

ARTHURIAN LITERATURE / AP/EN 4504 6.0

Fall/Winter 2019-2020 | Wednesday, 4-7 pm, R S101

Dr. Natalia Khomenko

E-mail: khomenko@yorku.ca

Office: Atkinson 708

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:30-3:30 pm, or by appointment

Course Description

In Guy Ritchie's recent film *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword*, the not-yet-crowned (and raised in a brothel) Arthur mockingly queries the appearance of the female magician who has just saved his life. "Mage... Never met one of you in the flesh," says he, "I thought you'd be taller. And have a beard." In this metatheatrical moment, the film asks us to challenge our own preconceptions about Arthurian characters, highlighting the complex development of Arthuriana from the early middle ages until today.

The stories of King Arthur and his knights have captured the popular imagination for over twelve centuries and stimulated the efforts of many writers and, lately, film-makers. It is very likely that these stories have foundation in historical events: Arthur might have been a warrior who fought on the side of the Celtic-speaking Britons after the weakening of the Roman Empire. However, throughout the late Middle Ages Arthur became known throughout Europe as a great and noble British king, whose genealogy could be traced directly to the ancient Troy. This course will examine a wide range of Arthuriana, beginning with the early mentions in Latin and Welsh sources and then closely focusing on the texts created in the late middle ages (including most of Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*). We will finish by tracing the adaptations of Arthurian texts and characters from the sixteenth into the twenty-first century. Throughout the course, we will consider how Arthurian stories blend history (or what their authors believe to be history) and fiction in order to offer social, political, and religious lessons to their readers.

Learning Outcomes

- Ability to read and analyze versions of the Arthurian legend, with particular attention to structure, intended audience, and cultural context.
- Familiarity with the Middle Ages as a historical period, and an understanding of its central concerns and preoccupations.
- Understanding of the blurry boundaries between history and fiction, with a focus on the practices and uses of historiography through the centuries.
- Knowledge of literary traditions and intertextual dialogues in English literature, as well as the influence of Latin, Welsh, French, and German sources.
- Awareness of our own interest in and engagement with medieval works in literature and film.
- Advanced critical thinking, ability to engage with scholarly arguments, and highly developed analytical and essay-writing skills.

Evaluation

Fall term essay – 20%

Presentation & essay – 15%

Winter term annotated bibliography and essay proposal – 10%

Winter term essay – 25%

Reading responses – 20%

Participation – 10%

Required Texts

The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation. Third edition. Eds. Norris J. Lacy and James J. Wilhelm. Routledge, 2013. (earlier editions are not suitable as they include fewer works)

Sir Thomas Malory. *Le Morte D'Arthur*. Winchester Manuscript. Ed. Helen Cooper. Oxford Paperbacks Publication, 2008. (this is a well-edited and slightly abridged edition that will make life significantly easier for you; please get this one)

Lord Alfred Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*. Penguin. (or any good edition)

Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant*. Vintage Canada, 2016.

Some Useful Online Resources

- Oxford English Dictionary online: available through York Library website.
- Middle English Dictionary online, created and maintained by the University of Michigan: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
- The Camelot Project, created and maintained by the University of Rochester, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot-project>.
- Digitised Manuscripts at the British Library: <https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/>.
- The British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts: <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/welcome.htm>.
- The Labyrinth: Resources for Medieval Studies, sponsored by Georgetown University: <https://web.archive.org/web/20081026025849/http://www8.georgetown.edu/departments/medieval/labyrinth/>.
- MLA guidelines:
 - 1) The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>,
 - 2) Student Papers and Academic Research Kit (SPARK): http://www.library.yorku.ca/spark/academic_integrity/index.html,
 - 3) The Writer's Handbook: MLA Documentation Guide, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocMLA.html>.

Reading Responses

You will submit a minimum of 8 reading responses throughout the year (**at least 4 of them must be submitted in the fall term, and at least 4 in the winter term**). Each response should be at least page long, single-spaced, submitted in hard copy at the beginning of the class, and should directly address one or more readings assigned for that day. Reading responses cannot be submitted late (after the material has already been discussed in class).

