

**Carleton University  
Winter 2023  
Department of English**

**ENGL 3200A: *Topics in Medieval Literature (King Arthur)***  
Prerequisite(s): third-year standing or permission of the department.  
Preclusions: None

**Mondays and Wednesdays / 2:35-3:55pm**

**Location:** *Please confirm location on Carleton Central*  
**Format:** In-person

**Professor:** Dr. S. B. Calkin  
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**Office:** 1809 DT  
**Phone:** (613) 520-2600 x2337  
**Office Hours:** *Mondays 4-4:45pm; Wednesdays 4-4:45pm, or by appointment*

**Important note:**

For information on deadlines for withdrawal from courses, please consult the Academic Year section of the Undergraduate Calendar (<https://calendar.carleton.ca/academicyear/>).



From *Lancelot du lac*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawl. Q. b. 6,  
reproduced for educational purposes from ArtStor

**Course Description:**

Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, Gawain—the names of these medieval characters live on today in a variety of films, novels, and games. But what were their literary origins? This course introduces students to the Arthurian literature circulating in Britain between 1100 and 1500 CE. We will study the

central texts of the medieval Arthurian tradition in Britain and examine the ways in which different writers took up this varied and disparate tradition. We will read both chronicles and romances about Arthur, and explore the ways in which these genres use the same characters, plots, and motifs to explore a wide range of issues. Specifically, we will consider the different ways in which Arthurian texts envision kingship, queenship, violence, and knighthood. We will also examine the literary models of love and loyalty provided in various texts, as well as the ideals of masculinity and femininity promulgated therein. We will strive to set these literary texts and models in their historical contexts, and consider how medieval Arthurian texts spoke to central issues of their day(s) and why they still speak to audiences today.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students in this course will:

- Read a variety of medieval Arthurian texts
- Explore how these texts engage issues of gender, violence, history, polity, and religion
- Develop a historical and historicized understanding of the depictions of masculinity, femininity, love, kingship, queenship, knighthood, and vassalage in late medieval Britain
- Develop an appreciation and understanding of the Middle English language as well as a facility with reading and quoting it
- Consider what constitutes the Arthurian Tradition, and what explains its enduring appeal
- Develop the research skills required to position medieval literature in relation to some of its secondary scholarship

### **Required Readings:**

**French and Latin texts will be read in modern English translation. All other medieval texts will be read in Middle English. Assistance with reading Middle English will be provided as needed.**

- Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Trans. and ed. Michael A. Faletra. Peterborough: Broadview, 2008. ISBN: 9781551116396 / 1551116391
- Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*. Trans. and ed. William W. Kibler. London: Penguin, 1991. ISBN: 9780140445213
- Marie de France, *Lanval* (available in both the Norton and Broadview Anthologies often used for ENGL 2301; if you do not have either of those, then this reading is available **online** in a translation by Judith Shoaf at <http://people.clas.ufl.edu/jshoaf/files/lanval.pdf> )
- *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Rev. Edward E. Foster. TEAMS Middle English Text Series. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications Western Michigan University, 1994. Also available **online** at <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/benson-and-foster-king-arthurs-death>. Please note, however, that the two Arthur texts in this book are rather long and so it will be easier on your eyes to read them offline in a hard copy. ISBN 1-879288-38-9

- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Ed. Paul Battles. Peterborough: Broadview, 2012. ISBN: 9781554810192 / 1554810191
- Sir Thomas Malory. *Le Morte Darthur*. Ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd. New York: Norton, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-393-97464-5

The required readings are available from Haven Books, at the corner of Sunnyside and Seneca Streets, <https://www.shophaven.ca/> .

## Evaluation:

**Oral Presentation on Arthur Text/Website not covered in class** **10%**  
*(On your chosen day, you are expected to speak to us in class for 5 minutes about an Arthurian text or website NOT on our assigned readings (these may include primary texts from any period or medium, popular or scholarly websites, games, movies, paintings, or scholarly articles you have read about an Arthurian text we study). Give us a very brief overview of your chosen resource and identify 1-2 points of connection, comparison and/or contrast with the medieval Arthurian texts we are studying. Assignments will be assessed on timely completion of specified tasks, clarity of communication, and effectiveness of organization/presentation)*

**Mid-Term Examination (In-person; in-class; February 27)** **20%**  
*(short answer questions, passage identification and analysis, and essay question; will be scheduled during class time)*

### Paper:

**Annotated Bibliography and Draft Thesis Statement**  
**(DUE March 27 or 29 in class; hard copy preferred)** **5%**

**Final Paper (DUE April 10 in class; hard copy preferred)** **30%**  
*(A paper of 8-10 pages, double-spaced, on one or more of the medieval texts studied in class; MLA or Chicago format and secondary research are required. Possible topics and a detailed outline of my expectations will be posted to Brightspace, and I encourage you to discuss your ideas and essay outlines with me.)*

**Final Examination (In-person; during Official Examination Period)** **35%**  
*(cumulative; short answer and/or short translation passage, in-depth passage identification and analysis, essay questions; will be scheduled during Formal Examination Period)*

### Please Note:

- For written assignments, **a hard copy on paper (double-spaced, 12-pt font) is preferred to help minimize eyestrain. These should be submitted in class on the date specified.** If you

**must submit your assignment electronically, please let the professor know in advance and ensure that it is submitted as a Word Document attached to an e-mail to the professor. Please be aware that it takes longer to mark electronic documents because the grammar error notation system is much clunkier than pencil marking grammatical errors on a hard copy.**

- **If one of your assignments is lost, misplaced, or not received by the instructor, you are responsible for having a backup copy that can be submitted immediately upon request.**
- **Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations, projects, hand-outs, assignments, lectures, tests, drafts, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).**
- **Letter/Number Grades and professor comments will be returned in person, and/or via Brightspace, and/or via e-mail depending on the assignment.**

**PLAGIARISM:** The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” According to the Department examples of plagiarism include the following:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

## **Statement on Student Mental Health**

As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There

are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

**Emergency Resources (on and off campus):** <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

**Carleton Resources:**

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

**Off Campus Resources:**

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

**Information on Pandemic Measures**

It is important to remember that COVID is still present in Ottawa. The situation can change at any time and the risks of new variants and outbreaks are very real. There are [a number of actions you can take](#) to lower your risk and the risk you pose to those around you including being vaccinated, wearing a mask, staying home when you're sick, washing your hands and maintaining proper respiratory and cough etiquette.

