



# “The Designer as Myth-maker: Myth, Metaphor and Meaning-making”

a learning cell for Spring 2005

This is a student-originated learning-cell. The primary focus will be on whole systems design and social change. The cell will be both a learning opportunity and a practical exercise in design. Themes might be design, origin, recognition, retelling, interpreting, and creating of myth as a meaning-making system where meaning-making is a field that includes design, myth, metaphor, theatre and dialogue.

## What is Myth?

What is myth; where does it come from; and where is it going? How can and do individuals or groups affect myth? What happens when myth is affected? What are some of the historical and present day elements in the mythic pattern language of our culture? How are the recurring themes reflected in our culture being used or changed? Can an apt mythic ideology, a master narrative, be created that cannot be used to justify the base psyche, or is that even an appropriate project? What is a “designerly” approach to culture and myth? How can designers use myth to understand and create social or cultural change?

In *Philosophy in the Flesh*, George Lackoff and Mark Johnson have described an apt metaphor as one that not only describes particular phenomena, but also creates a new

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inferential structure with which to speak (1999). If myth is metaphor, then myth can also be apt. Myth becomes not only a way to understand the world, but a way of creating the world. Understanding myth is not just hermeneutical, but is also the generative foundation for new social and cultural development. Apt myth is tool of both exegesis and praxis.

At Antioch, Boga has suggested that “mythic delusions” are “a human agony, condition and suffering.” (2005) If mythic delusion is the use of myth to justify political purposes, how are, and have, these ideologies been used to justify the base psyche or lead to new thoughts?

Havel () advocates a self-conscious culture that is aware and actively participates in its own development. What would it mean to be self-conscious about: our individual, communal, societal myths? What if we were more aware and actively participate in our myths of self, success and environment?

What is the effect of marketization of culture on the place of myth in society? When the metaphors used to understand the world are all from owned and controlled media like the movies or television, the mythic language of society becomes an extension of advertising and pulled into the market system. When culture is created and controlled by copyright owning corporations, the way society understands itself is through tools they did not create, do not control and were designed to manipulate.

Boga, S. (2005). Class Lectures. Antioch University Seattle.

Havel, V. (1986). *Living in Truth*. London, UK: Faber and Faber.

Lackoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

## Spring Cell Activities

### Learning Goals

The cell will offer learning opportunities and resources to enable participants to:

1. Become familiar with the concepts of myth, metaphor, and meaning-making

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within the context of creating social change.

2. Become aware of and seek understanding of where myth comes from, how individuals and groups affect myth, and what happens when myth is affected.
3. Gain a deep understanding of recurring themes, archetypes, and patterns that are reflected in our culture that embody various mythic ideologies.
4. Explore various design approaches to create meaning and empower social change through myth, metaphor, theatre, dialogue, or other design forms.
5. Develop collaborative skills in working with other designers, clients, users, stakeholders, and whoever is affected by the design of 'new' myths for social change.

## Learning Experiences

The seminar includes the following activities:

1. Students will meet during each residency weekend. Sessions include dialogue and experiential activities to integrate learning, generate guiding questions in the context of social change, and provide reflections. The second meeting will focus on the use of RefWorks. The third residency meeting will be an extended meeting to share materials followed by meeting with the faculty advisor.
2. Online discussions centered on evolving topics and issues guided by rigorous questions that relate to the seminar intention.
3. Developing a collective annotated bibliography. This will be the foundation for work in subsequent quarters and will be provided online to the whole Antioch community.

