

Spring 2008 ♦ ENGL 306-001 (#31046) COMP-L 306-001 (#32950)
TTh 12:30-1:45 ♦ ECON 1002

Dr. Obermeier

The Arthurian Legend: Transformations and Recyclings

Office Hours: TTh 2:00-3:00, and by Appointment in HUM 321

☎ and Voice Mail: 505.277.2930

Email: AObermei@unm.edu

Website: <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei>

Mailbox in Main English Department Office HUM 217



Required Texts

Chrétien de Troyes. *Perceval, or The Story of the Grail*. Trans. Ruth Cline. U of Georgia P, 1985.

Lacy, Norris J., and Geoffrey Ashe. *The Arthurian Handbook*. 2nd ed. Garland, 1998.

Lacy, Norris J., ed. *The Lancelot-Grail Reader*. Garland, 2000.

Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*. Ed. Helen Cooper. Oxford UP, 1998.

Mitchison, Naomi. *To the Chapel Perilous*. Oakland, CA: Green Knight, 1999. Get from me for \$5.

Obermeier, Anita, and Gregory Castle. *Guide to Style*. 2005. On class website.

Tennyson, Lord Alfred. *Idylls of the King*. Penguin, 1996.

Twain, Mark. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Penguin, 1971.

Wilhelm, James J., ed. *The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation*. Garland, 1994.

Secondary texts are on regular Reserves and eReserves in the Library. Links will be on website.

Course Requirements

Oral Group Presentation

worth 15 %

1 8-10-page paper

worth 30 %

Final

worth 25 %

Written Responses

worth 15 %

Class Participation

worth 15 %

Grading will be done on a standard 0-100 scale.

For grading rubrics,

see <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/gradingrubric.html>.

Tentative Syllabus

(Texts to be read for the day indicated. Responses are to be handed in on the day indicated.)

- T 1.22 Introduction to the Course.
 TH 1.24 **Origins: The Arthur of the Chronicles:** *The Arthurian Handbook (AH)*, Ch. I: “Origins” (2-23, 29-35); *Romance of Arthur (RA)*, Ch. I: “Arthur in the Latin Chronicles” (3-9).
- T 1.29 **The Celtic Arthur:** *AH*, Ch. I: “Origins” (23-29); *RA*, Chs. II, III: “Arthur in the Early Welsh Tradition” (11-24), “Culhwch and Olwen” (25-58).
 TH 1.31 **The Arthur of Monmouth:** *AH*, Ch. I: 36-52; *RA*, “Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth” (59-93). Note: there is a mass of detail in Chs. I and II of the *AH*—you are not expected to learn all the names, only to understand the major traditions.
- T 2.5 **The Arthur of Romance:** *RA*, Chs. V, VI, and XVIII: “Wace” (95-108), “Layamon” (109-19), “*The Alliterative Morte Arthure*” (489-527). This week, and for the next four weeks, browse through the *AH*, Ch. II, “Early Arthurian Literature” (57-135), as appropriate. **Response 1 Due.**
 TH 2.7 **Lancelot:** *RA*, Ch. VII: Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, or *The Knight of the Cart* (121-62).
- T 2.12 *RA*, Ch. VII: Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot* (163-200).
 TH 2.14 **Tristan:** *RA*, Ch. X: Bérout, *The Romance of Tristan* (225-75). **Response 2 Due.**
 F 2.15 **Last day to change grading options.**
- M 2.18 **Arthurian Film Festival** in HUM 108, 6:30: Clips from *King Arthur: Young Warlord* and Eric Rohmer’s *Perceval*. Feature Film: *Tristan and Isolde* (2006).
 T 2.19 **Perceval:** *RA*, Ch. XII: Thomas of Britain, *Tristan* (Death Scene) (283-93); Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, or *The Story of the Grail* (trans. Ruth Cline) (1-60).
 TH 2.21 Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval* (77-132). Browse through 61-76. **Response 3 Due.**
- T 2.26 **Merlin:** *The Lancelot-Grail Reader (LGR): The Story of Merlin* (49-92), and *The Death of Merlin* (415-419). Note that some of this material overlaps with “The Prose Merlin” section in the *RA*, Ch. XIV (305-63)—the same sources, but different translators, and different selections.
 TH 2.28 **The Vulgate Lancelot:** *LGR: Lancelot*, Pts. I-II (94-141). **Response 4 Due.**
 F 2.29 **Last day to drop a course without a grade.**
- T 3.4 *LGR: Lancelot*, Pts. III, V (142-79, 234-46, 296-304). Browse through Pt. IV (180-234) as it reworks Chrétien de Troyes.
 TH 3.6 **Group Presentations.**
- T 3.11 **The Vulgate Grail:** *LGR: The Quest for the Grail* (305-363). **Response 5 Due.**
 TH 3.13 **Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Grail** in *Parzival*: Selection will be on eReserves.
- 3.16-23 Spring Break
- T 3.25 **Gawain:** *RA*, Ch. XV: *The Rise of Gawain, Nephew of Arthur* (365-97).
Malory: *Le Morte Darthur*, Note on the Text (xiii-xvi), text 93-490. Note: some of this material will be familiar, since Malory is abridging and retelling tales from his sources, many of which you have already read.