**Feeling sick?** Remaining vigilant and not attending work or school when sick or with symptoms is critically important. If you feel ill or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms do not come to class or campus. If you feel ill or exhibit symptoms while on campus or in class, please leave campus immediately. In all situations, you should follow Carleton's [symptom reporting protocols](#).

**Masks:** Masks are no longer mandatory in university buildings and facilities. However, we continue to recommend masking when indoors, particularly if physical distancing cannot be maintained. We are aware that personal preferences regarding optional mask use will vary greatly, and we ask that we all show consideration and care for each other during this transition.

**Vaccines:** While proof of vaccination is no longer required to access campus or participate in in-person Carleton activities, it may become necessary for the University to bring back proof of vaccination requirements on short notice if the situation and public health advice changes. Students are strongly encouraged to get a full course of vaccination, including booster doses as soon as they are eligible and submit their booster dose information in [cuScreen](#) as soon as possible. Please note that Carleton cannot

guarantee that it will be able to offer virtual or hybrid learning options for those who are unable to attend the campus.

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow requirements and guidelines regarding health and safety which may change from time to time. For the most recent information about Carleton's COVID-19 response and health and safety requirements please see the [University's COVID-19 website](#) and review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). Should you have additional questions after reviewing, please contact [covidinfo@carleton.ca](mailto:covidinfo@carleton.ca).

**\*\* We will discuss ways of managing the attendance challenges Covid and other illnesses create for our course at the first class and decide on a preferred lecture management strategy then (possibilities we can discuss include, for example, note-takers, a buddy system, audio recording, etc.)\*\***

**Requests for Academic Accommodation:** You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:  
**Pregnancy:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**



Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.  
<https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

### **Schedule of Classes and Readings:**

Readings are to be completed for class by the date under which they are listed. Please note that I reserve the right to adjust this syllabus to meet the needs of the class and/or changes in Carleton's public health directives; however, major changes will be announced in advance.

- M. Jan. 9      Overview of Course and Requirements  
Introduction: Arthur Before Geoffrey of Monmouth
- W. Jan. 11     Finish Introduction  
Begin Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*  
—pp. 41-58 (Brutus); pp. 112-162 (Merlin, Uther, Arthur's Conception)
- M. Jan. 16     Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*  
—pp. 163-217 (Arthur and afterwards)
- W. Jan. 18     Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*  
**Day 1: Oral Presentations on Other Arthurs**
- M. Jan. 23     Finish Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain* if necessary  
Begin Chrétien de Troyes, *Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)* in *Arthurian Romances* pp. 207-94
- W. Jan. 25     —*Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)*, pp. 207-94
- M. Jan. 30     —*Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)*
- W. Feb. 1      —Chrétien de Troyes, *Story of the Grail (Perceval)*, in *Arthurian Romances* pp. 381-494
- M. Feb. 6      *Story of the Grail (Perceval)*, pp. 381-494  
**Day 2: Oral Presentations on Other Arthurs**
- W. Feb. 8      Finish *Grail (Perceval)* if necessary  
Marie de France, *Lanval* (in Norton or Broadview anthologies or on-line at:  
<http://people.clas.ufl.edu/jshoaf/files/lanval.pdf> )  
Introduction to Middle English if time

- M. Feb. 13 Finish *Lanval* if necessary  
 Introduction to Middle English  
 Begin Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* (in *King Arthur's Death*), pp. 11-68
- W. Feb. 15 Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, pp. 69-123
- M. Feb. 20 **NO CLASS—READING WEEK**  
 W. Feb. 22
- M. Feb. 27 **Mid-Term Examination (in class)**
- W. Mar. 1 Finish Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* if necessary  
 Begin *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Fitt 1, pp. 31-52
- M. Mar. 6 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Fitts 1-2, pp. 31-81
- W. Mar. 8 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Fitt 3, pp. 82-120  
**Day 3: Oral Presentations on Other Arthurs**
- M. Mar. 13 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Fitt 4, pp. 121-144
- W. Mar. 15 Finish *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*  
 Begin Alliterative *Morte Arthure* (in *King Arthur's Death*), pp. 131-203 if time
- M. Mar. 20 Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, pp. 131-203
- W. Mar. 22 Alliterative *Morte Arthure* 203-61
- M. Mar. 27 **Annotated Bibliography and Draft Thesis Statement due this week**  
 Finish Alliterative *Morte Arthure*  
 Begin Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*  
 —Beginnings, pp. 3-61
- W. Mar. 29 Malory, Beginnings, pp. 62-112
- M. Apr. 3 Finish Beginnings  
 Begin “The Noble Tale of the Sankgreal,” pp. 496-544 if time
- W. Apr. 5 Malory, “The Noble Tale of the Sankgreal,” pp. 544-587  
**Day 4: Oral Presentations on Other Arthurs**
- M. Apr. 10 **Final Papers due**  
 Finish Malory  
 Final Examination Format  
 Closing Discussion