The Ultimate Culture Hero: Herakles/Hercules of Thebes

Birth and Early Life
1. Son of Alcmene and Amphitryon (Thebes)
   a. Zeus sleeps with Alcmene
   b. Amphitryon comes back and Alcmene is confused
2. As a baby, H. kills Hera's snakes
3. Kills his music teacher Linus
4. Marries Megara; kills her and three kids
5. Must serve Eurystheus, his cousin

The Twelve Labors
a. The Six Peloponnesian Labors
   i. The Nemean Lion
   1. Uses lion's claws to cut impenetrable skin
   ii. The Lernaean Hydra
   iii. The Cerynean Hind/Deer
      1. Sacred to Artemis, Golden antlers, captured alive
   iv. The Erymanthian Boar
   v. The Augean Stables
   vi. The Stymphalian Birds
      1. Makes fly into the air with castanets, shoots them down
b. The Four Ends of the Earth
   i. The Cretan Bull (South)
   ii. The Horses of Diomedes (Thrace) (North)
      1. Man-eating Horses; H. feeds them with their master
   iii. The Girdle of Hippolyta (East)
   iv. The Cattle of Geryon (West)
      1. H. travels there in the Cup of the Sun
      2. Side Deed: Antaeus

c. Heaven and Hell
   i. The Golden Apples of the Hesperides
      1. Side Deed: Frees Prometheus
   ii. Cerberus from the Underworld

2. Hercules, The Man of Paradox
a. Human and Divine
b. Nature
   i. Association with Beasts
   ii. Hairiness and Lion skin clothes
   iii. Use of the Club, Wrestling

c. Lack of social restraints
   i. Gluttony and Drunkenness
   ii. Sexual Lack of Control
   iii. Murder
   iv. Rage and Madness
   v. Superhuman Strength

d. Culture
   i. Clear wilderness of beasts
   ii. The Hunter and The Herder of Cattle
   iii. The Archer
   iv. Kill outlaws, anti-social folk
   v. Founder of cities, Olympic Games
   vi. Freer of Prometheus
Sophocles' *Trachiniae/Women of Trachis*

1. **Labors**
   a. Atonement for murdering his family (taming the beast within)
   b. An ever widening circle of areas 'civilized' and wandered over: Peloponnese, Four corners of the Earth, Paradise/Underworld
   c. Predominance of Beasts (Lions, Boars, Deer, Birds, Bulls, Horses), Monsters (Geryon), and Anti-social People (Diomedes, Antaeus, Augeus, Amazons)

2. **Deianira, Nessus, Iole, Omphale, and Death**
   a. Hercules battles Achelous for Deianira
   b. Hercules interested in Iole, princess of Oetalia; rejected by her dad
   c. In anger he kills Iole's brother Iphitus, who had come as his guest
   d. As punishment, he serves the Lydian Queen Omphale for 3 years
      i. The two switch roles - he dresses as woman, she as a warrior
   e. Deianira and Nessus - the river crossing - the poisoned shirt
   f. Attacks Oetalia, gets Iole as a prisoner
   g. Deianira, jealous, sends the shirt to Heracles via Lichas
   h. Heracles, poisoned, enraged, kills Lichas
   i. Burns himself on pyre - Zeus makes him a god

3. **Hercules' Wild Side**
   a. Lone Mountain Man; Gets into Trouble in Society
   b. Clothing and Accessories: Lion Skin, Club, Sometimes Naked
   c. Big Appetites: Food, Drink, Sex
   d. Passions, Lack of Emotional Control: Murderous Rages
      i. Megara and Children; Linus; Iphitus; Lichas

4. **Not Bound by Social Constraints; Reckless, Man of Passions**
   a. Example: Admetus and Alcestis
   b. Example: Pholos and the Centaurs

5. **Force of Nature and Larger than Life**
   a. Hero: Not someone you look up to, and try to emulate, but a figure that combines the contradictory elements of life. Symbol of conflict between Nature and Culture in everyone.
      i. Every ancient story about him develops these elements.
      ii. The Ultimate Transgression of Convention:

6. **He becomes immortal and a god**

The credit for the pictures shown in class and the details presented on this handout must be shared with Professor Lawrence Kim, University of Texas at Austin: [http://www.utexas.edu/courses/larrymyth/](http://www.utexas.edu/courses/larrymyth/)