Power of Myth – Fall 2018 – Class Schedule
Beginning: Tuesday September 4th, 10:30 – Noon at Craig Hall, Gordon 1
Peer Leader: Sydney Wilde – 2skwilde@gmail.com, 530-809-0619

Class Description: Each class will begin with ½ hour video clips from the PBS Series *The Power of Myth*, conversations between Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, exploring the universal themes of mythologies around the world and throughout human history.
Campbell and Moyers discuss the meaning of Myth and the impact of mythologies on our cultures, our expectations, and our daily lives. Campbell explores psychological truths expressed by Myth, which we all experience throughout our lives. He explores the cultural disruption when our Mythology no longer reflects our world, and the need for and creation of a new Myth for the 21st century to give meaning to our lives.
Class discussion will include pondering how our myths answer the basic human questions: Who am I? And, how do I relate: to myself, to others and to the cosmos?
We will also ponder the mythologies of our time, and how our lives, and the world we live in, would differ if we understood the world through a different mythological lens. Class discussions include the Myths we live by today, and how they guide our daily relationships.

Class starts Sept. 4th, there is no class on Oct 23rd or Nov 20th, and our last class is Dec 11th
Sept 4 – The Hero’s Adventure: Part One
“Long before medieval knights charged off to slay dragons, tales of heroic adventures were part of all world cultures.” What did they mean?

Sept 11 – The Hero’s Adventure: Part Two
“Campbell challenges everyone to see the presence of a heroic journey in his or her life.” How have you experienced your hero’s journey with in your own life?

Sept 18 – The Message of the Myth: Part One
“Campbell compares the creation story in Genesis with creation Stories from around the world.”
How do these stories influence our expectations of the Universe, our place in it, and our expectations of other people (especially women)?
Sept 25 – The Message of Myth: Part Two
“Because the world changes, religion has to be transformed and new mythologies created.
People today are stuck with myths that don’t fit their needs.” Campbell uses the NASA picture of the earth from space and a mythological challenge fro “Star Wars” as ingredients of a new mythology. How could those images change our lives?

Oct 2 – The First Story Tellers: Part One

“Campbell discusses the importance of accepting death as rebirth as in the myth of the buffalo and the story of Christ.” What are the lessons we can learn from the myths of the ancient hunters? What part of their stories still resonate with us today? What is the significance of the recurring motif of death and rebirth throughout the ages?

Oct 9 – The First Story Tellers: Part Two
“Campbell speaks of “the rite of passage in primitive societies, the role of mystical Shamans, and the decline of ritual in today’s society.” What rituals do you see in American society today? What role have rituals played in your life? What is your understanding of the purpose of ritual?

Oct 16– Sacrifice and Bliss: Part One
“Campbell discusses the role of sacrifice in myth, which symbolizes the necessity of rebirth.” In this sequence Campbell moves from the societies of hunters and gatherers to agricultural cultures. He draws strong parallels between the human sacrifices of the early agricultural societies and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. What is your reaction to this comparison? What is the internal, psychological message inherent in the myths of sacrifice and rebirth? Are there other examples?

NO CLASS ON OCT 23rd

Oct 30– Sacrifice and Bliss: Part Two
Campbell “stresses the need for everyone of us to find our own sacred place in the midst of today’s fast-paced, technological world.” What and where is your sacred place? What makes it sacred?
What does it mean to follow your bliss?
Nov 13 – Love and the Goddess: Part One
“Campbell talks about romantic love, beginning with the 12 century troubadours.” He maintains that the troubadours changed the world; that the idea of romantic love undercut the authority of the church and the feudal system. Do you agree? How has the idea of romantic love given rise to a culture of individualism?

NO CLASS ON NOV 20th (Thanksgiving Week)

Nov 27 – Love and the Goddess: Part Two
Campbell “addresses questions about the image of women – as goddess, virgin, Mother Earth.”
Do you agree that the feminine principle is both powerful and still with us? How would an understanding of Earth as the Mother of us all change the way we see the world and ourselves? What does the Gaia Principle tell us about how to live our lives?

Dec 4 – Masks of Eternity: Part One
“Campbell provides challenging insights into the concepts of God, religion and eternity, as revealed in Christian teachings and the beliefs of Buddhists, Navajo Indians, Schopenhauer, Jung and others.” Does Campbell’s definition of eternity offer you comfort? Have you experienced eternal moments or epiphanies? How does your world view fit with Campbell’s universal mythological themes?

Dec 11 – Masks of Eternity: Part Two
This last sequence was filmed just two months before Campbell’s death from cancer. How does his personal understanding of life and death speak to you? Campbell makes a case for a new mythology arising out of the understanding that we all share one world without borders as seen in the NASA image of the earth from space. He also speaks of world in which all things are interdependent. He offers the hero’s story in Star Wars in which the message is to remain connected to our humanity and not succumb to technology. And he urges us all to follow our bliss and live the lives that motivate us, enrich our spirit, and set us free rather than those dictated by others or by society. Reflect on his message. What does it mean to follow your bliss? How would our lives be different if we understood our place in the world to be one of interdependence with all things, and chose to follow our bliss?
Also, Final Class Wrap Up.