

English 225: The “Age” of Arthur

(CRN: 12205)

Fall 2014 / MWF 10:00 to 11:00 / Room: VOL 307

Instructor: William Driscoll
Office Hours: M: 1:00-2:00 T: 11-1
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Course Credits

English 225 is a lower-division course that provides credit toward the English Major but also serves as an elective for non-English majors. English majors must achieve a C or better for this course to count toward the Major requirements. If you have any concerns about your performance in the course, please see me during office hours.

Course Texts

Complete Romances of Chretien de Troyes, trans., David Staines (1991 and rpts. pbk)
The Mabinogion, trans., Sioned Davies (2008 pbk)
Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript, ed. Helen Cooper (98 or reissue pbk)

Course Description

If we locate an ‘historical Arthur’ at all, he would have likely lived between the Roman occupation of Britain and the ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxons who invaded/immigrated to Britain beginning in the later 400s C.E. However, the legends of Arthur are less about a British king, than about the concerns of contemporary writers. We will focus on the **themes and anxieties** that pervade Arthurian legend rather than attempt a chronology of the ideas themselves. By exploring the legends of another time, thematically, I hope to explore questions relating to “who we are now?” I have envisioned a class in which we ask some broad questions—which I “feel” are related in some fashion.

1. What is myth? How is it shaped by cultural desires and anxieties? How do **medievalisms**, particularly Arthurian medievalisms, continue to shape our imagination?
2. What do the myths of Arthur show about medieval thought and ideals? How do the myths of Arthur relate to facts on the ground?
3. How do we read? What do genres say about our cultural values? How do we read medieval genres? (I ‘feel’ these questions are related connected—though the specific connection is more vague.)

These questions, of course, are only the beginnings and it is possible that we will, like knights errant, wander abroad and begin searching out new landscapes. This, however, will depend on how much you take control of this class.

Desired Learning Outcomes

The Department's assessment procedure for the Undergraduate English Major is built around six desired learning outcomes:

- 1) read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
- 2) draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
- 3) perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
- 4) write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
- 5) employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
- 6) employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis

Grading Policy

Attendance: Because so much of our work—and all our discussions—will take place during class time, it is important that you are here physically as well as mentally. You may miss up to three classes without penalty. Miss four or more classes and you will lose one-half letter (i.e., your hypothetical B+ will become a hypothetical B) for each additional unexcused absence. **If something serious comes up and you are unable to attend class, make arrangements with me immediately.**

Grading and Class Participation: The percentage ranges below will earn the following final grades. I will occasionally issue an A+ based on **exceptional class performance** in addition to a grade of over 98%. **Grades that are on the verge (89.99, for instance) will only be rounded up for students who have a strong participation record.**

A: A+ 99-100, A 94-98, A- 90-93
B: B+ 88-89, B 84-87, B- 80-83
C: C+ 78-79, C 74-77, C- 70-73
D: D+ 68-69, D 64-67, D- 60-63
F: F+ 58-59, F 54-57, F- 50-53

Assignments:

Reading Response Journal (RRJ)	10%*
Reflective Part of RRJ	5%
2 Formal Reading Responses	15% / 20%
Proposal for Longer Paper	5%
Longer <i>Revised</i> Paper (4-5 pages**)	25%
Final	20%

***Reading Journals will be collected *three* times during the term. See class schedule.**

**** If the paper expands on an earlier "Formal Reading Response" then the paper should be 6-7 pages in length.**

Reading Response Journal: The journals are an essential part of this class. In these journals, you will critically engage the texts that you read. Moreover, they will be a leaping off point for our class discussions each day. When we begin class, I will be looking at individual journal entries. If I see that the entry is not complete on a given day you will lose credit. Aside from class participation, the journals will help you develop your ideas and identify the evidence for your longer papers at the end of the term.

