**Incorporation of Persian Mythology into Pima’s HUM 131 (Mythology)**

Pima’s current HUM131 (Mythology) course focuses primarily on classical mythology of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The official course description reads as follows:

**Course Description:**

Myths, legends, and folktales of the Greeks and Romans. Includes basic concepts of myths, myths of the Greeks and Romans, major Greek divinities and their Roman counterparts, stories about the major divinities, artistic representation of myths, effects of ancient myths on western literary movement, similarities and differences between major mythic systems, and anthropological and psychological approaches to mythic systems. Also includes a humanistic approach to the study of Greek and Roman sacred narratives, stories derived from oral traditions, and cultural events, which invite symbolic analysis.

The course learning objectives, however, give some room for the inclusion of world mythologies, as you can see below:

**Student Learning Outcomes**

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

1. Examine the concept of myth.
2. Discuss the basic myths of the Greeks and Romans.
3. Distinguish the major divinities.
4. Relate the stories told about the major divinities.
5. Identify the ways in which ancient and modern artists have illustrated the great myths and depicted the gods and goddesses through the visual arts.
6. Evaluate the effects of ancient myths on the western literary tradition through excerpts from ancient and modern literature.
7. Determine the similarities and differences between the major mythic systems of the world through contact with some myths from non-Greek and non-Roman cultures.

The way I teach HUM 131 for Pima (as I am required, based on the course description and CLOs), is by dividing the material into three basic units: Creation Stories, Classical Pantheon & Heroes, followed by a short World Mythology unit during which students conduct research for their final projects and papers. Considering that the ancient Persians were the main rivals of the ancient Greeks, I can justify including a significant amount of Persian mythology into this course without straying too far from its course objectives. Thus, I incorporated Persian mythology beyond a brief mention during our designated World Mythology weeks. I included Persian Mythology as part of the Creation Stories Unit and as a substantial part of the Heroes Unit, which leads nicely into World Mythology research.

For the Creation Stories Unit, I first have students read and become familiar with several non-classical creation stories:

* Kono Creation Story (African)
* Egyptian Creation Story
* Ennead of Heliopolis
* Mayan Creation Story (Latin American)
* Enuma Elish (Babylonian)
* Genesis, Chapters 1 & 2

To these creation stories, I added reading from the Introduction of Prods Oktor Skjærvø’s *The Spirit of Zoroastrianism* (pp. 8-22), which includes the following subsections:

* Creation & The Divine World
  + Cosmic Contrast and the Two Spirits
  + Order & Chaos
  + Gods
  + Demons
  + The Creation of Living Beings

I also added the first chapter of the *Shahnameh*, “The First Kings” (pp. 1-7). This small selection of Persian mythology allows us a smooth segue to the classical creation stories of the ancient Greeks, *Theogony* and *Works & Days* by Hesiod – after which I ask students to draw comparisons between the various creation myths (with a focus on chaos & order), as well as to consider the manifestation and role of man in these myths (for example, comparing Prometheus to Jamsheed).

The second unit of the course focuses the classical pantheon of the ancient Greeks & Romans (Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Athena, Ares, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Hermes, Dionysus and Hades/classical conceptions of death and the underworld), as well as some miscellaneous myths from the classical tradition.

The third unit focuses on the heroes of the classical tradition (Achilles, Odysseus, Oedipus, Theseus, Heracles, Jason & Perseus). Once we have covered the classical heroes, we can venture more deeply into Persian mythology. At this point, we read the following stories from the *Shahnameh*:

* The Demon King Zahak (pp. 9-27)
* The Story of Fereydoun & His Three Sons (pp. 28-35)
* The Tale of Sam & the Simorgh (pp. 63-69)
* The Tale of Zal & Rudabeh (pp. 70-103)
* Rostam, the Son of Zal-Daston (pp. 104-109)
* Rostam & His Horse, Rakhsh (pp. 131-133)
* The Seven Trials of Rostam (pp. 152-173)
* Rostam & Esfandiyar (pp. 479-530)
* The Death of Rostam (pp. 531-548)

I end the Heroes unit with a short paper asking students to compare the classical Greek heroes and their stories with that of the Persian heroes of the *Shahnameh*. This foray into Persian heroes works nicely as a segue into our final weeks in which we briefly touch on World Mythology (Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Yoruba, Celtic, Norse & Hindu).