

Fall 2017 ♦ ENGL 551-002 (#59318)

TR 3:30-4:45 ♦ MH 120

Dr. Obermeier

Arthurian Legends: Medieval to Modern

Office Hours: M and R 10-12 in HUM 227, and by Appointment

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Required Texts

- *Chretien de Troyes. *Perceval / The Story of the Grail*. Trans. Ruth Cline. U of Georgia P, 1985.
- *Lacy, Norris J., and Geoffrey Ashe. *The Arthurian Handbook*. 2nd ed. Garland, 1998. (AH)
- *Lacy, Norris J., ed. *The Lancelot-Grail Reader*. Garland, 2000. (LGR)
- *Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte Darthur*. Ed. Helen Cooper. Oxford UP, 1998.
- Mitchison, Naomi. *To the Chapel Perilous*. Green Knight, 1999. On class webpage (CWP)
- Obermeier, Anita, and Gregory Castle. *Guide to Style*. 2017. (CWP)
- Tennyson, Lord Alfred. *Idylls of the King*. (CWP).
- *Twain, Mark. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Penguin, 1971.
- *Wilhelm, James J., ed. *The Romance of Arthur*. Garland, 2013. (RA)

* items you need to buy; all other readings will be available at:

Class webpage: <https://www.anitaobermeier.com/engl551arthurianlegends>

Course Requirements

Oral Group Presentation	worth 10%	Final	worth 15%
Literature Review for Research Paper	worth 15%	Class Participation	worth 15%
15-18-page Research Paper	worth 30%		
Electronic Discussion Forum	worth 15%		

Grading is done on a standard 0-100 scale. For grading rubrics and scale, see class webpage, Assignments.

Tentative Syllabus

(Texts to be read for the day indicated. Responses are to be handed in on the day indicated.)

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(Texts to be read for the day indicated.)

Week 1

T 8.22 Introduction to the Course.

R 8.24 **Origins: The Arthur of the Chronicles:** *The Arthurian Handbook (AH)*, Ch. I: “Origins” (2-23, 29-35); *Romance of Arthur (RA)*, Ch. 1: “Arthur in the Latin Chronicles” (1-8).

Week 2

T 8.29 **Celtic Arthur:** *AH*, Ch. I: “Origins” (23-29); *RA*, Browse through Ch. 2: “Arthur in the Early Welsh Tradition” (9-27), and Read “Culhwch and Olwen” (28-57).

R 8.31 **Arthur of Monmouth:** *AH*, Ch. I: 36-52; *RA*, Ch. 4, “Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth” (58-87). Note: there is a mass of detail in Chs. I and II of the *AH*—you are not expected to learn all the names, only to understand the major traditions.

Forum Article: Marylyn Jackson Parins, “Looking for Arthur.”

F 9.1 **Last day to add sections, change credit hours or change grading option in LoboWEB.**

Week 3

T 9.5 **Arthur, Gawain, and Mordred:** *RA*, Chs. 5, 6, 21: “Wace, *Roman de Brut*” (88-99), “Layamon, *Brut*” (100-11), *The Alliterative Morte Arthure* (501-3, 520-29—Browse through 503-19); *AH*, Ch. II (57-67, 122-4).

R 9.7 **Lancelot and Guinevere:** *AMA* cont. (529-41); *RA*, Ch. 7: Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, or *The Knight of the Cart* (112-38); *AH*, Ch. II (68-71).

Forum Article: Grzegorz Buczynski, “Battling Against Men and Monsters.”

F 9.8 **Last day to drop without a W, add sections, or change credit hours.**

Week 4

T 9.12 **Lancelot and Guinevere** cont.: *RA*, Ch. 7: Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot* (139-80); Epic/Romance Handout (CWP).

R 9.14 **Tristan and Isolde:** *RA*, Ch. 12: Béroul, *The Romance of Tristan* (236-81); *AH*, Ch. II (88-91, 100-3); Andreas Capellanus, *De Amore* (CWP).

Forum Article: Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “An Interpreter’s Dilemma.”

Week 5

T 9.19 **Perceval:** *RA*, Ch. 14: Thomas of Britain, *Tristan* (CWP); Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, or *The Story of the Grail* (1-60), and *AH*, Ch. II (71-76, 92-94).

W 9.20 **Arthurian Film Festival** in HUM 108, 6:30 pm: Clips from various European Tristan and Isolde films. Feature Film: *Tristan and Isolde* (2006).

R 9.21 **Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Grail:** *Percival* (77-132; 168-76); Browse 61-76; *RA*, Ch. 9: *Parzival* (193-206) and *Parzival* Part II (CWP); *AH*, Ch. II (76-81, 97-100). Grail Comparison Chart (CWP).

Forum Article: Monica L. Wright, “Dress for Success: Bérroul’s *Tristan* and the Restoration of Status through Clothes.”

