Provides a contextualized treatment of classical myth, combining ancient sources, comparative perspectives, theoretical approaches, and artistic interpretations

Here’s what some of your colleagues are saying about this exceptional text:

“Classical Mythology in Context overcomes the shortcomings of other myth texts in a way that will benefit students. Lisa Maurizio’s approach provides good explanations of theories with practical applications, good reviews of the myths, excellent translations of primary source material, both classical and other—with large selections or entire works instead of the ‘bits-and-pieces’ approach most texts employ. The fact that it is structured so that one doesn’t have to use everything, but can pick and choose, gives one the ability to tailor the class to the student body.”

—Victor Leuci, Westminster College

“Lisa Maurizio has selected interesting examples from non-Greek literature, ranging over the centuries, from Gilgamesh to modern plays, that provide opportunities for comparison. Instead of identifying to students all mythological figures, Classical Mythology in Context seeks to show how Greek myths have and continue to have pertinence for artists thinking about contemporary human conditions in their cultures.”

—Judith Sebesta, University of South Dakota

“Classical Mythology in Context offers an alternative model for teaching Classical Mythology, one based in trans-historical and transcultural meanings and modes, rather than the traditional gods-and-heroes approach. It challenges students to rethink their assumptions about why they would take a course in Classical Mythology in the first place.”

—John Given, East Carolina University

“The design of Classical Mythology in Context is very beautiful and functional at the same time. The colors are excellent and effectively demarcate the modules.”

—John Paul Russo, University of Miami
OUP: Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Lisa Maurizio: I’ve been teaching Classical Mythology for about twenty-five years, at a variety of different schools. When I was a graduate assistant at Princeton University, I was a teaching assistant in a large Classical Mythology class. Then I went on to Stanford University, where I again taught Classical Mythology to a large number of students, 200–300 at a time. At the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, where I taught next, I taught about 500 students at a time. I currently teach Classical Mythology at Bates College, a small New England college in Lewiston, Maine, to much smaller groups of students—about fifty at a time.

OUP: Twenty-five years is a long time. How has the course changed over the years?

Lisa Maurizio: When I began teaching Classical Mythology, there was no Internet, so textbooks had to provide information about the gods and goddesses and heroes and heroines. Now, of course, with Google and the Internet, students can look up all the information that formerly they had to get from textbooks. So, due to the Internet, students want to know different sorts of things about Greek myth, not just the “who,” “what,” and “where”. They want to know how to interpret the strange symbols and images.

OUP: So, student preferences and interests have changed. What about instructors’ interests?

Lisa Maurizio: The field of mythography among scholars has changed a lot too; they want to use theories from anthropology, psychology, and even cognitive science and media studies to understand ancient Greek myths. Scholars are also increasingly interested in thinking about Greece in relation to the Ancient Near East and Italy.
Lisa Maurizio

OUP: How is your book different from the other classical mythology books available to students?

Lisa Maurizio: Most current textbooks really want to tell students about classical myths, and they spend a lot of time doing that. But that ends up being their primary focus. What they don’t do is provide students with ways to think about classical myths. So what I wanted to do was provide a textbook that helps students think about myths by asking challenging questions of them from current theories.

The other thing I wanted to provide that other textbooks don’t provide is an opportunity and way for students to think about how current and contemporary artists use myths. This textbook includes many case studies about how modern artists use myths. These cases really go a long way towards helping students figure out what it means when they see myth in contemporary media.

OUP: How are the chapters in Classical Mythology in Context organized?

Lisa Maurizio: Each chapter is devoted to a god, a goddess, a hero, or a heroine, or looks at them in pairs. Each chapter has four sections. In the first section, History, myth is treated as part of the dynamic religious system of ancient Greece. In the Theory section, we look at different ways of asking and answering questions about Greek myth. In the Comparison section, we look at Greek myths by comparing them to the myths from the Ancient Near East or from Italy. And finally, in the Reception section of each chapter, we look at the ways that modern and contemporary artists have received—that is, have used myth—in their own artwork.

OUP: Primary sources are obviously an essential part of this course. How do you treat sources in your book?

Lisa Maurizio: Each chapter contains tons of primary sources, both visual and written. This is something that really makes this textbook unique: its emphasis on visual sources, not just written ones.