There are two types of entry: 1. a response to a prompt and 2. A thematic journal entry. First, you will be expected to write a response to a prompt (#1) every Wednesday. The prompts for these entries will be listed on BlackBoard under Reading Response Journal Prompts. Second, on Friday you will be expected to identify a theme from the reading that is due on Friday. So for example on Friday October 1 you are expected to have read Consolation of Philosophy 1-7 and 22-26. Your Thematic Journal Entry must discuss a theme from these pages. You will not get a prompt for this entry. The specific requirements, a rubric and a sample of this entry will be provided on BlackBoard under course documents.

Reflective Assignment: During week #9 you will be expected to read through your Reading Response Journal and respond to a general prompt that will be provided the previous week. This is not a reflection on “what you have learned,” though this may be included as well. The focus of the reflective assignment is on the unanswerable questions that guide *your* reading, the questions that interest *you*, the questions that follow *you* out of this course and haunt *your* readings. This will be due during week #7 so that you can develop an idea for a longer paper that fits with your interests.

Close Readings: Close reading is an important literature skill set. Very broadly, it is an attempt to look at the specific words chosen by the author and explain why she/he chose those words. What do they mean? How do they affect the reader? Why choose one word in preference of its synonym (e.g. what is the difference between dog and canine?) In these papers you will be expected to write 2-3 pages about 5-10 lines of text. Again, the specific requirements, a rubric and a sample of this entry will be provided on BlackBoard under course documents. Late assignments will lose 5 points per day.

Proposal for Longer Paper: On the Friday before conferences (11/14) you will be expected to electronically submit a paper proposal of about 2 pages in length. The proposal will provide a meaningful question at issue (i.e. the question your paper will engage), some thought as to what your response might be, an indication of what specific evidence you might use, how you will use it and at least one alternative reading (i.e. counterargument). The specific requirements, a rubric and a sample of this entry will be provided on BlackBoard under course documents.

Longer Revised Paper (4-5 pages*): If you want to continue exploring an idea you developed in one of your close readings and you are using significant material from one of them, then I will expect this paper to be 6-7 pages in length. The exact content of this paper, however, will depend entirely upon your own interests. It should be culled from your reading journal and the questions that interest *you*. The specific requirements, a rubric will be provided on BlackBoard under course documents.

The Rough Draft is due on Sunday 11/23. While the rough draft will not be graded, the failure to turn in an acceptable rough draft by this day will lower the grade of your final essay by 5 points each day that it is late. Similarly, if you fail to turn the final draft in on time, the essay will lose five points for each day that it is late.

You could write a medieval paper (i.e. How does Chretien's redeployment of Arthurian material reveal a shift in attitudes towards the warrior culture?), you could write a cross-cultural paper (i.e. how does the Galfridian image of the knight's ethos compare with a particular samurai text?), you could write a paper on more contemporary or even pop culture texts (i.e. how does Welsh construction of Arthur inform our understanding of Tolkien? *Mists of Avalon*? Or even the Dark Knight?). The one requirement is that you are very specific with the texts you choose. It is not acceptable to study how the Arthurian knight is like modern day superheroes. You need to be clear which texts you are using from the Arthurian tradition and how these help inform specific modern texts or ideas.

CLASS POLICIES:

Access

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me in week one if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu

Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please consult *The Little Seagull* for a definition of plagiarism and information on documentation and refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website. In cases where academic dishonesty has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course is the standard practice of the university. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

A Note on BlackBoard and the Readings

Instead of making you buy a bunch of books, I have decided to work with small selections that I will put on BlackBoard. You will find the selections on BlackBoard under Reading Selections. You will be expected to have some form of this text to class—either you can bring in a printed copy or a .pdf that you have *saved* onto your tablet or computer. It must be saved to your computer because you must be able to make notes and marginalia on the text. If you cannot do this on your tablet, then you must bring in a printed copy of the text. Again, if you use your tablet for any reason other than class, then you will be asked not to bring it back into class. Announcements, the syllabus, assignments, study questions, and other important course materials and information will be available on Blackboard. **Be sure to check our Blackboard site regularly for updates and announcements.**

Outside Availability

I will be available during office hours, by appointment and over email. Please see me if you have any questions about particular assignments or about your overall progress. Please

allow up to 24 hours for all email correspondence. In other words, if you ask about an assignment the night before class, I may not return your email on time (and you will be responsible for the assignment). If you want to discuss a grade on a particular assignment then you must meet me during office hours. I will not discuss grades immediately after class.