Week 6

T 9.26

Merlin: *The Lancelot-Grail Reader (LGR): The Story of Merlin and The Death of Merlin* (49-92, 415-19). Note that some of this material overlaps with *The Prose Merlin* section in the *RA*, Ch. 17 (324-76)—the same sources, but different translators, and different selections. **Film Response Due.**

R 9.28

Group Presentations. Instructions on CWP.

Forum Article: Anne Berthelot, “Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake.”

Week 7

T 10.3

Vulgate Lancelot: *LGR: Lancelot*, Pts. I-II (94-141); *AH*, Ch. II (81-88).

R 10.5

LGR: Lancelot, Pts. III, V (142-79, 232-42, 296-304).

Forum Article: Elspeth Kennedy, “The Figure of Lancelet in the *Lancelot-Graal*.”

Week 8

T 10.10

Continue *LGR*. **Midterm Exam Prep.**

10.12-13

Fall Break. Enjoy!

No Forum Article

Week 9

T 10.17

Meeting on Writing Assignments.

Arthurian Film Festival in HUM 108, 6:30 pm: Clips from *First Knight* (1995) and *Mists of Avalon* (2001); Feature Film; *Guinevere* (1994).

R 10.19

Vulgate Grail: *LGR: The Quest for the Grail* (305, 313-363)

Malory: *Le Morte Darthur*, Note on the Text (xiii-xvi), Caxton’s Preface (528-30), 3-49. *AH*, Ch. II (128-33). Note: some of this material will be familiar, since Malory is abridging and retelling tales from his sources, many of which you have already read, but we are focusing on what he decides to use, how and why.

Forum Article: Roberta Davidson, “Malory’s Originality Revisited.”

Week 10

T 10.24

Group Presentations. Instructions on CWP. **Film Response Due.**

R 10.26

Malory, 50-81, 120-68. Browse through 95-119; Heraldry and Color Symbolism Handouts (CWP).

Forum Article: Ken Hodges, “Wounded Masculinity in Malory.”

Week 11

T 10.31

Malory, 240-309.

R 11.2

Malory, 310-50, 388-414. Browse through 351-87.

Forum Article: Dhira B. Mahoney, “The Truest and Holiest Tale.”

Week 12

M 11.6

Paper Proposal Due via email.

T 11.7

Malory, 415-44, 460-505; Knighthood Handout (CWP).

R 11.9 **Victorian Masculinities and Femininities:** Finish Malory 505-27. Tennyson, “The Lady of Shalott” (CWP); *Idylls of the King*, “Dedication” (19-20—eR), “Merlin and Vivien” (142-67—eR); *AH*, Ch. III (152-64).

Forum Article: Virginia Blanton, “Guinevere’s Asceticism and Penance.”

F 11.10 **Last day to drop without approval of college dean in LoboWeb.**
Arthurian Round Table Dinner, 6:30 pm. Invitation will be issued.

Week 13

T 11.14 **Group Presentations.** Instructions on CWP. **Email Term Paper Proposal to me.**
Arthurian Film Festival in HUM, 6:30 pm: Clips from *Lancelot du Lake* (1974) and *Knight in Camelot* (1998). Feature Film: *Excalibur* (1981).

R 11.17 **The American Response:** Tennyson cont.: “Guinevere” (269-87—CWP), “To the Queen” (301-2—CWP), William Morris, “The Defense of Guinevere” (CWP); Twain, *Yankee* 29-77; Twain Preface Paragraph (CWP); *AH*, Ch. III (164-65). **Film Response Due.**

Forum Article: Catherine Phillips, “Tennyson’s ‘Idylls of the King’ and the Chivalric Code.”

F 11.18 **Literature Review due via email in MS Word format.**

Week 14

T 11.21 Twain, *Yankee* 79-214.

Forum Article: Jennifer O’Neill, “Twain’s ‘A Connecticut Yankee and US Imperialism.’”

R 11.23-24 **Thanksgiving Break**

Week 15

T 11.28 Twain, *Yankee* 215-352.

T 11.30 **Postmodernism:** Twain, *Yankee* 353-410; Naomi Mitchison, *To the Chapel Perilous* 13-49 (CWP); *AH*, Ch. III (183).

Forum Article: Porscha Fermanis, “Subversion of the Comic in Mark Twain’s ‘Connecticut Yankee.’”

Week 16

T 12.5 Mitchison, 50-146 (CWP).

R 12.7 Mitchison, 147-218 (CWP). **Review and Final Exam Prep.**

Forum Article: Michael Amey, “Constructing a Perilous Chapel.”

Su 12.10 **Term Paper Due by Midnight. Email Submission.**

R 12.14 **Final Exam:** 3:00-5:00. Blue books are optional, but some form of paper is required.

