

# Gaia

## Course Syllabus

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[Course Info](#)

[Assessment](#)

[Policies](#)

[Course Expectations](#)

### Course Info

### Course Description

Among the world's great myths are many that embody cultural wisdom about the relationship of humanity to our planet. This class examines a number of exemplary myths in order to compare and contrast visions of human interaction with the natural world. Myths from Japan, Ireland, Native America, Africa and classical Greece will be among those studied.

The word "Gaia" in the course title refers to the ancient Greek goddess of the earth. The name has also been employed in the last few decades to designate a scientific hypothesis that the planet comprises a self-regulating "living system." The Gaia Hypothesis will form part of this course, although only in terms of the A and H domains, not as part of the S domain. In other words, the concept will be examined as a metaphor for awareness of global connections rather than critiqued as a scientific theory.

The word "myth," as used in this course, does not indicate a false belief, which is a common though incorrect use of the word. Rather, "myth" means a sacred narrative, a story connected with a religious tradition. In this sense, the story of the birth of Jesus is a "myth"—which in no way suggests that it is false, but rather that it has religious meaning that a simple story of a baby's birth does not always have. By examining myths about the earth, we can explore the way people understand the natural world around them.

### Course Learning Goals

The intention of this course is to introduce the varying ways in which the earth has been depicted in mythology and religion, and to encourage learners to understand the connection between myth and daily action.

All participants in the course are expected to:

- Understand and be able to articulate the concept of myth and its connection to, and difference from, religion.
- Understand in depth at least one foundation or creation myth and to be able to analyze its the underlying values it articulates.
- Articulate the concept of ritual and its connection both to religion and to daily life.

In addition, students seeking the following individual competences will be expected to meet the following course goals, as articulated in SNL guidelines:

For students seeking the A-3-E competence (Can compare substantially different theological or philosophical systems):

This competence asks the student to show that they can compare substantially different theological or

[Download a printable syllabus here.](#)

*Please check the online course for the most up-to-date version of course materials and assignments.*

*If the online materials differ, the online materials take precedence.*

philosophical systems. SNL guidelines explain the competence this way:

1. Identifies two theological or philosophical systems.
2. Determines the basis for meaningful comparison between these two systems.
3. Articulates key assumptions and ideas of both systems as they apply to a particular issue.

Students demonstrate this competence by identifying and comparing the key assumptions and ideas of two substantially different systems of thought. These systems of thought should have distinct interpretations of the human experience in relation to the universe. Philosophical and theological ideas inform certain practices and rituals but are not completely explained by them, so therefore a comparison of religious practices alone would not fulfill this competence.

In this class, students seeking the A-3-E competence will show that they can:

1. Relate the creation myths of two cultures, as well as any other related myths.
2. Articulate the philosophical differences between the myths.
3. Describe the connection between myth and surrounding natural environment.

For students seeking the A-5 competence (Can define and analyze a creative process):

This competence asks the student to show that they can define and analyze a creative process. SNL guidelines explain the competence this way:

1. Can define the concept of creativity
2. Can identify, analyze, and describe the components of a creative process in one or more fields of human endeavor.
3. Can explain how engaging in a creative process affects one's perception of the world.

Creativity is often associated with forms of human expression in the literary, fine, and applied arts. Because it involves the development of innovative ideas and fresh approaches to problems, however, the practice of creativity is no less integral a component of the social, physical, and technological sciences. In any field of human endeavor, the creative process requires ability to question accepted and "acceptable" ways of perceiving and thinking, as well as a willingness to forge connections and refine knowledge through doubt, curiosity, and imagination. Through engagement, reflection, and analysis, this competence invites the student to understand how a creative process is born, how it functions, and how it changes our perception and experience of the world. Such insights may develop, for example, by analyzing the creative process in the writing of a poem, the production of a visual narrative, the planning of a city, the design of a web site, or the development of an innovative way of perceiving and explaining a natural phenomenon.

In this class, students seeking the A-5 competence will show that they can:

1. Articulate their own creative process.
2. Connect that process with theories articulated by specialists in the field.

For students seeking the H-1-E competence:

This competence asks the student to show that they explain the concept, function, and expression of culture and illustrate the explanation with one or more cultures. SNL guidelines explain the competence this way:

1. Defines culture as a concept through which to see and interpret the world.
2. Chooses a theoretical model for analyzing cultures.
3. Describes two or more dimensions present in one or more cultures using this model.

Students demonstrate this competence by explaining "culture" using appropriate explanatory models or theories. The dimensions of culture that students choose to analyze may include traditions, rituals, religious beliefs, laws, or arts. Students can fulfill the competence through courses and independent learning pursuits that analyze their own or another culture.

