

IS 306: Myth and Music
Winter 2025/2026
Fully Online

Professors:

Douglas Simms
Telephone: 618-650-2177
E-mail: dsimms@siue.edu
Dept. of Foreign Languages & Literature
Office: Peck Hall 2326
Teams Office Hours: Mondays 11:00am

Andrew Greenwood
Telephone: 618-650-2026
E-mail: agreenw@siue.edu
Department of Music
Office: Dunham Hall 2106
Teams Office Hours: Thursdays 5:00pm

Materials:

All readings, music, video links etc. posted electronically via Blackboard

Course Description:

Mythology – stories passed from generation to generation because they were culturally meaningful – can be found all over the world. This course explores myth and its musical manifestations primarily through case studies of the myths of medieval Scandinavia and of the Vikings, and their appropriation by composer Richard Wagner and others. Musical adaptations of these mythological texts have had a profound impact upon the circulation of media worldwide (e.g. in film and popular culture).

The musical aspect of this course involves first an introduction to the basic listening fundamentals of music (melody, rhythm, tone color, dynamics, etc.). Once students have acquired some of these basic fundamentals, we will use them in order to enhance our listening experiences of various musical settings of mythological texts. The idea that cultural myth could be conveyed universally through music was developed through Johann Gottfried Herder's invention of the concept of *Volkslied* ("folksong"). Our primary examples consist of the music of Wagner, settings of Scottish/Herderian folk songs, and other musical examples of myth found in popular culture (e.g. Eurovision Song Contest, *Star Wars*, and Looney Tunes). Of particular interest will be excerpts taken from the operas of Wagner, particularly his "Ring Cycle" (comprising *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*). The Wagnerian theory of *Leitmotif* central to these operas is still vital to much music in film today.

The mythological aspect of this course comprises an introduction to the myths and mythological figures of early Germanic Europe, turning its attention thereafter to the collections of myths and legends left behind by the descendants of the Vikings. Although a brutal scourge of Europe between 800-1100 C.E., the Vikings possess a rich and complex literature which was only set into writing generations later by medieval Scandinavians. In addition to selections from the *Poetic Edda* and Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, we will read *The Saga of the Völsungs*, in which the dragon-slaying hero rises to glory and tragedy through a complex love-story involving a king, his sister, and a Valkyrie. We can see echoes of Scandinavian myth and Wagnerian themes in the works of silent movie maker, Fritz Lang, and the novels of J.R.R. Tolkien, and their film

adaptations in recent years by Peter Jackson, and continuing influence on such modern works as George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones*. We will also include a number of approaches to these myths and topic from newer perspectives, such as through the lens of gender studies. Moreover, we will also look at ways in which appropriations of these myths by (neo)nationalists and right-wing radicals are used and abused in the present.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course it is expected that students are not only familiar with the characters and plots of the texts and/or music covered, but equally as important, students should become acquainted with the medieval and modern worlds and how they continue to interact, rather than viewing them as separate from one another. Students should also acquire a sense of how music plays an important role in conveying myth in our world.

Also, by the end of the course, students are expected to:

- 1) Be able to compare and contrast texts of similar type
- 2) Be able to formulate and express opinions regarding the textual similarities
- 3) Be able to address challenging notions such as "heroic," "medieval," and "modern"
- 4) Be able to appreciate and understand trans-semiotic notions such as the *Leitmotiv*
- 5) Be able to conduct research using a variety of primary and secondary source materials in learning and writing about literature
- 6) Be able to see how the study of literature from a variety of cultures and eras can enrich their lives in the here-and-now
- 7) Be able to use some basic fundamentals to describe, identify, and interpret music
- 8) Be able to use these fundamentals of music in listening contexts in and outside of class (e.g. concerts, digital media, etc.)
- 9) Be able to relate musical listening experiences (using musical fundamentals) to mythological themes and ideas
- 10) Be able to construct arguments about music & myth in written work

Communication with Professors:

As this course has two professors, it is imperative that when communicating with one to copy an e-mail to the other so that every person is informed. If you find video-conferencing useful, we are both trained in the use of Zoom, video-conferencing software supported by SIUE. Each of us will hold virtual office hours during the week. Outside of these office hours, and specific appointments you make, e-mail is the preferred method of contact. Please do not hesitate in contacting us with any questions or concerns about the course.

