Assignment 3

What lead to Joseph Campbell's interest in comparative mythology?

His father took him to the Natural History Museum as a child. He became fascinated with Native American culture which to an interest in storytelling and myths.

How did Joseph Campbell become the world's foremost scholar on mythology? How did the Great Depression benefit his education?

He wanted to study Medieval Lit. and Sanskrit in graduate school but wasn't permitted by the faculty so he dropped out and began studying on his own. He rented out  a shack and began studying different cultures nine hours a day for five years straight since there wasn't any work during that time.

What is considered to be Joseph Campbell's most important teaching?

He taught the significance of "following your bliss." He later developed the miniseries "The Power of Myth" which embraced the idea that you can put your life on track by recognizing you are where you are meant to be. Everything else will then begin to follow.

What is the primary factor that decides what types of stories a storyteller will decide to tell? What are storytellers "a product" of?

A storyteller has to understand what kind of genres/interests he has. From there he can use his foreknowledge of ideas/history relating to those genres/interests to create something of current value. Storytellers are unique in the fact they come from different cultural and historical backgrounds. Each individual's thoughts are different due to the exposure of their childhood rearing, monetary status, education, life experience, etc. These ingredients create a mixture where every storyteller has a distinct purpose in being and influencing the world around them.

Describe why myths are important. What are "stories", as defined in the context of this chapter?

Throughout history myths have given us the ability to connect across cultural boundaries through developing stories related to the nature of mankind, including our dreams. We are able to learn profound principles from their teachings and incorporate these lessons in our own lives to make them more meaningful. Stories are a collection of the dreams of those who have lived.

Explain how you will discover your own myths.

By having a thorough understanding of cinematic history I can discover the myths in my life. Watching different genres of films and reading different types of stories or screen plays will aid me in realizing what I want to create for an audience. As I focus on character development, motifs, creative structure patterns. etc. I will soon know how to transform my dreams to story and share them with the world.

Why is it important to understand the history of your art?

I will have a knowledge of how the story should be told. By studying my art's history I can know what has been done before and what hasn't. I can verify what works and what doesn't. Knowing my craft's history can help me draw on ideas for references to build my own creative masterpiece. I can respectfully adhere to the workings of those "giants" that have gone before me by building from where they left off.

Describe the difference between an antihero and an antivillain.

An antihero is a flawed (protagonist who isn’t particularly heroic) struggling to do what is right/wrong although often times has to break rules to fulfill his objective. He doesn’t necessarily choose to be involved in the story but is forced to act by his external surroundings. An antivillian has character traits similar to a hero but ultimately isn’t a villain in the sense he still has motives which are understandable/respected (not just pure evil).

As a storyteller, following countless other storytellers before you, how do you plan on keeping your stories FRESH and UNIQUE? How do you achieve freedom from the "monomyth?"

I can learn that the monomyth provides a particular story structure, but I don’t always have to follow it step by step. It is a guide to help me understand the development and progress of a narrative. Not all stories are the same, although they seem to have the underlying techniques of a myth. I can use my own creativity to develop new stories. By having a knowledge of the myths that have gone before me, I can branch off of ideas to formulate something new. I also like to look in places where stories naturally present themselves but haven’t yet been told. I often discover them by people watching when out and about my day. Few people take the time to recognize stories are being told constantly around them without ever realizing.

Explain what you think is the best way to utilize the "hero's journey" without it becoming stale and predictable.

I have let my story be organic by just writing it first. Afterwards, I can go back and identify the elements of myth within the plotline. To do so beforehand would limit my creativity instead of allowing for an open mind where conscious and subconscious ideas can escape.

What separates real storytellers from those who just want to play storyteller? What is the most important trait you must possess to achieve your goals?

I need to have creative discipline. I need to be able to lock myself in a room for multiple hours in the day and produce something of worth within that time frame. I need to take the thoughts in my head and bring them into the physical world so they can be shared and interpreted by others. My ideas will only grow as I nurture them. If I don’t take care of them they will die. There are moments I will have to sacrifice doing something else I like in order to get the writing done. It is almost an insane thought to the average mind but necessary for future success.