In this class, students seeking this competence will show that they can:

- Clearly define the term "culture."
- Describe the connections between religion and cultural expression in a specific culture.

For students seeking the A-2-A competence:

This competence asks the student to show that they create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect on the creative process. SNL guidelines explain the competence this way:

1. Produces an original work of art.
2. Describes the elements of the artistic form used.
3. Articulates criteria by which this work may be considered an example of an art form.
4. Discusses the technique and the creative process used to create the original work.

Students demonstrate this competence by creating an original work of art. The original work may be visual, musical, literary, performative, etc. Students must place their original work in a broader context than their own creative process.

In this class, students seeking this competence will show that they can:

- Articulate their own creative process by documenting the creation of an artwork.
- Describe the artistic choices made during the creation of an artwork and the benefits to the audience of such choices.

## Course Resources

All course reading materials are available online through JSTOR or through electronic reserve. Most are very short readings, in some cases only a paragraph or two in length.

Wohlens, J.F.H. New Zealand Heaven and Earth Myth. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 6 (1877), pp. 343-344.

Deans, James. A Creation Myth of the Tsimshians of Northwest British Columbia. *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 4, No. 12 (Jan., 1891), p. 34.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creativity>

Gotz, Ignacio L. On Defining Creativity. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Spring, 1981), pp. 297-301.

Wiebe, Gerhart D. An Exploration Into the Nature of Creativity. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Autumn, 1962), pp. 389-397.

Sasso, James. The Stages of the Creative Process. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 124, No. 2 (Apr., 1980), pp. 119-132.

Zuesse, Evan M. Meditation on Ritual. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Sep., 1975), pp. 517-530.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

Patricia Monaghan's *O Mother Sun* (on electronic reserve).

"Earth Goddess and Sky God" by Annie Finch (electronic reserve from *Calendars*, Tupelo Press, p. 64)

"We Have a Beautiful Mother" by Alice Walker (electronic reserve, from *Her Blue Body Everything We Know*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, p. 259-260)

Hollis, Susan Tower. Women of Ancient Egypt and the Sky Goddess Nut. *The Journal of American*

Folklore, Vol. 100, No. 398, (Oct., 1987), pp. 496-503.

Drury, Susan. Customs and Beliefs Associated with Christmas Evergreens: A Preliminary Survey  
Folklore, Vol. 98, No. 2 (1987), pp. 194-199

You will also visit the following virtual museums:

[http://www.museum.upenn.edu/Greek\\_World/Index.html](http://www.museum.upenn.edu/Greek_World/Index.html)

<http://www.morikami.org>

## Course Competences

In this course, you will develop the following competences:

Competence	Competence Statement and Facets/Criteria
A-3-E	Can compare substantially different theological or philosophical systems.
A-5	Can define and analyze a creative process.
H-1-E	Can explain the concept, function, and expression of culture and illustrate the explanation with one or more cultures.
A-2-A	Can create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect on the creative process.

## How Competences will be Demonstrated in this Course

All students in this course complete the same assignments. These include, in addition to assigned readings and online discussions:

- Reading article on creativity
- Visiting online museum
- Reading two poems
- Creative arts project
- Group creation

These activities are designed to present varying ways of interpreting myths and thus to give students tools for analyzing myths that are not considered in class.

In addition, students seeking particular competences will, after submitting required work with the others, receive feedback that can lead to expansion, improvement and revision. In other words, all students submit drafts of all assignments, but revised and completed work is only expected of students pursuing specific competences. After revising their work, students resubmit the following work in order to attest to the competence they have gained in specific areas.

### ***A student seeking the A-3-E competence (Can compare substantially different theological or philosophical systems) will:***

Select two mythological systems from world culture. Students are encouraged to select their culture of origin, one that represents an area where in they have traveled, or a culture that they find compelling for other reasons. After the selection of cultures is approved, the student will prepare an online discussion of the creation myth of one of those cultures and will show how that myth connects to the environmental setting. A final paper (10 pages, including at least six published sources) will tell the creation myths of the chosen culture and compare/contrast them.

### ***A student seeking the A-5 competence (Can define and analyze a creative process) will:***

Read three articles about creativity, from the bibliography provided or from student's own selection (subject to instructor approval). Write three response papers using rubrics provided in this courseguide

and “publish” portions online.

***A student seeking the H-1-E competence will:***

With an assigned group, create an imaginary society using instructions provided in this courseguide. Then, also using courseguide’s instructions, create an imaginary “ritual” illustrating environmental influences upon the invented culture and document the experience.

