ENG 5001-001: Arthurian Traditions in Medieval British Literature

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English 5001
Arthurian Traditions in Medieval British Literature
Fall 2008

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Office Hours: M/W/F 10-11:30 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 not only toward their literary qualities, but also toward their extraordinary adaptability as tools for political maneuvering, “nation” building, and social critique. As we trace the historical production and circulation of these legends, we’ll consider the ever-shifting representations of Arthur and of his knights in order to ask in what ways these portraits speak to and about the cultures in which they are produced.

Required Texts


Evaluation and Policies

Response papers: 3 at 10% each
Article Presentation: 15%
Final Exam: 25%
Seminar Paper: 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: August 25
- Course Introduction
- Edward I and the Scots
- "The Spoils of Annwfn"

Week 2: September 1
- Labor Day: no classes

Week 3: September 8
- *How Culhwch Won Olwen* (e-reserve)
- *Rhonabwy's Dream* (e-reserve)
- Presentation: on Armel Diverres, "Arthur in Culhwch and Olwen and in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes"

Week 4: September 15
- Nennius, from *Historia Brittonum* (handout)
- Gerald of Wales, from *On the Instruction of Princes* and *Mirror of the Church* (handout)
Geoffrey of Monmouth, from *The History of the Kings of Britain* (handout)

Week 5: September 22
*Peredur Son of Efrog* (handout)
Chretien de Troyes, *The Story of the Grail* (*Complete Romances*)
Presentation: on Donald Maddox, “Lévi-Strauss in Camelot: Interrupted Communication in Arthurian Feudal Fictions”

Week 6: September 29
French Vulgate, *The Quest for the Holy Grail* (*Lancelot-Grail Reader*)
Guidelines for reading Middle English
Presentation: on Martin B. Shichtman, “Politicizing the Ineffable: The *Queste del Saint Graal* and Malory’s ‘Tale of the Sankgreal’”

Week 7: October 6
Marie de France, *Lanval* (e-reserve)
Middle English *Sir Launfal* (e-reserve)
Presentation: on David Chamberlain, “*Marie de France’s Arthurian Lai*: Subtle and Political”

Week 8: October 13
Selection from the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* (pages tba)
Selection from the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (pages tba)

Week 9: October 20
Review esp. Geoffrey of Monmouth
Presentation: on Elspeth Kennedy, “The Knight as Reader of Arthurian Romance”

Week 10: October 27
French Vulgate, *The Death of Arthur* (*Lancelot-Grail Reader*)
Presentation: tba

Week 11: November 3
Selection from *Prose Merlin* (*Camelot Project*)
French Vulgate, *The Story of Merlin* (*Lancelot-Grail Reader*)
Presentation: tba
Week 12: November 10
Chretien, *The Knight of the Cart, (Complete Romances)*
Presentation: tba

Week 13: November 17
*The Knight with the Sword* (handout)
*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (e-reserve)
Presentation: on Felicity Riddy, “The Speaking Knight: Sir Gawain and Other Animals”

Week 14: November 24
Thanksgiving Break: no classes

Week 15: December 1
*The Marriage of Sir Gawain* (*Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances*)
*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* (*SG*)
*The Greene Knight* (*SG*)
Presentation: tba

Week 16: December 8
Exam Review, Project Discussion
Final Papers are due