Student Responsibilities:

It is expected that students will take responsibility for completing material in a timely fashion as per the syllabus. Please contact the professors should a problem or question arise. Please consult the following link, as it explains expectations for students of online courses at SIUE and what is needed for success in an online course:

<http://www.siue.edu/its/idlt/learning/success.shtml>

Final Grade:

Grades are calculated according to a 100 pt. scale (A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, etc...). The individual components of the final grade are weighted thusly:

Discussion Board	30%
Weekly Quizzes (3)	30%
Final Project	30%
Participation	10%

Quizzes:

Three quizzes will be given in total: one every week during the course in order to check students' progress. Each quiz will be available via Blackboard, beginning the Wednesday of each week, to be completed by 11:59 p.m. the following Sunday. Quizzes will contain approximately 30 questions and you will have 30 minutes to complete the quiz. The third quiz will be comprehensive, where 2/3 of the questions will be from material from week 3, and 1/3 will come from material during the first two weeks. **Note: Once you begin the quiz you may not stop or restart. Because of this, please make sure you have proper internet connectivity, as we are unable to accommodate technical difficulties on your end: Quiz re-takes are not permitted.**

Final Project:

The final will be due on Friday January 2, 2026. The project topic and instructions will be provided during the first week of the course.

Note: Failure to submit the final will result in a grade of **F** for the final.

Discussion Board:

Students are required to engage in discussions with each other and the professors via Blackboard's Discussion Boards each week of the course. Professors will interact with students to a great extent via the Discussion Boards, so please make full use of this feature, it's a great way to learn and ask questions. Items we discuss here will be very relevant to the final project.

During each week each student is required minimally to make **six postings**, divided equally between Prof. Simms' and Prof. Greenwood's discussion forums. On each of the two weekly forums, every student should post:

- A prompt for discussion. Your prompt may be one of the following:
 - A meme **of your generation** (others' memes do not count) which relates something on anything assigned in **Prof. Simms' or Prof. Greenwood's course materials** (i.e. on video lectures, readings, or musical examples).
 - A question regarding something in **Prof. Simms' or Prof. Greenwood's video lectures**. Questions must be open-ended (no yes/no questions, or questions with very specific answers in mind) and written to generate discussion. Read all posts before posting.
 - A question regarding something in **Prof. Simms' or Prof. Greenwood's bonus video lectures**. Questions must be open-ended (no yes/no questions, or questions with very specific answers in mind) and written to generate discussion. Read all posts before posting.

- Two (2) responses to other students' prompts.
- Note:
 - Off-topic postings, or postings without any depth or effort will not count.
 - Postings which have prompts more-or-less the same as a previous posting's question or meme will not count. Please read all existing posts before adding yours. Note SIUE policies concerning plagiarism below.
- To recap, **each student needs to post 1 prompt and 2 responses material per week**
- **Prompts are due no later than 5.00pm each Wednesday**
- **Responses are due no later than 5.00pm each Friday**
- The "week" for Discussions ends each Friday at 5.00pm (Please pay attention to the time...a posting made at 5:02 p.m Wednesday does not count!) – Although it might seem persnickety, there has to be a deadline at some point.

Netiquette (Adapted from <http://www.education.com/reference/article/netiquette-rules-behavior-internet/>):

- ☐ **Avoid sarcasm.** People who don't know you may misinterpret its meaning.
- ☐ **Respect others' privacy.** Do not quote or forward personal email without the original author's permission.
- ☐ **Acknowledge and return messages promptly.**
- ☐ **Be concise.** Keep messages concise—about one screen, as a rule of thumb.
- ☐ **Use appropriate language:**
 - Avoid coarse, rough, or rude language.
 - Observe good grammar and spelling.
- ☐ **Use appropriate emoticons (emotion icons) to help convey meaning.** Use "smiley's" or punctuation such as :-) to convey emotions. See website list of emoticons at <http://netlingo.com/smiley.cfm> and <http://www.robelle.com/smugbook/smiley.html>.
- ☐ **Use only appropriate intensifiers to help convey meaning.** No all-caps shouting.

