Syllabus: MYTHS OF ORIGIN.

We will read and discuss a representative group of “sacred narratives” that offer rich and diverse accounts of origin. Four traditional cultures will offer a glimpse of the complexity embedded in creation stories that tell of relatedness to the cosmos, to community and to the natural environment. The stories of Australian Aboriginal people provide a starting point in our exploration of mythic understandings of origin and will be followed with the totemic trickster stories of Canadian native peoples. The Navajo and Dogon (African) tales of emergence from below and evolution from above will complete our survey.

Each class will begin with a short introductory lecture including classic theories of myth (e.g., Campbell, Eliade, Dundes), and traditional art. The text can be purchased online at a reasonable cost: Barbara Sproul, *Primal Myths*.

Outline

Week One: Quest for “the beginning,” Illustrated Lecture
Week Two: Australian Aboriginal Narrative: Sproul text; recommended: Bruce Chatwin, *Songlines*
Week Three: Northwestern Natives (Canada): Haida/Raven myths Sproul text; online text; recommended: Bill Reid’s art
Week Four: Native narrative Eskimo; Southwestern-Navajo
Week Five: Continue Southwestern native; African (Mali)
Week Six: Mali-Dogon; overview and conclusion