



CVSP 295Y – Archetypes across Traditions

Spring 2017-18

TT: 12.30 – 1.45pm
409 Nicely

Dr. Dahlia E. M. Gubara

Office: 313, Nicely x4029
Email: dg05@aub.edu.lb

Course description and objectives

The idea that certain images, stories, ideas, or even personality types repeat themselves over and again along the collective history and memory of humankind is an old one. In classical philosophy, one immediately thinks of Plato's Forms as representing the eternal and true ideal of things imperfectly replicated in the world. For the Pre-Socratic philosophers before Plato, the *arché* was the primary element from which all physical objects ensued. Philosophers after Plato would conceive of things in terms of macro- and microcosms.

In modern psychology and psychoanalysis, archetypes are mental templates or patterns of thought that are common in all human individual psyches. Similarly, in evolutionary biology, physics and mathematics, they are fundamental organizing structures that lie at the base of things. While in art, literature, anthropology, religion and mythology, an archetype is more often understood as a recurrent and universal image, figure, story, symbol, theme or motif. In all cases and despite the many ways that it has been discussed across the disciplines, at the core of many definitions of the archetype is the idea of a source/original (a *prototype*) that is imitated, or can at least be traced, in subsequent models (*tupoi*) and representations that often share somehow in its fundamental characteristics.

As reoccurring images, symbols or forms, archetypes are an important feature of meaning and knowledge making. They play a vital role in structuring the horizons of human thought, but also of human experience and aspiration across different cultural traditions throughout time. It is this aspect of the archetype that will interest us in this course, as we explore and compare the ways in which some key archetypal figures are represented in primary works (texts, images and films) from different cultures and historical epochs.

Some the archetypal figures we will explore include: the Angel/Devil, the Artist, the Book, the City, the Genius, the Mother or Father, the Philosopher, the Prophet/the Redeemer/the Perfect Man, the Scientist, the Slave, the Storyteller and the Trickster, the Teacher, the Traveller, the Fairy, the Witch and the Magician.

Course objectives and structure

The course is an interdisciplinary undergraduate Humanities (List I) course. It revolves around the weekly reading and discussion of sets of paired primary sources that span the fields of philosophy, literature, visual art, anthropology, science and religious and intellectual history.

We begin in the first two-three weeks, with an introductory survey that aims to familiarize students with some key theorizations of the archetype and archetypal analysis in the human and social sciences. The objective here is to arrive, collectively, at a working definition of the archetype that can then be applied in the close comparative reading and discussion of the primary texts and images in the weeks that follow.

The course aims to:

- introduce students to the concept of the archetype and to various iterations of key archetypal forms or figures through a selection of seminal primary texts (both written and visual)
- develop students' abilities to identify, trace, analyze and ultimately compare different archetypal forms as universal expressions of historically and culturally situated worlds, across different texts and genres
- cultivate an awareness of, and critical engagement with, archetypal structures of thinking and being that may determine students' individual and collective (as a class) encounters with the assigned weekly material, and the capacity to express this effectively in verbal and written forms

All class discussions, presentations and written assignments are geared towards this triple focus (and correspond to the general learning outcomes of CVSP courses as stated on the CVSP website).

Readings and other course materials will be made available to students via Moodle and/or by way of a Course Pack.

Course requirements, policies and grading criteria

Students are expected to:

- ❖ attend classes assiduously and on time,
- ❖ come fully prepared to participate in an informed, involved and textually grounded group discussion,
- ❖ be ready to present on the text/material when called upon to do so.
- ❖ complete a final research paper

Students are asked to observe proper scholarly conduct and etiquette at all times. **Please see the CVSP website for University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity; nondiscrimination; special needs and accessibility.**

The **final grade** for the course is based on:

- ❖ Attendance and Punctuality (10%)
- ❖ Discussion and Participation (20%)
- ❖ Presentation (15%)
- ❖ Midterm Exam (20%)
- ❖ Final Paper (35%)