***A student seeking the A-2-A competence will:***

Visit several online museums to appreciate artworks related to the myths of a culture studied in this class; read several contemporary poems to appreciate how literary artists work with myth. After composing several sample poems together with the rest of the class, students will compose another piece of writing (poetry or prose) inspired by one of the myths studied in class or a myth read in another setting. After completing the composition, student will write a brief (2-4 page) paper describing the aesthetic choices made in the composition.

## Course Structure

This course consists of 10 modules. The estimated time to complete each module is one week.

To view the course schedule, click on the Schedule link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

[Top](#)

## Assessment

### Assessment of Learning

Competences require the following completed work:

A-3-E (Can compare substantially different theological or philosophical systems)

- Select two cultures that interest you.
- Prepare a classroom discussion of one of these cultures.
- Write a 10-page paper that tells in your own words the creation myths of each culture (and any other related myths), articulates any similarities and differences between the myths, and describe the connection between myth and surrounding natural environment.

A-5 (Can define and analyze a creative process)

- Read three online articles regarding the creative process.
- For each article, prepare a three-four page personal paper using rubrics provided.

H-1-E

- Participate in group discussions of the concept of culture.
- With a group of other students, create an imaginary society.
- Create a “ritual” for the imaginary society.
- Document the reasons for selection of details in the ritual and how they reflect the conditions in which the imaginary society functions.

A-2-A

- Visit several online museums to experience visual art inspired by myth.
- Read several literary works inspired by myth.
- Create a work of literary art inspired either directly by a myth, or indirectly by a work of mythic art.
- Discuss the reasons for aesthetic choices made in creating the work of art.

## Percentage Distribution of Assessments

25 % of all students' grades will be based upon participation in class discussions and group work. In addition, the following competences will be assessed in the following way:

#### A-3-E

Classroom discussion of culture: **25%**

Paper discussing myths: **50%**

#### A-5

First response paper: **25%**

Second response paper: **25%**

Third response paper: **25%**

#### H-1-E

Group project: **25%**

Individual creation (ritual) from group project: **25%**

Paper documenting creation: **25%**

#### A-2-A

Description of second online museum: **20%**

Personal artwork: **30%**

Paper discussing creation of art: **50%**

### Course Grading Scale

A = 95 to 100	A- = 91 to 94	B+ = 88 to 90	
B = 85 to 87	B- = 81 to 84	C+ = 77 to 80	
C = 73 to 76	C- = 69 to 72	D+ = 65 to 68	
D = 61 to 64	F = 60 or below	INC	

For SNL courses taken for Pass/Fail, a "Pass" represents a grade of "A" for purposes of financial aid and employer reimbursement.

Students wishing to declare a Pass/Fail option must do so before the end of the 2nd week of the quarter.

### Your Grading Policies and Practices

All students, no matter what competence they seek, are expected to:

- Read assigned texts in timely fashion.
- Participate regularly and articulately in class discussions.
- Show respect for divergent points of view expressed within the discussions.
- Turn in assignments in timely fashion.
- Use correct academic format including citation in all work.
- Follow rubrics given in courseguide for each assignment.
- Revise according to instructor suggestions when requested or required.

### General Assessment Criteria for All Writing Assignments

All writing, including posted messages, must be:

1. Original work. All work must be in your own words. If you have questions about whether you have

paraphrased or cited correctly, click on the "Academic Integrity" button on the upper left-hand side of the Blackboard entry page and follow the links there, or ask for help from the DePaul University Writing Center, which provides online help for no charge.

2. Professionally stated. Even though we hope to be a friendly group online, casual or slangy wording is inappropriate in college classes. If you imagine yourself at a business meeting (even if you are sitting at home in your pajamas), you are more likely to write in an appropriately formal style.

3. Correctly spelled, punctuated, and phrased. Even in postings, you should be careful to use correct standard English. This is required as well in all written materials that you submit for assessment.

### **Assessment Criteria for your Final Paper or Project by Competence**

A-3-E (Can compare substantially different theological or philosophical systems)

Final paper will:

- Clearly narrate the selected myths.
- Describe and define the cultures from which the myths arose, including description of important physical and environmental features.
- Define at least one important similarity between the myths.
- Define at least one important difference between the myth.
- Suggest ways in which the similarities and/or differences might reflect aspects of the natural environment.

A-5 (Can define and analyze a creative process)

Each of the three short papers must:

- Clearly describe the theory as explained in the assigned article.
- Draw connections to two or more specific experiences of the learner.
- Selecting one creative experience of the learner, analyze in depth the way that it illustrates the theory being discussed.

