How Do We Get in Touch?

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bdlowe@princeton.edu
Drop-in Hours:
Thursday, 9:00 AM–12:00 PM via Zoom
Also by appointment

What Is This Course?

Myths are powerful. The stories we will read this semester were first recorded around 1,300 years ago and continue to be shared and retold to the present day. In this course, we will ask why people—both in Japan and humans more generally—tell these types of tales. We will see that although myths claim universal truths and have long histories, they are by no means stable texts. Individuals retell myths in response to the challenges of their day. But how they tell their stories represent profound struggles. Are these universal or particular to their times?

What to Buy?

- W.G. Aston (trans.), *Nihongi*
- Gustav Heldt (trans.), *The Kojiki: An Account of Ancient Matters*
- John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shintō*
- Helen Hardacre, *Shintō: A History\n  *Chronicle*
- Tezuka Osamu, *Phoenix: Dawn*

What Skills Will We Learn?

Recognize some of the key myths and gods in Japanese history.
Assess the role of myths in shaping Japanese politics, religion, and the arts.
Identify, employ, and critique methods and theories used by scholars to interpret myths.
Uncover the agendas of myth makers and locate myths within historical contexts.
Write and create in a range of forms including analytical essays, creative pieces, and short portfolio entries to effectively communicate ideas and interpret texts.

What Dates Should We Know?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>Survey due @ 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>Portfolio #1 due @ 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>Hirafuji lecture @ 4:30 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/12</td>
<td>Midterm due @11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/26</td>
<td>Portfolio #2 due @ 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/29</td>
<td>Schedule consultation this week</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Proposal due @11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/26</td>
<td>Portfolio #3 due @ 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Final project due @ 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poster session TBD during reading period</td>
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How Are We Evaluated?

**Attendance:** 10% (score based on % of classes attended)
**Active participation:** 10% (qualitative assessment of participation)
**Portfolio:** 15% (variety of short, low-stakes writing)
**Midterm paper:** 25% (4–5 pages on Japanese myths and theorist of myth)
**Final project proposal:** 5% (1 page with annotated bibliography)
**Poster session:** 5% (something visual to explain your final project)
**Final paper/project:** 30% (creative project or research paper)
Details for the portfolio, midterm paper, and final project will be distributed in advance of each assignment.
Responsibilities, Expectations, and Resources

Student and Teacher Responsibilities

Learning requires an effort by both the student and the teacher. Only if we both agree to the following can the above learning objectives be met:

- **To attend class:** As a seminar, it’s hard to learn without attending. As such, regular synchronous and on-time attendance is expected. But things happen, especially during a pandemic. When they do, notify me by email. For my part, I will start and end class in a timely manner and provide diverse activities to meet a range of learning styles. Please check Canvas regularly to ensure that you are marked present for days you attend.

- **To actively participate in class:** An “A” for participation requires consistent and high-quality contributions to class discussion and activities in a way that shows careful reflection on the assignments and an awareness of your relationship with your classmates, including respecting identities and viewpoints. One helpful/insightful comment or question is more valuable than frequently talking for talking’s sake. A good question can be more helpful than a comment. I will be a participant too, sometimes asking questions, sometimes offering interpretations, and sometimes actively listening.

- **To complete all assignments by the date indicated:** Successful participation depends upon completing the readings by the start of class and having them with you in hard or electronic copy. **FORTY-EIGHT-hour notice is required for extensions on written work.** Extensions will be granted at my discretion. Students will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each day late including weekends (e.g. a B+ will become a B if one day late, a B- if two days late, etc.). I will return written work within ten days.

- **Critically engage the materials presented in the course:** Critical engagement is a two-way street: we should be open-minded enough to allow the assignments to challenge our assumptions but should also actively question the arguments and ideas advanced in the texts and class. This type of reflection is expected both in discussion and in written work for teachers and students alike. It should always take place in a respectful manner.

- **Contact me promptly** with any questions or concerns (email is best). I will respond within forty-eight hours, Monday through Friday. Please do not expect prompt replies late at night or on weekends.