Discussion Board Posting Rubric

Discussion board posts will be graded according to the following rubric:

Grade	Prompts	Responses
A	Thoughtful and thought-provoking, generates strong discussions, open-ended	Thoughtful response, generates additional replies
B	Thoughtful prompt, generates moderate discussion	Response that thoughtfully considers prompt in its reply
C	Variation of previously-posted prompt	Variation of previous response or "ditto"-type response

D	Yes-No question or asks for a specific answer rather than an open-ended prompt to further discussions	Responds without much thought, very little thought put into reply or single-word replies
F	No prompt, off-topic posting	No response, off-topic reply

Participation:

Although IS 306 is an asynchronous, on-line course, we feel that more learning happens when there is a human connection (thus the discussion board posts). To that end, we also want to make sure that each student participate as much as possible. To this end, every week there will be a participation grade assigned according to the following rubric (subject to change with notice):

Grade	Characteristics
A	Complete viewing of video lectures, significant additional engagement beyond minimum on discussion board and full use of extra/bonus video lectures
B	Complete viewing of video lectures, significant engagement beyond minimum on discussion board or full use of extra/bonus video lectures
C	Complete viewing of video lectures, minimal required participation on discussion boards, little to no use of extra/bonus video lectures
D	Incomplete viewing of video lectures, minimal or partial posting on discussion boards, no use of extra/bonus video lectures
F	No participation, no viewing of lectures, posting on discussion board, no use of extra/bonus lectures

SIUE Policies:

Students enrolling in the University assume responsibility for conduct compatible with the learning environment of the University. Students are expected to be familiar with Student Conduct and Student Grievances: Rights and Responsibility. This policy describes the University's expectations for student conduct, sanctions imposed for violations of the standards, and procedures which students may follow in filing grievances.

The University gives high priority to matters of academic ethics and abhors all types of cheating, including plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of representing the work of another as one's own and

may consist of copying, paraphrasing, or otherwise using written or oral work of another without proper acknowledgment of the source or presenting oral or written material prepared by another as one's own.

Instructors may impose sanctions for academic cheating in accordance with Student Conduct and Student Grievances: Rights and Responsibilities. In the case of plagiarism, the minimum sanction of the first instance of plagiarism is disciplinary probation; for the second instance of plagiarism, the minimum sanction is separation from the University for one term; and for a third instance of plagiarism, the minimum sanction is permanent separation from the University.

Students who wish to understand matters relative to academic ethics and plagiarism should consult their advisers or instructors.

Copies of the policy are available in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, the Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Graduate School, the Service Center, and in the Office of the Dean, School of Dental Medicine.

Upon registration, students accept responsibility for attending all class sessions and completing course work. Attendance at all sessions of a class is expected. It is especially important to attend the first meeting of a class. Failure to attend the first session could result in your place being assigned to another student. It is your responsibility to ascertain the policies of instructors with regard to absence from class, and to make arrangements satisfactory to instructors with regard to incomplete course work. Although absence from a class does not constitute dropping a class or withdrawing from the University, faculty have the authority to request removal of undergraduate students who fail to meet attendance requirements, as published in their syllabus. This results in a grade of WR (Withdrawal by Registrar) being recorded. Faculty who choose not to drop for failure to attend class will assign an appropriate grade at the end of the term. Under no circumstances will non-attendance in any course or courses be considered a valid reason to permit dropping the course from a student's schedule after the second week. Dropping a class that you do not plan to take or complete is your responsibility. You must submit your request to drop classes within the established deadlines to avoid punitive grades.

The University recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Plagiarism, the act of representing the work of another as one's own, may take two forms. It may consist of copying, paraphrasing or otherwise using the written or oral work of another without acknowledging the source, or it may consist of presenting oral or written course work prepared by another as one's own.

Normally a student who plagiarizes shall receive a grade of F in the course in which the act occurs. The offense shall also be reported to the Provost. In addition, any graduate student who has been found to have committed an act of plagiarism may be dropped from his or her graduate degree program by his or her department. A student who is reported a second time shall be suspended from the University for a period of not less than one term. Should a student who has been suspended for plagiarism be readmitted and be again found guilty of the offense, he/she shall be permanently expelled from the University.

This policy statement shall appear in the University catalogs and course announcements, shall be called to the attention of advisers, shall be explained during the program of new student orientation, and shall be published in the Alestle at least once during the beginning of each fall term.

The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs is charged with administrative responsibility for handling complaints, allegations, or grievances against students concerning plagiarism, according to the Student Academic Code (Policy 3C2).

Academic Integrity

Students are reminded that the expectations and academic standards outlined in the Student Academic Code (3C2) apply to all courses, field experiences and educational experiences at the University, regardless of modality or location. The full text of the policy can be found here: <https://www.siu.edu/policies/3c2.shtml>.

