

**Carleton University
Winter 2021
Department of English**

ENGL 3200A: *Medieval Literature (King Arthur)*

Prerequisite(s): third-year standing or permission of the department.

Preclusions: None

Mondays and Wednesdays / 11:35am-12:55pm
Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central*

Professor: Dr. S. B. Calkin

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Office: 1809 DT

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Office Hours: TBD

Please note that this is a preliminary Course Description. Check back in December 2020 for a full syllabus.

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.



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

Course Objectives:

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

Reading List:

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 2300 or 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

Please note:

Right now I plan to arrange for book orders through the student-run Haven Books near campus (43 Seneca Street) so that you can obtain the books all together from one source. During Covid-19 Haven has moved to an online model of selling books in which they offer shipping across North America and free curbside pickup (tel: 613-730-9888 /e-mail: havenbooks@cusaonline.ca; www.havenbooks.ca). You may also order books directly from the individual publishers or seek copies from your preferred online booksellers (e.g. abebooks etc).

Evaluation:

Online or In-Person Delivery of Winter term classes has not been decided as of now. If this course goes online, then I will likely present a blended course offering synchronous and asynchronous options for students, and evaluation options may be adjusted accordingly although oral presentations are still possible virtually through various options on CULearn.

Introductory Textual Analysis Presentation

5%

(On your chosen day, you are expected to start off our discussion of that day's text with a 2-3 minute oral presentation in which you identify 1-2 issues for our attention and direct our attention to 2-3 passages that engage those issues. Presentations will be assessed on clarity of

organization and presentation, timely completion of specified tasks, and quality of textual analysis)

Oral Presentation OR CULearn Post on Arthur Text/Website not covered in class 5%
(On your chosen day, you are expected to either post a 1-page (double-spaced) presentation to CULearn by 9am OR speak to us for 2-5 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, 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. Posted assignments will be assessed on timely completion of specified tasks, clarity and correctness of writing, and effectiveness of organization/presentation; oral presentations will be assessed on timely completion of specified tasks, clarity of communication, and effectiveness of organization/presentation)

Mid-Term Examination 20%
(Short answer, passage identification and analysis, essay question; will be scheduled during class time)

Paper:

Annotated Bibliography and Draft Thesis Statement 5%

Final Paper 25%

(A paper of 10-12 pages, double-spaced, on one or more of the medieval texts studied in class; MLA format and secondary research are required. Possible topics and a detailed outline of my expectations will be distributed, and I encourage you to discuss your ideas and essay outlines with me.)

Final Examination 30%
(cumulative; short answer and/or short translation passage, in-depth passage identification and analysis, essay questions; will be scheduled during Formal Examination Period)

Class Participation 10%
(You are expected to arrive at class with 1-2 questions or comments on the readings to contribute to our lecture/discussions either orally or through a discussion forum on CULearn. You are expected to meet your presentation or posting commitments (barring illness, bereavement etc.). You are expected to pay attention to lectures and to your fellow students' presentations, and to participate in class discussion forums regularly.)