

MODULE CODE: AHAN7024
TITLE: Heavenly Discourses
DATED: 23/02/2012

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LEVEL: 7
CREDITS: 20

TEACHING METHODS: Distance Learning via Electronic Media (90% on-line course work, 10% video conferencing tutorials, seminars and lectures).

JACS CODE: L600

AIM(S)

- To introduce students to the history of the role of the sky in western thought.
- To become familiar with the use of visual data as a means of establishing evidence for the existence of celestial symbolism in culture.
- To examine the evidence in recent academic literature for celestial knowledge within a variety of cultures.
- To become familiar with the cultural context of modern developments in modern astronomy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module successful students should be able to:

- demonstrate a systematic understanding of the origins of zodiacs and constellations and the mapping of the sky in a variety of cultures;
- critically evaluate representations and applications of celestial knowledge in literature, music and the visual arts;
- display a sophisticated understanding of the celestial basis and use of calendars;
- reflect on their own responses to visual celestial phenomena.

CONTENT

1. Introduction to the key principles and coordinates of naked-eye astronomy:
 - 1.1. The understanding of the construction of calendars.
 - 1.2. Precession of the equinoxes and movement of the celestial sphere.
 - 1.3. Solar, lunar and stellar cycles.
 - 1.4. The use of an astrolabe.
2. Phenomenological versus Objectivist views of the sky

- 2.1. The phenomenological sky: the sky as a landscape, patterns, time and narrative, notions of place.
- 2.2. The objective sky: the sky as a neutral resource or a place to be colonised, notions of space and large scale astronomy.
3. Mapping the sky.
 - 3.1. The history of zodiacs and constellations
 - 3.2. Cross cultural comparisons of sky mapping
4. Calendars
 - 4.1. The basis of calendars in observations of the sun, moon and stars.
 - 4.2. Ritual and social uses of calendars
5. Star myth
 - 5.1 Introduction to stellar mythology – Babylonian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese
 - 5.2 Myths and story as navigation – Polynesian and other cultures.
 - 5.3 Moon myth and lore.
6. Architecture and the Built Environment
 - 6.1 Egypt –Pyramids as cosmological buildings, astronomical ceilings.
 - 6.2 Europe - Cathedrals, stain glass, domes and the sky.
 - 6.3 Medieval and Renaissance imagery.
 - 6.4 Cosmograms and urban planning.
 - 6.5 Modern use of sky in buildings.
7. The Arts, Literature, Film.
 - 7.1 Views of the sky in classical and sacred literature.
 - 7.2 Images of the sky in non-western art
 - 7.3 The sky in Medieval and Renaissance painting.
 - 7.4 The sky as metaphor in modern literature.
 - 7.5 The celestial journey in contemporary cinema.
8. The sky today
 - 8.1 The politicising of the sky - space race, the stars and constellations on national emblems and flags.
 - 8.2 The approbation of sky images and sky names into the commercial world - a post-modern sky.
 - 8.3 The changing cultural perception of the sky: deep space and Hubble telescope – the current cultural view of the universe.
 - 8.4 The re-emergences of naked-eye sky – the Dark Sky movement, WAN (World At Night).

ASSESSMENT

Written Assignments: 5000 words of written work

Essay written on a topic within the subject area (50% of marks).

2500 word assignment

Example assignment: Using at least two examples, explore the use of mythical narratives of celestial journeys in recent cinema.

Reflexive Journal with Academic Commentary (50% of marks).

2500 word assignment

Students are expected to keep a daily journal of observations of the sky over a two month period, and to write an academic commentary using primary and secondary texts in the subject area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Essential

Barrow, John D., *The Artful Universe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

Campion, Nicholas and Darrelyn Gunzburg (eds), *Heavenly Discourses* (Lampeter: Sophia Centre Press, 2012)

Campion, Nicholas and Rolf Sinclair (eds), 'INSAPVII: Proceedings from the Seventh Conference on the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 14, (2010) no 1 and 2.

Bell, David and Martin Parker, *Space Travel and Culture: From Apollo to Space Tourism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

Cosgrove, Denis, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Recommended

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Campion, Nicholas, 'Surrealist Cosmology: André Breton and Astrology', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 6 no 2 (Autumn/Winter 2002), pp. 45-56.

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