

# CHID 496 F: Buffy as Archetype: Rethinking Human Nature within the Buffyverse

2cr ■ Thursdays 4:00-6:00pm

## Goals of the Class

1. Examine the enduring power of cultural archetypes and myths, and the transformative potential of modern reinterpretations of them.
2. Explore how theory and popular culture can work together to help us think through constructions of human nature.
3. Familiarize ourselves with complex theoretical concepts through accessible points of entry.

## Required Textbooks:

- Course Reader (referred to as **CR**)
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. New York: Citadel Press, 1948/1976.
- Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1914/2001.
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1887.
- James B. South, Ed., *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale*. Chicago and LaSalle, IL, 2003. (Referred to as **BTVS&P**)

## Optional:

- Carl Jung, Ed., *Man and his Symbols*. New York: Dell, 1964.
- Philip Hill, *Lacan for Beginners*. New York: Writers and Readers, 1997

## Assignment:

Both Stuart Hall (in “Encoding/Decoding”) and Frances Early & Kathleen Kennedy (editors of *Athena’s Daughters*) address the idea of “participating in the creation of meaning.” Drawing on this concept (as well as Joss Whedon’s idea of “Bring your own Subtext,” analyze a specific episode or character. You must incorporate and cite at least three of the readings we used in class. This paper should be 3-5 pages in length and is due on March 11 (the last day the class will meet).

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## INTRODUCTION

### Week 1: Popular Culture and Conscious Television Viewing

*Episode: New Moon Rising* (May 02, 2000) Oz returns to Sunnydale and is captured by the Initiative during a full moon; a conflicted Willow tells Buffy about her new relationship with Tara.

#### Readings

- **CR:** Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in S. During (Ed.), *A Cultural Studies Reader* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998).
- **CR:** Rachel Fudge, “The Buffy Effect or, A Tale of Cleavage and Marketing” in *Bitch Magazine*, No. 10

#### Recommended Readings:

- **CR:** Roz Kaveny, “She Saved the World. A lot. An introduction to the themes and structures of Buffy and Angel.” In *Reading the Vampire Slayer* (London/New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks)
- **CR:** Farah Mendlesohn, “Surpassing the Love of Vampires: Or, Why (and How) a Queer Reading of the Buffy/Relationship is Denied.” In Rhonda Wilcox and David Laverly, Eds., *Fighting the Forces* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), Page 45-60
- **CR:** “The Super Queers” From [Alternet.org](http://Alternet.org)

## TOPIC 1: MYTH, SYMBOL, AND SLAYER

### Week 2: The Traditional Mythic Hero

*Episode: Prophecy Girl* (June 02, 1997) A book of infallible prophecies predicts that Buffy will face the Master in a battle to the death — hers.

#### *Readings*

- **CR:** Demaris Wehr, Preface; Chapter 1: “Jung And Feminism;” and Chapter 2: “Feminist Theory in Psychology and Theology.” In *Jung and Feminism: Liberating Archetypes*, (1987, Beacon Press. Boston, Mass.) pp. 1-25
- **CR:** The Slayer's Journey: Buffy Summers and the Hero's Life (from atpobtv.com)
- **CR:** Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, Selections from *The Power of Myth*. (USA: DoubleDay, 1988)
  - “Myth and The Modern World,” pp. 3-35
  - “The Journey Inward,” pp. 35-67
  - “The Hero’s Adventure,” pp.123-164

#### *Recommended Readings:*

- *Man and His Symbols*: Carl Jung, “Approaching the Unconscious,” pp. 1-95
- *Man and his Symbols*: Joseph Henderson, “Ancient Myths and Modern Math,” pp. 95-157
- *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, by Joseph Campbell (not ordered)

## TOPIC 2: PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING HUMAN NATURE

### Week 3: Confronting the Real

*Episode: Restless* (May 23, 2000) A primordial spirit haunts the dreams of Buffy, Giles, Willow and Xander, making them each face their innermost fears.

#### *Readings*

- **CR:** Terry Eagleton, “Psychoanalysis,” in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983). 151-193
- **CR:** Elizabeth Grosz, “Sexuality and the Symbolic Order,” in *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990).
- Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams* (**entire book**)

#### *Recommended Readings:*

- **CR:** Carl Jung, “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious” in *The Portable Jung* (Viking Penguin Books), pp. 59-69
- **CR:** Philip Hill, *Lacan for Beginners* (New York: Writers and Readers, 1997), pp. 40-50, 78-85.
- **CR:** Edith Kurzweil “Feminists and Freudians” in *Feminism in the Study of Religion, A Reader*
- **CR:** Donald Keller, “Spirit Guides and Shadow Selves; from the dream life of Buffy (and Faith) from *Fighting the Forces*, pp. 165-177

### Week 4: Between the Two Deaths

*Episode: Once More with Feeling* (Nov. 06, 2001) A mysterious force impels the Scooby Gang to burst into song, revealing their true feelings. Buffy admits that she was pulled out of heaven, and she and Spike share a kiss. Musical episode, with the cast doing their own vocals.