While I don't expect the reading responses to be in essay format, they do need to be coherent, have reader-friendly structure, and offer interesting and original interpretation and discussion of the material. Each response is worth 2.5% of the final grade, and will be graded out of 10 points. You should be quoting to support your ideas (and don't forget to cite properly!), and feel free to make connections to contemporary interpretations of the Arthurian legend.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: September 4

Introduction: The Telling of Arthurian Stories

Gerald of Wales, "The Discovery of the Tomb of King Arthur"

(<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/gerald-of-wales-arthurs-tomb>) - handout

Disney's *The Sword in the Stone* (1963) – watch in class

Week 2: September 11 [Didacticism and Entertainment in Arthuriana]

Disney's *The Sword in the Stone*, continued

T.H. White, *The Sword in the Stone* (1938): <http://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/whiteth-onceandfutureking/whiteth-onceandfutureking-00-h.html> (at least chapters 1-7, and 20-24)

Rob Gossedge, "The Sword in the Stone: American *Translatio* and Disney's Antimedievalism," in *The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy-Tale and Fantasy Past*, eds. Tison Pugh and Susan Aronstein, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 115-132 (available electronically through York Library).

Week 3: September 18 [The Latin and Celtic Roots of Arthur]

Arthur in the Latin Chronicles, 1-8 (unless otherwise specified, page numbers refer to *The Romance of Arthur*)

Arthur in the Early Welsh Tradition, 9-27

Culhwch and Olwen, 28-57

Week 4: September 25 [Discovering Arthurian History]

Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth, 58-87

Wace, *Roman de Brut*, 88-99

Layamon, *Brut*, 100-111

Victoria Flood, "Arthur's Return from Avalon: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Legend," *Arthuriana* 25.2 (2015): 84-110 (full text available through ProQuest Literature Online).

Week 5: October 2 [Arthuriana and Courtly Love]

Marie de France, *Lanval*, 298-314

Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot, or The Knight of the Cart*, 112-180

The Saga of the Mantle, 223-235

Week 6: October 9 [Meanwhile in Another Part of the Forest: Tristan and Isolde]

Bérout, from *The Romance of Tristan*, 236-281

Thomas of Britain, *Romance of Tristan*, 282-293

Marie de France, *Chevrefueil*, 294-298

"Cantare on the Death of Tristan," 315-323

Recommended: Selected Lyrics, 220-221

FALL READING WEEK: October 12-18

Week 7: October 23 [Arthuriana and Medieval Christianity]

Chrétien de Troyes, excerpts from *Perceval, or The Story of the Grail*, 181-192

Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, 193-206

From *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 207-214

Week 8: October 30 [Enter Merlin]

The Prose Merlin and the *Suite du Merlin* Episodes, 324-376

"Merlin's Prophecy," ed. James M. Dean, *The Camelot Project* (3 versions):

<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-prophecy-of-merlin-bodley-manuscript>

<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-prophecy-of-merlin-dublin-manuscript>

<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-prophecy-of-merlin-magdalene-college-manuscript>

Week 9: November 6 [Some of the Less Known Knights: Gawain]

The Rise of Gawain, Nephew of Arthur, 377-408

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 409-475 (Part 1)

Reading Middle English: *Ywain and Gawain*: <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/braswell-ywain-and-gawain> (for in-class work)

Week 10: November 13 [Gawain and the Alliterative Revival]

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 409-475 (Parts 2-4)

Excerpts from the original (on Moodle)

Week 11: November 20 [Gawain's Shotgun Marriage]

The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle, 476-500

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* in *The Tales of the Clerk and the Wife of Bath*, ed. Marion Wynne-Davies (Routledge, 1992), pp. 21-70 (available electronically through York Libraries).