Lecture and discussion etiquette

Please turn off cellphones before class begins (tablets may be used for class purposes only). If I see you using your tablet or laptop for non-class purposes, I will ask you to use paper, pen and photocopies from that point forward. Of course, plan to hold your individual conversations (virtual or real) outside class time. Any activity that disrupts or distracts others from course material is not only rude but may also violate the university's code of academic conduct. Please be considerate of those around you. You are also asked not to leave the classroom while class is going on except when absolutely necessary.

Class sessions may not be copied, taped, or videotaped in any manner unless you have documented a communication-related disability with the University and have received permission from the course instructor. Should you miss a lecture or discussion, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from your colleagues, so be sure to get to know others in the course who would be willing to help you and whom you would be willing to help.

Tutorial help

Students with tutoring needs may use any of the services offered by the University of Oregon's Teaching & Learning Services (TLS), located in 68 PLC (x6-3226). Any other assistance (beyond the UO TLS office) that you receive on papers, from organizing your paper to identifying your main points, from typing or proofreading papers to editing or revising papers, must be cleared with the professor. Of course, as you prepare papers, or as you work to understand readings and discussions, talking and reviewing with fellow ENG 225 peers outside of class is encouraged; this is different from directly assisting or writing someone else's specific paper assignment.

Class Schedule

*Subject to change & slight adjustments, as needed.
Readings should be complete before class.

Abbreviations

BB: BlackBoard

TJE: Thematic Journal Entry (Due every Friday)

WP: Writing Prompt (Due every Wednesday)

DATE		READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS DUE
WEEK #1		
M (9/29)	Introduction to Class.	
W (10/1)	Discussion: 1. What is a theme? 2. What is—and how do we read—allegory? 3. What is Spenser’s anxiety about warrior culture? Activities: Write Thematic Journal Entry #1.	Read: Selections from BB
F (10/3)	Discussion: On Allegory and Boethian Philosophy	Read: Selections from BB Thematic Journal Entry (TJE #1).
WEEK #2		
M (10/6)	Medieval Contexts: Fortune, Providence, and Theology.	Read: Selections from BB
W (10/8)	Close Reading. Anglo-Saxon Elegies: “The Seafarer” and “The Wife’s Lament.”	Read: Selections from BB— <i>Consolation</i> and The Elegies. Due: See Writing Prompt (WP #1)
F (10/10)	Close Reading. Anglo-Saxon Elegies: “The Seafarer” and “The Wife’s Lament.” Finish Elegies. Activity: Practice Close Reading	Read: Selections from BB— <i>Consolation</i> and The Elegies. Due: TJE#2 <u>Reading Journals will be Collected!</u>
WEEK #3		
M (10/13)	Contexts: Romance. A reading of Golden Book’s: <i>Frozen</i> or <i>Curious George</i> . How does Romance work? Read Mabinogion pages 179-80 and begin Narrative Map in class. Practice Welsh pronunciation.	Read: Selections from BB—Romance.