**Grades**

Letter grades translate to the following numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Reserved for exceptional work</td>
<td>94–100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89.99</td>
<td>A– 90–93.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77–79.99</td>
<td>B 84–86.99</td>
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<td>C 74–76.99</td>
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<td>C– 70–73.99</td>
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<td>F 59.9 and below</td>
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</table>

Please note that grades do not round-up and are non-negotiable. A 93.999999 is still an A- without exception. I am happy to discuss the reasons you received a given grade, but I will not change your grade unless you found an obvious mistake (an answer that was correct but marked wrong). I also will not give any extra credit opportunities to boost your grade beyond the standards outlined above.

**Honor Code**

All academic work at Princeton is done under the [Honor System](https://honorsystem.princeton.edu). Students may collaborate in preparation for class, but all papers and exams are to be completed independently. If you have any questions about citation practices or the honor code, please do not hesitate to ask.
Learning and Wellness Resources
Part of a college education is learning to learn. We can all get better at this. The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning offers a number of resources to teach these skills, including materials for learning remotely. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of their services.

Moreover, you cannot learn if you do not take care of yourself. Don’t overexert yourself—you will be a better student if you are rested. Sleep. If you are having any trouble at all, Counseling and Psychological Services, is a valuable and confidential resource available to all students, even remotely in a telehealth setting. Please let me know if you are having any problems, and I will try my best to connect you to people who can help.

Accommodations
I am committed to creating an effective and welcoming environment for all. If you have any type of disability or require any accommodations, the University requires that those requests be made through the Office of Disability Services.

Sensitive Topics
The study of religion is full of difficult topics, and throughout the course we will discuss myth as it intersects with imperialism, gender, and sexuality. It is sometimes hard to predict which assignments or classes may be sensitive, as individual experiences differ. But I should highlight the film Himiko in week eleven in particular, as it includes sexual violence. If you ever feel that a topic is too traumatic, you may be excused from that class. Just simply tell me that you are uncomfortable. I do not expect any more detail than that.

Online Learning
As you know, this class will take place entirely online. In larger classes in the past, I have experimented with a number of asynchronous assignments and not required synchronous attendance. As a seminar, my current plan is to run this class similarly to an in-person session. Ideally, I expect that you would attend as many classes as possible. But I also recognize that this is a pandemic and things happen. I ask that you be in touch if something comes up and you have to miss class.

A few other “best practices.” Cameras are great, and I love to see you, especially in a seminar. I really hope you have them on. But they are not required—do what makes you comfortable. Please don’t multitask. I ask that you be fully present for our class. If there are internet problems on either end, don’t worry. Things will go wrong. And that’s ok.

I plan to take a poll around halfway through the course to see how things are going and we might end up mixing things up and restructuring dramatically. I appreciate your patience as we all continue to adapt to this new world of teaching and learning.
Schedule
After an introductory unit on how we define myths in general, we will read two eighth-century Japanese myths describing the origins of the cosmos. While these myths share many common characteristics and were compiled within a decade of one another, there are significant differences between them. We will work together to plot some of these discrepancies. At the same time, both narratives contain remarkable similarities with other myths from different cultures that demand comparison. We will read scholarship by or inspired by three theorists of myth, Georges Dumézil, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Bruce Lincoln, to take up the possibilities and limits of comparison. We will then transition to a more historical approach. We'll first ask whether or not these myths constitute Shintō. We'll then turn to the ways various authors have reinterpreted myths for projects ranging from nationalism to feminism. We will see that narratives are not bound to the original author’s intention but can be used to solidify or subvert traditional readings and power structures.

All readings should be completed by the start of class on the day listed (i.e. read Segal, Matsumura, and Lurie by the start of class on 2/3). In general, focus on the primary sources and skim the other readings for the main argument. Primary sources are marked with a “*.” Please note that Labyrinth was unable to order Aston and I added Tezuka's Phoenix at the last minute. You should secure copies of both on your own (for Phoenix, a Kindle version is likely your best bet, but let me know if you have trouble).

