MASS MEDIA MYTHOLOGY

This course will provide an introduction to the analysis of myth, especially as presented through modern media of mass communication. We will begin with an explanation of the essential nature of myth for human culture. Then the relationship between myth and communication media will be explored from anthropological and historical perspectives, including a review of major viewpoints on the study of myth throughout the ages. This will lead up to a summary of psychoanalytic, literary critical, anthropological, theological, and media theory views in mythological studies today. From here we will consider the roles of television, movies, popular music, and other modern media as creators, reflectors, and disseminators of the mythology of popular culture. Finally, we will consider the impact of mass media mythology on public consciousness and the psyche of the individual in our society. Moral judgment will be encouraged, and prescriptive suggestions will be explored.

The courses objectives will be:

1. to increase students’ understanding of the role of myth in culture and the function of mass media in determining basic assumptions, images, and terminology in the realm of cultural agenda-setting and evolution,

2. to provide them with a review of and critical analysis of the mythological themes and values found in various mass media, and

3. to equip them with the literary/mythological skills to recognize, analyze, criticize, and even create mass media mythology.

Required Reading: Mythologies by Roland Barthes
Additional readings to be supplied by the professor

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance at a five-day seminar to be held at Stony Acres, May 27 – 31.

2. Reading of text and assorted articles before attendance of seminar.

3. A final paper representing a substantial, in-depth analysis of a mass media myth.
Schedule of Topics

Day 1:
Morning: Myth, Orality, and Tribalism
Afternoon: Myth Around the Globe

Day 2:
Morning: History of Myth Interpretation
Afternoon: Myth Interpretation Today

Day 3:
Morning: History of Television Myth
Afternoon: Television Myth Today

Day 4:
Morning: Myth at the Movies
Afternoon: Myth in Popular Music

Day 5:
Morning: Myth and the Modern Mind
Afternoon: Strategies for Coping

Departmental Outcomes:

At the end of taking courses in the Communication Studies program, students should be able to (1) demonstrate above average oral, visual, relational, and presentational communications; (2) demonstrate above average critical thinking skills; (3) demonstrate above average research literacy skills; (4) demonstrate above average ability to participate as an active citizen in his/her local, state, national and global communities, and (5) demonstrate above average ability to interpret visual communication.