H-1-E (Can explain the concept, function, and expression of culture and illustrate the explanation with one or more cultures).

The final paper must:

- Offer definitions of the term "culture" from at least two different published (not online) sources.
- Describe the culture invented with class group, stressing the connection of that culture with the surrounding environment.
- Describes the "ritual" invented by the student.
- Defines how the "ritual" connects to the environment in which people of the imagined culture live.

A-2-A (Can create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect upon the creative process).

The final reflective paper must:

- Describe the initial process of creation of work of art. Where did the ideas come from? Did they appear together or in discrete parts? What was the emotion(s) that came with the initial creative impulse?
- Describe the process of revising and polishing the work. What specific steps did you take, and for what reasons? How did they make the work of art better?
- Define how the process of creating this artwork corresponds (or does not correspond) to the process of creating you used in creating at least one other thing (which can be organizational or personal or artistic).

## Online Discussion

### Assessment Criteria for Online Discussion Participation

The material to be considered in this course may be considered by some to be controversial. It is important to note that the study of myths is, like the interpretation of literature and art (of which myth has been considered a form), is a rigorous academic discipline that is entirely separate from belief. Just as one can appreciate a landscape that is quite different from that which one loves and calls "home," so one can read with appreciation the myths of other cultures without that challenging the basis of one's own religious traditions. There is no intention in this course to promote one religion's worldview as superior to another, nor is there any intention to suggest that any religious worldview (ancient or modern) is problematic or deficient.

Online participation will be assessed according to the following expectations:

- Each student will post each week in that week's forums.
- Students are expected to work on a weekly basis; each forum will be closed to new postings after two weeks.
- Postings should be on topic and in professional language.
- Postings may disagree with other postings, but disagreements should be courteously stated.
- Postings should be substantive, meaning they should do more than agree or disagree with an earlier posting.
- Postings should, when appropriate, reference works from the class bibliography or outside sources. Such citations should be appropriately quoted and sourced.

### Online Participation Guidelines for this course

#### Discussion Boards

Discussion Boards are a forum for discussion and sharing information among students. Your instructor may create one or more public conferences related to the topics you are studying each week.

At the beginning of the quarter, your instructor will set up three discussion conferences. These three conferences will help you and your classmates get off to an immediate start on the course, by providing conversational spaces for necessary, ongoing social and administrative activities. These conferences are:

- Introductions
- Course Q&A
- The Student Union for discussion that is not directly related to course content. (

The Q&A conference is where the management and administrative tasks of the course are conducted, and where you can ask 'process' questions and receive answers. You will also find the schedule of specific dates for your course in this Conference, and the emails sent out to the whole class using the Listserv.

The Student Union can be used freely for your own conversation (like setting up groups or teams, if these are used in the course)

[Top](#)

## Policies

### Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following

categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit [studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html](http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html) for further details.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

## Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude (think "Hurricane Katrina") adversely impact their ability to complete the course,

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have *satisfactorily* completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have an event of "Katrina" magnitude that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

## Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~irb>

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve "interactions"—interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s).

As such, these activities qualify as "research" with "human subjects" and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning's Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no "harm"—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please

change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.

- a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an “informed consent” document. For information on creating an “informed consent document” see, for example, [www.research.umn.edu/consent/](http://www.research.umn.edu/consent/)

[Top](#)

## Course Expectations

### Time Management and Attendance

SNL’s online courses are **not** self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least **FOUR** times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than “face to face” courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour “face to face” course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

***The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.***

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact your course instructor immediately.

### Your Instructor’s Role

Your instructor’s role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments posted to your delivered to you by your instructor via email or through the Gradebook. You can view your feedback by selecting “My Grades” in the course website and viewing your assignment.

The instructor may choose to designate “office hours” when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

### Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor’s role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

You will learn with and from your classmates in the online discussions and group assignments, sharing information and resources and posting your ideas and critiquing and expanding on the ideas of others in a collegial fashion. You are encouraged to bring your questions to the online discussions and respond to each other—do not always wait for the instructor to answer questions.

***If events arise in your life that will prevent your attendance in class for one week or more, it is your responsibility to make sure that your instructor is advised at the first possible opportunity. You, or a friend or family member can do that by email, postal mail or phone. Someone could also send a note to [snlonline@depaul.edu](mailto:snlonline@depaul.edu), or call either of the CDE contact numbers listed on page 1 of this guide. This will allow your instructor to assist you to make up missing work. If these events occur early in the quarter and you wait until the end of the quarter before informing your instructor, do not expect to receive an incomplete.***

[Top](#)