It contains sources from other parts of the Mediterranean basin—ancient myths, both visual and written. Finally, all of the Greek primary written sources are from the Oxford World’s Classics series, so they’re in up-to-date, readable translations.
Theogony

Classical Mythology in Context offers students an approach to understanding how Greek myths acquire meaning and significance in their historical, theoretical, comparative, and later artistic contexts.

The “History” section of each chapter introduces fundamental historical and cultural concepts surrounding the chapter’s main myth or topic.

This chapter investigates the extent to which Athena's declaration of her loyalty and favoritism of men in this play defines her as a goddess. We compare her oversight of men's activities (plowing, farming, sailing, shipbuilding, taming horses, governing, and warfare) with her oversight of the activities of women (weaving). We consider myths about her founding efforts on behalf of the city of Athens and consider why she, not Poseidon, the god of the seas, was the patron deity of Athens, despite its success as a naval power. Finally, we return to and evaluate Athena's sentiment, "I wholeheartedly approve the male."

The second module in each chapter, “Theory,” highlights a key theoretical approach to myths that might fruitfully be applied to the chapter’s topic.

Greek myths may seem to share elements with dreams, if not nightmares. The actions, monsters, and scenarios of dreams, such as the ability to fly, often appear in myths. For example, the hero Bellerophon flies on a winged horse named Pegasus and defeats a sea monster. Daedalus makes wings of feathers and wax so that he and his son Icarus can escape from the island of Crete, where they are being held against their will. But, flying over the Aegean Ocean, Icarus climbs too close to the sun; the wax in his wings melts, and he plunges into the sea. The myth, like a dream, ends abruptly. The dreamer wakes; the reader wonders what flying might mean.
“The inclusion of sections on Theory, Comparison, and Reception is one of my favorite features of this book. It takes the whole project to an intellectual level more ambitious than that of rival textbooks.”

—John Gibert, University of Colorado

The third module, “Comparison,” provides an introduction to literary and visual depictions of myths from the Mediterranean basin and the Ancient Near East.

6.3 COMPARISON

EGYPT: NEITH

Athena appears in the provocative title of historian Martin Bernal’s three-volume *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (1987–2006), and she plays a key role in the contentious debates on the relationship between Greece and Egypt generated by Bernal’s work.

6.4 RECEPTION

ATHENA AS A POLITICAL ALLEGORY

In ancient Greece, Athena was both a virgin and warrior and was renowned for her intelligence. Although female, Athena did not represent women’s lives nor embody the traits they were believed to possess. She was neither a role model for women nor a feminine ideal. Curiously, this disjunction between Athena and the reality of women’s lives allowed her to preside over Athens and represent the ideals to which Athenian men aspired. Freed from the constraints that limited the scope of women’s lives in Greece, Athena was able to become a political, military, and unifying goddess and symbol for the Athenian state. Subsequently, female figures modeled on Athena have served a similar role for nations, particularly modern (post-Enlightenment) ones. The figure of Marianne in France and the Statue of Liberty in America can be traced back to Athena. Both are allegories for certain abstract political values. This section addresses why and how these two figures have become such enduring allegories for their nations and what they have in common with Athena.
CHAPTER 3

30 BCE–476 ce

Greek and Greek-speaking Cities in Anatolia

Abundant maps help students locate all sites in Greece, the larger Greek world, and the Ancient Near East
A “Before You Read” section for each primary source and critical reading is prefaced with a brief contextual overview followed by questions that encourage critical thinking about a god or goddess and previewing that chapter’s content. In Part II, they appear whenever a new hero or heroine is introduced.
SUPPLEMENTS

An online Ancillary Resource Center (ARC) houses:

- An Instructor’s Resource Manual containing lecture outlines, discussion questions, additional sources for the History, Theory, Comparison, and Reception modules in each chapter, and a Test Bank of questions that can be used for assessment
- PowerPoint slides of all of the photos, maps, and line art in the text
- Lecture slides for each chapter

An open-access Companion Website for students at www.oup.com/us/maurizio provides quiz questions, flashcards, author videos, and links to YouTube videos.

PACKAGE any of Barry B. Powell’s powerful translations with Classical Mythology in Context and save your students 20% off the total package price. You can also package any Oxford World’s Classics title with the text at a discounted rate.

TRANSLATIONS, NOTES, AND INTRODUCTIONS BY BARRY B. POWELL

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