* (Pearson) Martha Sims and Martine Stephens, *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions* (Utah State University Press)