W (10/15)	Mabinogion. Who is Arthur? What does the fiction explore? What concerns does it reveal?	Read: Mabinogion 180-92 Due: WP #2 and continue Narrative Map.
F (10/17)	Discussion: Folk Motifs and the Arthurian Tradition. Giants, Jealous Fathers, and the Jealous Fathers that are Giants.	Read: Mabinogion 192-202; Selections from BB—Folk Motifs. Due: TJE #3 and continue Narrative Map.
SUN (10/19)	CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE 8pm.	CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE 8pm.
WEEK #4		
M (10/20)	Discussion: Heroic Romances and the Historical Knighthood.	Read: Mabinogion 202-213; Selections from BB—Historical Knights Due: Completed Narrative Map.
W (10/22)	Contexts: on Kingship	Read: Selections from BB—on Medieval Kingship. Due: WP #3
F (10/24)	TBA	Read: Selections from BB Due: TJE #4
WEEK #5		
M (10/27)	Contexts: Heroic Romance and Gender. Geoffrey of Monmouth	Read: Selections from BB— Heroic Romance, History and Gender
W (10/29)	Geoffrey of Monmouth	Read: Selections from BB—Geoffrey of Monmouth Due: WP #4
F (10/31)	Geoffrey of Monmouth	Read: Selections from BB—Geoffrey of Monmouth Due: TJE #5
SUN (11/2)	CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE 8pm.	SUBMIT THROUGH SAFEASSIGN.
WEEK #6		
M (11/3)	Contexts: on Chivalry	Read: Selections from BB—on Chivalry; and “The Knight of the Cart”

		(170-72) from <i>The Complete Romances of Chretien</i> .
W (11/5)	Discussion: “The Ideal Chivalric Hero.” Compare the values of the heroic romance versus the chivalric romance.	Read: Selections from BB—on Ideal Chivalric Hero. “The Knight of the Cart” (173-185) Due: WP #5
F (11/7)	Discussion: Themes and Motifs in “The Knight of the Cart”	Read: “The Knight of the Cart” (183-200) Due: TJE #6
WEEK #7		
M (11/10)	Contexts: The Tradition of Courtly Love	Read: Selections from BB—on Courtly Love. “The Knight of the Cart” (200-215)
W (11/12)	Discussion: Courtly Love in Chretien.	Read: “The Knight of the Cart” (215-230) Due: WP#6
F (11/14)	Discussion: “Knight of the Cart”	Read: “The Knight of the Cart” (230-246) Due: TJE #7 <u>Reading Response Journals</u> will be collected! (2 nd time)
Sun (11/16)	Proposals for Longer Paper	Submit through SafeAssign by 11pm.
WEEK #8		
M (11/17)	Discussion: Chretien and the Arthurian Tradition	Finish “The Knight of the Cart” (246-256).
W (11/19)	Class Cancelled for Conferences	Due: WP#7 Due
F (11/21)	Class Cancelled for Conferences	Due: TJE #8
SUN (11/23)	ROUGH DRAFT OF LONGER ESSAY	DUE AT 11PM SUBMIT THROUGH SAFEASSIGN AND BRING COPY TO CLASS
WEEK #9		
M (11/24)	Workshop Essays	BRING COPY OF ESSAY TO CLASS
W (11/26)	Contexts: Malory and the War of the Roses	Read: Le Morte D’Arthur (TBA) Due: WP#8

F (11/28)	Essay Workshop	Read: Le Morte D'Arthur (TBA) Due: TJE#9
WEEK #10		
	Contexts: The Grail Quest	Read: Selections from BB—on Chivalry; and Le Morte D'Arthur (TBA)
	Discussion: The Grail Quest, Archetypes and Modernity	Read: Selections from BB—on Chivalry; and Le Morte D'Arthur (TBA)
	The Grail Quest (cont.)	Read: Selections from BB—on Chivalry; and Le Morte D'Arthur (TBA) Due: Reading Journals will be collected for final time.

Important Dates During Finals Week

Final Exam: 2014 Tuesday, December 9, 10:15-12:15 in our regular classroom. Reading Response Journals will be returned during final exam.

Final Drafts of the Longer Essay: due on Thursday, December 11 at 10pm. Submit them through BlackBoard on SafeAssign.