Summer 6-15-2012

ENG 5061-031: Arthurian Traditions in Medieval British Literature

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English 5061
Arthurian Traditions in Medieval British Literature
Summer 2012

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Office Hours: M/W 5-6 pm, 8:30-9:30 pm and by appointment.

About the Course

In this course we’ll explore the multivalent legends of Arthur and his court, particularly those from Britain and France, with an eye toward their extraordinary adaptability as tools for political maneuvering, “nation” building, and social critique. As we trace the circulation and transformation of these legends, we’ll consider the ever-shifting representations of Arthur and of his knights to ask how these portraits speak to and about the cultures in which they are produced. Equally important, we’ll examine these works as literature, exploring how they produce meaning – all textually sensitive critical approaches are welcome.

Required Texts

The Camelot Project at the University of Rochester. Web. <lib.rochester.edu/camelot/arthmenu.htm>

Evaluation and Policies

Response papers: 2 at 15% each
Article Presentation: 15%
Seminar Paper: 25%
Final Exam: 30%
Participation: thoughtful contribution to class discussion, informed by careful reading of the assigned texts, will be expected of all students in the class.

Attendance: except under extraordinary circumstances, you’re expected to be present for and engaged in every class meeting.

Late work: except under extraordinary circumstances, work turned in late will be penalized.

**Plagiarism Policy**

The following is the English department’s statement concerning plagiarism:

> “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including a grade of ‘F’ for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

While I assume I’ll have no need to impose penalties for plagiarism, the ones I consider appropriate are that the student fail the course and be reported to the Judicial Affairs Office. If at any point in your writing for this course (or for another, if you like) you’re uncertain about whether you’re using sources appropriately, please come to talk to me.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please let me know and please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**Syllabus**

(I’ll notify you in advance of any changes)

Week 1: Welsh Narratives

Monday, June 11

Course Introduction

“The Spoils of Annwfn” (c. 500-1000!)

Nennius, *Historia Brittonum* (c. 800)

Wednesday, June 13

*How Culhwch Won Olwen* (c. 1100?) (*Mabinogian*)

*Rhonabwy’s Dream* (c. 1100?) (*Mabinogian*)
Week 2: The Chronicle Tradition

Monday, June 18
Geoffrey of Monmouth, from *The History of the Kings of Britain* (c. 1138)
Wace, “The Death of Arthur” from *Roman de Brut* (c. 1155)
Layamon, “The Death of Arthur” from *Brut* (c. 1205)
(All texts are available online through *The Camelot Project*)
Presentation: on Dennis P. Donahue, “The Darkly Chronicked King: An Interpretation of the Negative Side of Arthur in Lawman’s *Brut* and Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britannie*”

Wednesday, June 20
Edward I and the Scots (1301) (handout)
Gerald of Wales, from *On the Instruction of Princes and Mirror of the Church* (c. 1193) (*Camelot Project*)

Week 3: Romancing the Legend

Monday, June 25
Chretien de Troyes, *The Knight of the Cart* (c. 1160) (*Complete Romances*)
Presentation: tba

Wednesday, June 27
Chretien de Troyes, *The Story of the Grail* (c. 1190) (*Complete Romances*)
*Peredur Son of Efrog* (c. 1100) (*Mabinogian – excerpts TBA*)
Presentation: tba

Week 4: Christianizing the Legend

Monday, July 2
French Arthurian Cycle, *The Quest for Holy Grail* (c. 1215) (*Lancelot-Grail Reader*)
Presentation: on Martin B. Shichtman, “Politicizing the Ineffable: The *Queste del Saint Graal* and Malory’s ‘Tale of the Sankgreal’”

Guidelines for reading Middle English

Wednesday, July 4 – no classes
Week 5: Repercussions in England

Monday, July 9
*Alliterative Morte Arthur* (c. 1400) (*King Arthur’s Death*)
*Stanzaic Morte Arthure* (c. 1350) (*King Arthur’s Death*)
Presentation: tba

Wednesday, July 11
*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1380) (handout)
Presentation: tba

Week 6: Sir Thomas Malory

Monday, July 16
Presentation: on Elspeth Kennedy, “The Knight as Reader of Arthurian Romance”

Wednesday, July 18
Selection from *Prose Merlin* (c. 1450) (*Camelot Project*)
French Arthurian Cycle, *The Story of Merlin* (c. 1215) (*Lancelot-Grail Reader*)
Presentation: tba

Week 7: Continue with Malory

Monday, July 23
French Arthurian Cycle, *The Death of Arthur* (c.1215) (*Lancelot-Grail Reader*)
Presentation: tba

Wednesday, July 25
Seminar papers are due
Presentations
Week 8: Gawain in England

Monday, July 30
*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* (*Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances*)
*The Greene Knight* (*SG*)

Wednesday, Aug 1
**Final Exam**