Week 1: Introductions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 3</td>
<td>Robert Segal, “Introduction: Theories of Myth”</td>
<td>Fill out course survey by Friday, February 5 at 11:59 PM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kazuo Matsumura, “Kojiki and Nihon shoki (Nihongi)”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>David Lurie, “Myth and history in the Kojiki, Nihon shoki, and related works”</td>
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Week 2: Foundational Myths I

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 8</td>
<td><em>Kojiki</em> (Heldt), 7–19*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helen Hardacre, <em>Shintō</em>, “The Kami in Myth” (47–70)</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<td>Feb. 10</td>
<td><em>Nibongi (Aston), 1–34</em></td>
<td>David Lurie, “Governing in Prose”</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Week 3: Foundational Myths II</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 15</td>
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<td><em>Kojiki (Heldt), 19–25</em></td>
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<td>Feb. 17</td>
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<td><em>Nibongi (Aston), 34–52</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 4: Comparative Mythology: Myth and Structure</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 24</td>
<td></td>
<td>C. Scott Littleton, “Gods, Myths and Structures: Dumézil”</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Week 5: Comparative Mythology: Myth and Ideology</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Takamitsu Kōnoshi, “Constructing Imperial Mythology”</td>
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Bruce Lincoln, “From the Second World War to the Present (and Possibly a Little Beyond)”

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 3</td>
<td><em>Kojiki</em> (Heldt), 25–60*</td>
<td>Prof. Hirafuji Kikukuo lecture on Thursday, March 3 at 4:30 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Nihongi</em> (Aston), 52–108*</td>
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**Week 6: The Shintō Question**

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<th>Readings</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Jolyon Thomas, “Big Questions in the Study of Shinto”</td>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 10</td>
<td>Hardacre, <em>Shintō</em>, “Introduction” 1–16</td>
<td>Midterm due Friday, March 12 at 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jolyon Thomas, “Big Questions in the Study of Shinto”</td>
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**Week 7: Catching up**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 17</td>
<td>No readings (we’ll use this period to discuss lingering questions)</td>
<td>Post a lingering discussion question on the discussion board</td>
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**Week 8: Medieval Retellings**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Morell and Mujū Ichien, “Mujū Ichien’s Shintō–Buddhist Syncretism”*</td>
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Mar. 24  
Thomas Hare, “Rituals, Dreams, and Tales of Adventure: A Material History of Noh Drama”  
Monica Bethe (trans.), “Miwa”*

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 29</td>
<td>Hardacre, <em>Shintō</em>, “Shintō and Kokugaku” (only 323–337)</td>
<td>Schedule consultations for research project this week</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Atsutane Hirata, “The True Pillar of the Soul”*</td>
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**Week 9: Nativist Myths**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 5</td>
<td>John Gauntlett (trans.), <em>Kokutai no hongi</em>, “Book 1: The National Entity,” 59–102 *</td>
<td>Submit proposal for final project by Monday, April 5 at 11:59 PM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 7</td>
<td>Seizō Kōno, “Kannagara no michi (The way of kannagara)”*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kikuko Hirafuji, “Colonial Empire and Mythology Studies”</td>
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### Week 11: Challenging the Imperial Myth through Myth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings/Film</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 14</td>
<td>Masahiro Shinoda, <em>Himiko</em> (film)*</td>
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### Week 12: Feminist Myths

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 19</td>
<td>Natsuo Kirino, <em>Goddess Chronicle</em>, 1–80*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 21</td>
<td>Natsuo Kirino, <em>Goddess Chronicle</em>, 83–184*</td>
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### Week 13: Wrap-up

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 26</td>
<td>Natsuo Kirino, <em>Goddess Chronicle</em>, 185–end*</td>
<td>Portfolio # 3 due Monday, April 26 at 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rebecca Copeland, “Kirino Natsuo Meets Izanami: Angry Divas Talking Back”</td>
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