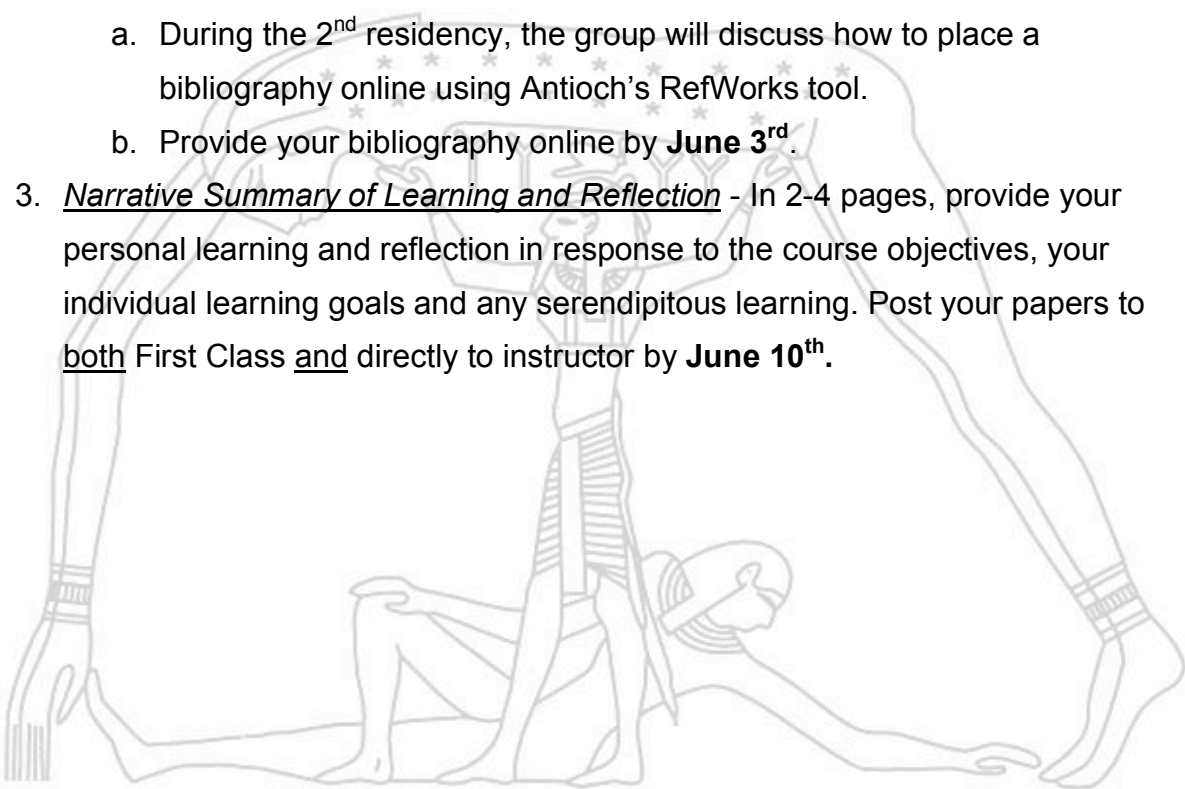
## Demonstration & Assessment of Learning

The seminar includes the following requirements:

1. Online discussion – discuss and reflect on what you feel are significant points in the readings, and comment on other participants postings.

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- a. Post at least every other week, comment on peers postings at least every other week.
2. Assignment 1: Annotated Bibliography - Prepare an annotated bibliography on myth, metaphor, meaning-making, etc. featuring at least 5 items (books, journal articles, CD products, videos – please no websites or magazines) as a contribution to a collaborative bibliography collection. Each item in the bibliography should be annotated with a 1-2 paragraph summary that briefly summarizes the item and describes why it is significant in relation to the learning goals. Additional materials can be added to the bibliography without annotation.
  - a. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> residency, the group will discuss how to place a bibliography online using Antioch's RefWorks tool.
  - b. Provide your bibliography online by **June 3<sup>rd</sup>**.
3. Narrative Summary of Learning and Reflection - In 2-4 pages, provide your personal learning and reflection in response to the course objectives, your individual learning goals and any serendipitous learning. Post your papers to both First Class and directly to instructor by **June 10<sup>th</sup>**.



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## Sample Bibliography

### Origin and Recognizing:

- Flinders, C. L. *The Values of Belonging*.  
Campbell, J. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.  
De Santillana, G. and Von Dechend, H. *Hamlet's Mill*. (Pattern language of/in myth)  
Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. *Metaphors We Live By*.  
Jung ... Archetypes / Myths / Alchemy  
Bonvillain, N. *Language, Culture, and Communication: The Meaning of Messages*.  
Quinn, D. *Ishmael*.  
Arnheim, R. *Entropy and Art*.  
Wilber, K. *No Boundary*.  
Koestler, A. *Janus*.  
Pearson, C. *Awakening the Heroes Within*.  
Weston, J. L. *From Ritual to Romance*.  
Eliade, M. *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History*.  
Shirley, J. "The Shadows of Ideas: A Distant Glimpse of Gurdjieff" on *DarkEcho Horror*  
<<http://www.darkecho.com/JohnShirley/jsgurd.html>>.

### Retelling:

- Gardner, J. *Grendel*.  
Maguire, G. *Wicked: The Life and Times of The Wicked Witch of the West*.  
Donoghue, E. *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*.

### Interpreting:

- Wilson, R. A. *Ishtar Rising*.  
Edred. *Witchdom of the True*.  
Griffith, G. "A Good Little Girl Like You: Revisiting 'The Wizard of the Oz'" in *Season of the Witch: Border Lines, Marginal Notes*.  
Grahm, J. *Blood, Bread & Roses*.  
Eisler, R. *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*.

### Creating:

- Starhawk. *Twelve Wild Swans*.  
Grimes, R. L. *Deeply into the Bone: Re-inventing Rites of Passage*.  
Johnson, R. A. *Inner Work: Using Dreams & Active Imagination for Personal Growth*.

### Cinema:

Movies as myth-making, myth-presenting media. For example, the character as mythic hero in comparing Rocky as Hercules, Predator as Beowulf, or Punch Drunk Love & Zelig as retelling the Fool archetypes.

Voytilla, S. *Myth and the Movies: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50*

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*Unforgettable Films.*

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0941188663/>

Bonnet, J. *Stealing Fire from the Gods: A Dynamic New Story Model for Writers and Filmmakers.*

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0941188655/>

Volger, C. *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers.*

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0941188701/>