#### *Readings*

- **CR:** Slavoj Zizek, “The Real and Its Vicissitudes,” in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).
- **BTVS&P:** James Lawler, “Between Heaven and Hells: The Multidimensional Universe in Kant and BTVS” Pages 103-116 from, *BTVS and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale*

### Week 5: Slayer Semiotics

*Episode: Hush* (Dec. 14, 1999) After the residents of Sunnydale lose the power of speech, Buffy battles strangely silent assailants alongside an incredulous Riley.

#### *Readings*

- **CR:** Stuart Hall, "Representation, Meaning and Language," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997).
- **CR:** Michael Adams, selections from *Slayer Slang: A Buffy the Vampire Slayer Lexicon*:
  - Introduction (By Jane Epenson)
  - Chapter 1, "Slayer Slang" Pages 1-46

#### *Recommended Readings:*

- **CR:** Karen Eileen Overby and Lahney Preston-Matto, "Staking in Tongues" from *Fighting the Forces* Pages 73-84

## **TOPIC 3: LEARNING ABOUT OURSELVES THROUGH THE OTHER**

### Week 6: Reading the Other

*Episode: Who Are You?* (Feb. 29, 2000) While Buffy is mistakenly kidnapped by the Watcher's Council, Faith wreaks havoc in Buffy's life.

#### *Readings*

- **CR:** Simone de Beauvoir, "The Psychoanalytic Point of View," in *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989/1952), 38-52
- **CR:** Demaris Wehr, "Individuation and Our Inner Cast of Characters" (pp. 49-75) & "Analytical Psychology Through a Feminist Lens" (pp.99-126) from *Jung and Feminism: Liberating Archetypes* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987)

#### *Recommended Readings:*

- **BTVS&P:** Greg Forster, "Faith and Plato: "You're nothing! Disgusting, Murderous Bitch!" Pages 7-19
- **BTVS&P:** Karl Schult, "Also Sprach Faith: The Problem of the Happy Rogue Vampire Slayer" Pages 20-34
- **CR:** Sue Tjardes, "'If You're Not Enjoying It, You're Doing Something Wrong' Textual and Viewer Constructions of Faith, the Vampire Slayer." From *Athena's Daughters* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003)

### Week 7: Reading the Other

*Episode: What's My Line, Part 2* (Nov. 24, 1997) Buffy must team up with Kendra to save Angel when it turns out that his death is necessary to cure Drusilla.

#### *Readings*

- **CR:** Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997).
- **CR:** Vivian Chin, "Buffy? She's like me, she's not like me. She's rad!" From *Athena's Daughters* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003)
- **CR:** Lynne Edwards, "Slaying in Black and White" from *Fighting The Forces*

## **TOPIC 4: SEARCHING FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE**

### Week 8: Themes in Human Nature

*Episode: Intervention* (April 24, 2001) The Scoobies mistake Spike's custom-made romance with his Buffybot for the real thing; Glory's minions kidnap Spike in the belief that he is the Key.

#### *Readings*

- Simone DeBeauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (**entire book**)

### Week 9: Redemption and Morality

*Episode: Lies My Parents Told Me* (March 25, 2003) When the Scoobies fail to nullify the First's hold on Spike, Principal Wood and Giles team up to kill him. Meanwhile, Spike relives the day he became a vampire.

#### *Readings*

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (**entire book**)
- **BTVS&P:** Richard Greene and Wayne Yuen, "Morality on Television: The Case of BTVS" Pages, 271-281
- **BTVS&P:** Jason Kawal, "Should we do What Buffy Would Do?" Pages 149-159
- **BTVS&P:** Scott R. Stroud, "A Kantian Analysis of Moral Judgement in BTVS" Pages 185-194
- **BTVS&P:** Gregory J. Sakal, "No Big Win: Themes of Sacrifice, Salvation, and Redemption" Pages 239-253
- **BTVS&P:** Jessica Prata Miller, "The I in Team, Buffy and Feminist Ethics" Pages 35-48

### **CONCLUSION:**

### Week 10: Breaking the Heroic Mold

*Episode: The Chosen* (May 20, 2003) The final episode.

#### *Readings*

- **CR:** Frances Early and Kathleen Kennedy, "Intro to Athena's Daughters"
- **CR:** Frances Early, "The Female Just Warrior Re-Imagined: From Boudicca to Buffy" From *Athena's Daughters* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003)
- **CR:** Selections from *The Feminist Companion to Mythology* (London: Pandora Press, 1992)
  - Jane Caputi, "On Psychic Activism: Feminist Mythmaking"
  - Diane Purkiss, "Women's Rewriting of Myth"

#### *Recommended Readings:*

- **CR:** Elyce Rae Helford, "My Emotions give me power" Pg 18-34, *Fighting the Forces*
- **CR:** Trina Robbins, "Chapter 1," *The Great Woman Super Heroes*.
- **CR:** "Warrior Women on Screen" By Douglas Eby from <http://www.talentdevelop.com/wwos.html>
- **CR:** Zoe-Jane Playden, "What you are, what's to come: Feminisms, citizenship and the divine" Pg 120-147 From *Reading the Vampire Slayer*