

Fall/Winter 2019-2020

AP/EN 4504 6.0A (Y)

Arthurian Literature

Course Director:

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Delivery Format:

Seminar

Time:

Wednesdays 4:00-7:00pm

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. Is Arthur always a heroic king surrounded by his noble knights? Does Merlin always have a beard?

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. In the late Middle Ages, Arthur became known throughout Europe as a great British king whose genealogy could be traced directly to 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 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.

Category:

C

Historical Requirement:

Period I (pre-1700)

Requirements:

Fall term essay (6-8 pages) – 15%
Presentation & essay – 15%
Winter term essay proposal & annotated bibliography – 10%
Winter term essay (8-11 pages) – 25%
Reading responses (4 in the fall semester, and 4 in the winter semester) – 20%
Participation – 15%

Reading List:

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)
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 things 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*. (any good edition)

Open To:

YR 4 Honours