Recordings of Class Content

Faculty recordings of lectures and/or other course materials are meant to facilitate student learning and to help facilitate a student catching up who has missed class due to illness or quarantine. As such, students are reminded that the recording, as well as replicating or sharing of any course content and/or course materials without the express permission of the instructor of record, is not permitted, and may be considered a violation of the University's Student Conduct Code (3C1), linked here: <https://www.siu.edu/policies/3c1.shtml>.

Services for Students Needing Accommodations

It is the policy and practice of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or to accurate assessment of achievement—such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content or the use of non-captioned videos—please contact Accessible Campus Community and Equitable Student Support (ACCESS) as soon as possible. In order to properly determine reasonable accommodations, students must register with ACCESS either online at [siue.edu/access](https://www.siu.edu/access) or in person in the Student Success Center, Room 1203. You can also reach the office by emailing us at myaccess@siue.edu or by calling [618-650-3726](tel:618-650-3726).

If you feel you would need additional help in the event of an emergency situation, please notify your instructor to be shown the evacuation route and discuss specific needs for assistance.

SIUE Statement on Diversity

<https://www.siu.edu/about/mission-goals-plans/diversity.shtml>

The SIUE Statement on Diversity reflects SIUE's commitment to recognizing and valuing the contributions of the breadth of humankind. This statement, adopted in *January 2025*, replaces an earlier version:

All societies and peoples have contributed to the rich mix of contemporary humanity. To achieve domestic and international peace, social justice and the development of full human potential, we must build on this diversity and inclusion.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville recognizes that our strength lies in the varied perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds of our students, faculty, and staff. The university is dedicated to creating a campus climate that embraces diversity and promotes equity and inclusion. Each member of the University is responsible for contributing to such a campus environment.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is committed to education that explores the historic significance of diversity and acknowledges the historical and systemic inequities that affect marginalized groups and is committed to addressing these challenges.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is dedicated to building a student body and workforce that reflect the rich diversity of our society. We believe that diversity enhances learning and innovation, equipping our community with the skills needed to address complex global challenges as we progress in the 21st century.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville recognizes that a democratic society depends on equitable access to opportunities, representation across identities and perspectives, and the freedom for all to engage without fear of bias or discrimination. Through education, dialogue, and advocacy, we strive to equip our community with the tools and knowledge to become informed, engaged, and ethical leaders in democracy. We encourage critical thinking, respectful debate, and a dedication to social justice as we prepare to contribute meaningfully to an inclusive and fair society. The university affirms that diversity and inclusion are essential elements of a thriving democracy.

Additional Support

Academic and Other Student Services

As an enrolled SIUE student, you have a variety of support available to you, including:

- [Lovejoy Library Resources](#)
- [Academic Success Sessions](#)
- [Tutoring Resource Center](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)
- [Academic Advising](#)
- [Financial Aid](#)
- [Campus Events](#)
- [Counseling Services](#)

If you find that you need additional support, please reach out and let us know.

Cougar Care

Dealing with the fast-paced life of a college student can be challenging, we always support a student's decisions to prioritize mental health. Students have access to counseling services on campus (Student Success Center, 0222). Make an appointment by visiting cougarcare.siu.edu or by calling [618-650-2842](tel:618-650-2842).

Student Success Coaches

Student success coaches work across campus to serve the SIUE student population with the tools and resources to adjust to and meet the demands of the college experience. Success coaches provide direct services such as time management support and referrals to campus resources. If you find yourself in need of academic or personal support, or in a situation that is preventing you from being successful in the classroom, please utilize Starfish to connect with a coach as soon as possible. The sooner you engage, the sooner you can access the information or tools you need that may help you get back on track.

Technical Support

Since some of the work for this course is completed online, you are expected to have reliable Internet access on a regular basis. It is your responsibility to address any computer problems that might occur. Such problems are not an excuse for delays in meeting expectations or for missing course deadlines.

Contact ITS at 618-650-5500 or at help@siue.edu with any technical concerns. You can also check the functionality of University systems, including Blackboard, at the ITS System Status page, or search the ITS Knowledge Base for various how-to and troubleshooting guides.