Course Objectives

The Arthurian Legend has been the single most prolific and enduring literary motif in Western literature. This course will investigate the enduring strength and attraction of the Arthurian legends from their pan-European beginnings in the medieval period to contemporary literature popular culture, and film. There is no such thing as one “authentic” Arthurian tradition, only competing accounts and reconceptualizations. We will read masterpieces from the Celtic tradition, Chrétien de Troyes, the French Lancelot-Grail Cycle, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Thomas Malory, Alfred Lord

Tennyson, Mark Twain, Naomi Mitchison, and others. This way, we can observe how each new version serves a new authorial, political, or cultural agenda—whether it is to establish a national foundation myth, to endorse specific religious values, to revive medieval values in an industrial age, or to challenge gender stereotypes in modern times. We will also focus on the evolution of other important Arthurian characters, such as Gawain, Tristan, Perceval, Morgan le Fay, Galahad, Merlin, Lancelot, and Guinevere. Our guiding question through the course will be “Why Arthur and his companions, particularly? Why *these* figures, *this* narrative, *this* myth?”

Learning Outcomes

At end of the course, students should be able:

- to examine firsthand some of the best Arthurian works throughout time
- to be familiar with the various personages surrounding King Arthur
- to understand the historic time periods of the Arthurian legends and those that perpetuated them
- to explore why the Arthurian legends took hold and how they remain popular
- to gain a sense of the evolution of the themes, how and why they transformed
- to make intertextual connections between the medieval and modern versions of the legends
- to conduct independent research using appropriate methods and tools for Medieval and literary studies to give effective oral presentations
- to write competent analytical response and research papers
- to identify, analyze, and synthesize the acquired knowledge and skills in tests and papers

Course Policies

1. Attendance is mandatory. Since your progress in the course will depend a great deal on what we discuss in class, I expect class attendance and participation (actual contributions to the class discussion). I will pass out attendance sheets, and it is your responsibility to sign the sheets. If the sheet passed you by, come up to the desk and sign at the end of class. Half of your participation grade is based on attendance. Every missed class will drop your participation grade 3 points. **Note:** While you are welcome to check with me on what you have missed, I cannot “reteach” material you missed during my office hours or over email. Please consult with your peers for notes.

2. The Term Paper must conform to the presentational guidelines set forth in the *Guide to Style* or the *MLA* and be submitted on time. The paper should represent your best effort and will be graded accordingly. Please note that I encourage you to discuss topics, outlines, and rough drafts with me during my office hours or via email. The paper assignment sheet is on the class webpage.

3. Tests are closed book, consisting of short ids, passage ids, and essay questions. I will link a study guide before each exam on the class webpage.

4. Discussion Forum: The discussion forum is designed to provide an additional opportunity for scholarly exchange, especially discussion of interesting secondary material we don’t have time to treat in class. The benefit here is that your thought processes do not happen in a vacuum, as everyone receives everyone else’s responses and can respond to individual opinions, if so desired. You are supposed to post **FIVE** times per semester and respond **FIVE** times to the posts of others. You pick the five weeks in which to post and the five weeks in which to respond. You may post more often, if you wish. **Try to post by Friday of a given week.**

Format: Students read the essay(s) assigned for the week, paying particular attention to content, methodology, and argument. Don't be afraid to critique a certain approach or methodology.

5. Class Discussion and Participation: One of my teaching philosophies is student ownership of text along with critical thinking. In order to facilitate good class discussion and involvement of all students, I have devised several short individual and small group warm-up exercises trying to cull out the significance of each text. It is not enough to retell "the story," although sometimes things might be confusing and clarification is necessary. The emphasis is on analysis.

6. Group Presentations: Please look at the instructions on the class.

7. Arthurian Film Festival: Attendance at the film nights counts toward your participation grade. You have to attend **twice** during the semester and write a 1-page response paper for each film night you attend. It should be fun, and there will be dinner-type food and refreshments.

8. Assignments: Students must attempt **all** assignments to pass the course; hence you cannot, for instance, skip the final. There will be extra credit opportunities for attending lectures with medieval topics, etc. 5 points on 5% of the overall grade.

9. Pertinent Websites: Our class website contains links to pertinent Arthurian and other medieval sites. All handouts will be available from the website also.

10. The English Department affirms its commitment to the joint responsibility of instructors and students to foster and maintain a positive learning environment.

11. Accommodation Statement: Accessibility Services (Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506) provides academic support to students who have disabilities. If you think you need alternative accessible formats for undertaking and completing coursework, you should contact this service right away to assure your needs are met in a timely manner. If you need local assistance in contacting Accessibility Services, see the Bachelor and Graduate Programs office.

12. Cell Phones: No cell phone use or texting in this class. Turn your phones off.

13. Plagiarism. Don't do it! For clarification, see #102-107 in the *Guide to Style*.

14. Letters of Recommendation: I receive many requests for letters of recommendations for graduate school admission, job applications, scholarships, etc. I am happy to write these when asked but have two requests: 1) Your work needs to be on a level that I can recommend; 2) You need to keep the work you do in this class so I can reference specifics when needed.