

Legacy of Gods and Heroes: Monsters and Marvels through the Ages

UHON 122-002 | T R | 11:00-12:15 | SHC 16 | 27336

Fulfills UNM Core Group V: Humanities

Dr. Leslie Donovan

Many of our culture's most fascinating and compelling stories involve monstrous characters or the marvelous realms of the otherworld. Goblins and fairies, Grendel and Circe, dragons and gargoyles are all creations from earlier periods that have inspired the imaginations of writers and artists since ancient times and continue to engage contemporary audiences. This course focuses on how conceptions of the imaginary creatures and worlds both reflect and comment on cultural ideologies important to earlier peoples. Although removed from "real life," the fantastical visions we will study provide windows that open on a vast vista of historical ideas, social constructs, cultural patterns, and spiritual themes. For example, we may discuss whether werewolves are always evil and fairies always morally good, whether believing in dragons makes us more or less human, whether fantasy themes are purely escapist entertainment or provide us with potent metaphors for how we may choose to live our lives, and whether modern people care more about vampires and unicorns than ancient peoples did. Through explorations of the supernatural in literature, art, and architecture, students will be introduced to the historical traditions of monsters and marvels as these are reflected in epic literature, Celtic sculpture, classical mythology, gothic novels, Northwest American Indian legends, religious architecture, and courtly romances, among others. Through vigorous discussion, concentrated critical thinking, energetic writing in a variety of modes, and dynamic oral presentations, we will examine how the conventions of otherworldly beings and events have become integral to our own U.S. popular culture.

Readings

Gilgamesh

Beowulf

Homer, *The Odyssey*

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*

Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*

Cal Newport, *How to Become a Straight-A Student* (optional)

Requirements

2 analytical papers, 1 creative project, 1 oral presentation, weekly electronic exercises, final portfolio, attendance and active class participation.

About the Instructor

Leslie Donovan is a continuing UHP faculty member and the faculty advisor for Scribendi. She earned her B.A. and M.A. in English from UNM and her Ph.D. in Medieval Literature from the University of Washington. Her recent publications include studies of J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beowulf*, Anglo-Saxon women saints, and Honors teaching.