Fall essay due (20%)

Week 12: November 27 [Writing English History through Arthur]

The Alliterative Morte Arthure (excerpts), 501-541

Recommended: *The Stanzaic Morte Arthur*: excerpts <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/creator/larry-benson>)

CHRISTMAS BREAK

Week 1: January 8

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*: “From the Marriage of King Uther unto King Arthur” and “The Noble Tale betwixt King Arthur and Lucius the Emperor of Rome”

Week 2: January 15

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*: “A Noble Tale of Sir Lancelot du Lake” and “The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney”

Week 3: January 22

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*: “The Book of Sir Tristram du Lyonesse”

Week 4: January 29

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*: “The Book of Sir Tristram du Lyonesse”

February 3: Last day to drop a course without receiving a grade

Week 5: February 5

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*: “The Noble Tale of the Sangrail”

Week 6: February 12

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*: “The Tale of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guenivere”

WINTER READING WEEK: February 15-21

Week 7: February 26

Winter Essay Bibliography and Proposal due (10%)

Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*: “The Death of Arthur”

Week 8: March 4 [Absorbing Arthuriana]

Ben Jonson, *Prince Henries Barriers* (printed in 1616) – electronically through York
 “Brittains glory: or, The history of the life and death of K. Arthur, and the adventures of the knights of the Round Table: giving a relation of their heroick exploits and victories in many lands ... pleasant and delightful, altogether worthy the perusal of the ingenious reader” (1684)
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo;idno=A51707>

Week 9: March 11 [Arthurian Nostalgia in Victorian England]

Alfred Tennyson, “The Coming of Arthur,” “Balin and Balan,” “The Holy Grail,” “The Last Tournament,” “The Passing of Arthur” (in *Idylls of the King*)

Week 10: March 18 [Love, Seduction, Power]

Alfred Tennyson, “Merlin and Vivien,” “Pelleas and Ettarre,” “Guinevere” (in *Idylls of the King*)
 Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant* (2015)

Week 11: March 25 [The Past is a Foreign Country: Arthuriana, History, and the Tricks of National Memory]

Final Essay due (25%)

Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant*, cont'd

Alfred Tennyson, "To the Queen" (in *Idylls of the King*)

G.K. Chesterton, "The Grave of Arthur: *Hic Jacet Arturus Rex Quondam Rexque Futurus*" (1930) (on Moodle)

Francis Brett Young, "Hic Jacet Arturus Rex Quondam Rexque Futurus" (1944) (on Moodle)

Marian Engel, "Arthur and the Seven Stars" (1986) (on Moodle)

Week 12: April 1

Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAK-vjFJ0c4>)

April 5: Course Withdrawal Period Ends

Additional Information

Lateness Penalties and Extensions: All deadlines have one-day's grace: every assignment can be submitted one day late with no penalty (with the exception of the reading responses which must be handed in hard copy during class). Assignments submitted after that will be penalized 2% per day. I am open to the idea of extensions, but they should be discussed at least a week in advance of the due date. Exceptions may be made in cases of illness or emergency if proper supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter) is provided.

Participation: Student participation is crucial in a seminar. Come to class having read the assigned works and ready to discuss them. Missing classes, or being physically present but mentally absent, can – and will – significantly affect your grade. There will be small activities (e.g. translating Middle English, group discussions, opportunity for Moodle posts) that will count toward your participation grade.

Technology in the Classroom: I am not, in principle, against laptops, tablets, or cellphones in the classroom: they can be useful when it comes to fact-checking or searching for a specific passage. However, they can also be distracting to you (and your neighbours), and make for less successful note-taking (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>). If you are overly enthusiastic about engaging with your device during our three hours together, you will be asked to put it away.

Special Accommodations: If you require special accommodations for assignments or classroom engagement, speak to me as early as possible.

The Writing Department: The Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies Writing Department offers one-on-one tutoring, as well as a series of non-credit writing workshops. If you need help with a specific writing assignment, book your appointment well in advance, as there are often waiting lists.

Academic Integrity: I expect that by now you are very familiar with the academic integrity definitions and policies (but here is the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, just in case:

<http://secretariat-policies.info.yorku.ca/policies/academic-honesty-senate-policy-on/>).

Plagiarism includes trying to pass off somebody else's words and ideas as your own (even if you are paraphrasing), as well as giving and receiving excessive assistance on an assignment. Substantial difference in writing style between assignments can be grounds for an academic honesty case.

Please be aware that this course uses Turnitin for all substantial assignments.

If you are having trouble with an assignment, please come talk to me. Academic dishonesty is never a good solution, and penalties for it are severe.