

University of California, Santa Barbara  
Department of Religious Studies  
RS 136: Creation Myths

Winter 2011  
TR 5:00 – 6:15

Professor David White  
Phelps 2524

Books for Purchase at UCSB Bookstore:

Joan O'Brien and Wilfred Major, *In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Ancient Mesopotamia, Israel and Greece*  
Barbara C. Sproul, *Primal Myths: Creating the World*

Xeroxed Readings for Purchase at the Alternative Copy Shop, 6556 Pardall Road. Readers can be ordered in advance, on line by 1) logging onto [www.alternativecopy.com](http://www.alternativecopy.com); 2) clicking on “order readers” link in the top right corner of the home page; and 3) entering the following username and password (in lower case): username: ucsbrgst136 / password: white23

The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Edition (Oxford)  
Mircea Eliade, “Time and Eternity in Indian Thought”  
George Johnson, *Fire in the Mind*  
W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *The Atra-Hasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood*  
Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths* [HM]  
\_\_\_\_\_, *The Rig Veda* [RV]  
Benjamin Ray, *African Religions*  
\_\_\_\_\_, *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship in Buganda*  
David C. Yu, "The creation myth and its symbolism in classical Taoism "

Books on Reserve in Davidson Library:

Yves Bonnefoy, ed. (translation editor Wendy Doniger), *Mythologies*, 2 vols.  
Joan O'Brien and Wilfred Major, *In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Ancient Mesopotamia, Israel and Greece*

*Course Description:* Who/what started it? Are we going to make it? Where are we going to put it? Who's going to clean it up? These are not idle questions, as the perennial prestige of creation accounts—from 10,000 year-old petroglyphs engraved into the living rock down to the mind-boggling theories of late-twentieth century astrophysicists—makes plain. Human beings have a deep, existential need to know where they came from, and the answers they provide in response to their questions of origins often guide them in their religious precepts, everyday attitudes, ethical outlook, and long-term aspirations. Therefore, however fanciful they may appear, cosmogonic accounts, i.e. creation myths, are to be taken very seriously by anyone interested in human thought and behavior. In this course, we will approach the world's creation myths from comparative, historical, and philosophical perspectives, and seek to understand how they are grounded in—even as they serve as conceptual foundations for—systems of belief, ritual, social structure, and political domination.

*Course Requirements and Grades:* Students are required to attend lectures and prepare for classes by fulfilling reading assignments prior to each class meeting. There will be four quizzes in the course of the quarter: these will count for 40% of the total grade for the course. **This course fulfills the writing requirement.** Accordingly, three five-page directed writing assignments, which will be due on the dates indicated below, will count for 60% of the total grade.

#### Schedule of Quizzes

January 20	quiz #1
February 8	quiz #2
February 24	quiz #3
March 10	quiz #4

#### Due Dates of Directed Writing Assignments

January 27	directed writing assignment #1 (reading distributed January 20)
February 22	directed writing assignment #2 (reading distributed February 15)
March 17	directed writing assignment #3 (reading distributed March 10)

## Schedule of Class Meetings

Date	Lecture Topic	Assigned Readings
Jan. 4	Introduction: Creation Myths	
Jan. 6	Where Did We Come From?	Johnson, <i>Fire</i> , pp. 11-28
Jan. 11	Hopi Emergence, 1	Sproul, pp. 268-84
Jan. 13	Hopi Emergence, 2	
Jan. 18	The Cosmogonic Dive	Sproul, pp. 189-92; 215-16; 253-57
Jan. 20	God and his Adversary Create Together <b>quiz #1</b>	Sproul, pp. 218-29; 237-42; 245-48
Jan. 25	Ordering by Division/Divided Order, 1	Genesis 1-5 O'Brien, pp. 34-38
Jan. 27	Ordering by Division/Divided Order, 2 <b>directed writing assignment #1 due</b>	O'Brien, pp. 89-96 Revelation 12.1-10; 20.1-15; 21.1 Sproul, pp. 141-42
Feb. 1	God Slays the Dragon	Exodus 15.1-18 Isaiah 51.9-11 Job 38.1-41 Psalms 18.8-16; 77.16-20 RV, pp. 148-56
Feb. 3	The World Parents: Creation and Incest	Genesis 2-3 HM, pp. 25-26; 29-35
Feb. 8	Creation through Sacrifice <b>quiz #2</b>	Genesis 15.9-19 O'Brien, pp. 145-58 RV, pp. 29-32
Feb. 10	Flood Myths	Genesis 6-9 Millard, <i>Atra-hasis</i> , pp. 73, 89-103, 138-45 HM, pp. 180-84 Sproul, pp. 236-37

Feb. 15	Confucian and Taoist Creation Accounts	Sproul, pp. 199-215 Yu, pp. 479-500
Feb. 17	Hindu Creation Cycles, 1	HM, pp. 43-46 Eliade, "Time and Eternity"
Feb. 22	Hindu Creation Cycles, 2 <b>directed writing assignment #2 due</b>	
Feb. 24	World Parents/Cosmic Generation Gaps, 1 <b>quiz #3</b>	O'Brien, pp. 48-66; 159-72 Sproul, pp. 172-76
March 1	World Parents/Cosmic Generation Gaps, 2	O'Brien, pp. 10-31; 125-44 Sproul, pp. 136-41; 308-13; 339-44
March 3	Creation and Social Order	O'Brien, pp. 108-21; 173-94 Sproul, 77-80; 179-81; 243; 295-96; 315-20
March 8	Africa: Dogon, Mande, and Baganda Creation Myths	Sproul, pp. 66-75 Ray, <i>African</i> , 24-32 Ray, <i>Myth</i> , pp. 54-73
March 10	Creation Myths and Culture Shock <b>quiz #4</b>	Sproul, pp. 45-46; 248-52; 257-58; 298-301; 307; 327-30
March 17	<b>directed writing assignment #3 due</b>	