* Choose one film from the 12 films you watched that you enjoyed the most, were inspired by, want to steal from, etc, and break down the archetypes in the film using the Christopher Vogler book as a guide. The film you choose should also be what you see as most similar in tone to the film you hope to eventually make.

I’m choosing “Blue Valentine” as my main inspiration for my screenplay. Dean is the hero and his wife Cindy is sort of an antihero (can’t really say villain although I want to). I enjoyed the rawness of the film. It was so subtle and subjective yet powerful in its ability to show, not tell. I liked how the timeline jumped back and forth between their current and past life. The juxtaposition of their love and hate made me realize as a viewer there are more important things to life than giving up. I also learned that the good guy doesn’t always win, which is sad but sort of admirable in respect to seeing the protagonist as a tragic hero. There was a sense of progression and digression in the film that made me question where the story was going.

I hope to be able to create real characters that audiences can cheer for or root against. I want them to have their own unique personality traits that make them quirky and likeable. I was obsessed with the music in the film, mostly because it created a mood and feeling that was reflected in the characters actions. The movie kind of jumped around a bit, but I liked that I didn’t have a clear objective as to what was going to happen. It made the story spontaneous and fun. It wasn’t boring and disinteresting but rather captivating and sincere. I don’t feel like stories always play out in a linear fashion, and here it definitely worked. I want to play around with my timeline and structure to see how the story can become more exciting and draw viewers in. I want to be able to evoke an emotion in an audience that causes them to reflect on their own lives and then act for the better.

* Watch the films "Burden of Dreams" and the DVD supplement "Werner Herzog Eats his Shoe"
* Write a 1 page paper on what you believe Herzog's "philosophy of film" to be. How does it relate to guerilla filmmaking? How does his method of filmmaking differ from other filmmakers?

Werner attempts to keep his film “Fitzcarraldo” organic by keeping his camp and that of the native tribes separate. He doesn’t want to contaminate their culture with that of the white man. He believes the people have their own way of living so while he is filming he attempts to secure a land title for them. He even has prostitutes come to the village to keep the men at peace so they don’t rape the local women.

He takes a huge amount of risks as numerous tribes fight over territory during the filming of “Fitzcarraldo”. He has to change locations several times and even loses some of his ships while filming. Many of the native’s lives are at risk when hauling the ship up the mountain, but he urges them on to complete his film, eventually getting a new engineer and more funding for machinery to pull the ship up the hill. The irony is that he doesn’t want to destroy their culture but doesn’t seem to care much about the men losing their lives for the film.

He sees the Amazon as a “cruel, evil environment where, obscene, violent, and unfinished, yet is humbled before its fornication, lack of harmony, but stills love it”. Filming there is organic for him which is how he believes film should be made. Nothing is forced in that weary environment but natural. At one point he says, “you have to be insane to do what I’m doing” which shows his passion for filmmaking and his ability to articulate his own personal dream. He isn’t in Hollywood on a set made by a group of engineers, yet out in the real world capturing scenes as they come over years of work and toil. He is persistent in his endeavor to get the film completed no matter the cost or time frame. You can’t work that way now days with production companies.

In the film “Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe” Werner criticizes commercials, talk shows, and TV in general. He claims they are “destroying speech, our language, and ability to communicate as humans”. He continues to state that “we should declare war on these things”.

He believed “films will change our perspective of things in the future” and that “we lack adequate images in our lives”. He fulfilled his promises to others to get them to complete tasks like when he ate his shoe after his friend completed a movie or jumped into a cactus after the small man caught on fire. He talked about how filmmakers are clowns of society never being understood yet bearing the burden of silliness to make others laugh/act through their efforts.

I liked when he told his friend that “money doesn’t make films.” He went on to convince him to finally complete one of his stories. He had a deep passion to help others achieve their potential as well as pursuing his own creativity to affect change in the film industry/world in general. He had an understanding of himself and society around him that few connected with. He saw what lacked in life and aimed to make it better through the influence of filmmaking.