Tips for taking online assessments:

- Set up a wired (Ethernet) Internet connection on your computer
- Do not use a mobile device, such as a phone or tablet
- Read the instructions and directions carefully
- Be prepared to complete the assessment in the allotted time

[See over for Tentative Schedule of Readings and Topics]

Tentative Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Listening* All required readings and listenings are to found in the folder for the corresponding week in Blackboard *students will be notified of any subsequent changes		
	Simms	Greenwood
Week 1 12.15.2025 to 12.19.2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to course • Germanic – what is that? • Myth – what is that? • Days of the Week • Overview of Germanic Myth • Reading – Jan Puuhvel “Germanic Mythology” • Reading – Gardell, Introduction to “Gods of the Blood” • Reading – Dorothy Kim, “White Supremacists Have Weaponized an Imaginary Viking Past. It's Time to Reclaim the Real History” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to course • Fundamentals of Music • Music, Myth, & Nation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Herder, World & Folk Music ○ Eurovision Song Contest • Reading – Kerman/Tomlinson, <i>Listen</i>, 7th edition, Bedford St. Martins [excerpt] • Listening – examples corresponding to above as posted as links • Reading – Tragaki, “The Monsters’ Dream” • Listening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schubert, <i>The Erlking</i> ○ Lordi, “Hard Rock Hallelujah” ○ Other selections from Eurovision
	<p style="text-align: center;"> Discussion Prompts due 5.00pm Wed Discussion Responses (2) due 12 Noon Fri Quiz due 11:59pm Sun </p>	

<p>Week 2 12.22.2025 to 12.26.2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prose Edda Reading – Pages to be announced • Poetic Edda • Reading – Haymes, <i>Wagner's Ring in 1848</i> [excerpt] • Reading – Selections available under the folder for that week • Podcast – <i>Vikings are Gay</i> (link in Blackboard) <p>Discussion Question (1) due 5.00pm Wed Discussion Responses (2) due 5.00pm Fri QUIZ 2 due 11.59pm Sun</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wagner, Myth, and <i>Leitmotif</i> • Reading – Ross, <i>Wagnerism</i> [excerpt] • Reading – Donington, <i>Wagner's Ring and its Symbols</i> [excerpt] • Reading – Taruskin, “Form and Content” • Reading – “Leitmotif” • Documentary: “Wagner’s Jews” • Listening – Wagner’s Operas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Das Rheingold</i> (opening) ○ <i>Die Walküre</i> (selection) ○ <i>Siegfried</i> (selection) ○ <i>Götterdämmerung</i> (end) <p>Discussion Question (1) due 5.00pm Wed Discussion Responses (2) due 5.00pm Fri QUIZ 2 due 11.59pm Sun</p>
	<p>Discussion Prompts due 5.00pm Wed Discussion Responses (2) due 12 Noon Fri Quiz due 11:59pm Sun</p>	
<p>Week 3 12.29.2025 01.02.2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Volsunga saga</i>, Reading on Blackboard– Only the text, no need to read the “Introduction” • Lang’s <i>Nibelungen</i> Viewing – Links to these two films are available under the folder and are from YouTube <p>Discussion Question (1) due 5.00pm Wed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myth in Film and Musical Media • Reading – Bribitzer-Stull, <i>From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music</i> [excerpt] • Reading – Buhler, “<i>Star Wars</i>, Music, and Myth” • Listening – “What’s Opera, Doc?”; • <i>Star Wars</i> [excerpts] • Video selections from popular musical culture using Leitmotif <p>Discussion Question (1) due 5.00pm Wed</p>

	Discussion Responses (2) due 5.00pm Fri QUIZ 3 due 11.59pm Sun FINAL DUE 1/2/26	Discussion Responses (2) due 5.00pm Fri QUIZ 3 due 11.59pm Sun FINAL DUE 1/2/26
	Discussion Prompts due 5.00pm Wed Discussion Responses (2) due 12 Noon Fri Quiz due 11:59pm Sun	

Worried?:

If at any point during the semester you have concerns, please feel free to make use of our office hours, or contact either of us via e-mail (dsimms@siue.edu or agreenw@siue.edu), or phone (DS: 618-650-2177 or AG: 618-650-2026, although e-mail is best). Should you think you might like to need the university's counseling services, they can be reached at: 618-650-2179. The sooner a problem is noticed, the sooner it can be resolved, whereas leaving things to the last minute can multiply difficulties. Above all, we hope that this course is an enjoyable and enlightening one.