- T 3.25 **Arthurian Film Festival** in HUM 108, 6:30: Clips from *Lancelot du Lake*.
Feature Film: *Excalibur*.
- TH 3.27 **Group Presentations.**
- T 4.1 Malory, 50-57, 121-68. Browse through 95-119. **Response 6 Due.**
TH 4.3 Malory, 240-309.
- T 4.8 Malory, 327-34, 346-50, 388-444; 460-67. Browse through 310-26, 335-45, 351-
87, 445-60. **Response 7 Due.**
- TH 4.10 Malory, 468-527.
- T 4.15 **Victorian Masculinities and Femininities:** Tennyson, “The Lady of Shalott”
(link on class website) *Idylls of the King*, “Dedication” (19-20), “Merlin and
Vivien” (142-67), “Guinevere” (269-87), “To the Queen” (301-2), William
Morris, “The Defense of Guinevere” (link on class website). **Response 8 Due.**
- TH 4.17 **Group Presentations.**
F 4.18 Tentative Date for **Arthurian Round Table Dinner, 7 pm.**
- T 4.22 **The American Response:** Twain, *Yankee* 29-130.
TH 4.24 Twain, *Yankee* 131-260. **Response 9 Due.**
TH 4.24 **Arthurian Film Festival** in HUM 108, 7:00: Clips from *Connecticut Yankee*.
Feature Film: *Mists of Avalon*.
- T 4.29 Twain, *Yankee* 261-410.
TH 5.1 **Post-Modernism:** Naomi Mitchison, *To the Chapel Perilous* 13-126. **Response
10 Due.**
- T 5.6 Mitchison, 127-218. Review and Final Exam Prep.
TH 5.8 **Term Paper Due.** Class cancelled because of a conference obligation of mine. To
make up for the lost class time, I am adding 10 minutes to the class periods on **4.15,**
4.22, 4.24, 4.29, 5.1 (and **5.6**, if we need it). I hope that won’t be too much of an
inconvenience.
- TH 5.15 Final Exam: 10:00-2:30 in MH 204. Blue books are optional, but some form of
paper is required.

Course Objective

This course will investigate the enduring strength and attraction of the Arthurian legend from its beginnings in the medieval period to contemporary literature and popular culture. There is no such thing as one “authentic” Arthurian tradition, only competing accounts and reconceptualizations; indeed, uncertainty about Arthurian “truth” has recently become a literary theme in itself. In this course, we will read different versions of the legend, from medieval to modern, observing how each new version serves a new authorial or political and cultural agenda, whether it is to establish a national foundation myth, or to endorse specific religious values, or to revive medieval values in an industrial age, or to satirize both medieval and modern conventions through the myth. Medieval and Victorian art will also be represented, as will opera and contemporary film. We may also glance at the ways in which the Arthurian legend surfaces in popular culture, in musicals, films, and fantasy shows. Our guiding question through the course will be “Why Arthur, particularly? Why *this* figure, *this* narrative, *this* myth?”

Course Policies

1. Attendance is mandatory. Since your progress in the course will depend a great deal on what we discuss in class, I expect class attendance and participation (actual contributions to the class

discussion). I will pass out attendance sheets, and it is your responsibility to sign the sheets. So if the sheet passed you by, come up to the desk and sign at the end of class. Your participation grade will be affected after **3** unexcused absences (from a B+ to a B for one additional absence, etc.). An excused absence is a doctor's note, letter from an employer, etc. If you have an emergency situation, you can leave a message on my voice mail or email. **Note:** While you are welcome to check with me on what you have missed, I do not "reteach" class periods you missed during my office hours or over email. Please consult with your fellow students for notes.

2. The Paper must conform to the presentational guidelines set forth in the *Guide to Style* or the *MLA* and be submitted on time. The paper should represent your best effort and will be graded accordingly. Please note that I encourage you to discuss topics, outlines, and rough drafts with me during my office hours or via email. The paper assignment sheet is on my website.

3. Tests: The final is closed book, consisting of short ids, passage ids, and essay questions. I will distribute a study guide before the final exam.

4. Written Responses: You are expected to write a 1-page (single- or double-spaced—your choice) response for each session indicated, discussing the readings for that day or since the last response. These responses should be informal, journal-like, **typed** pieces, expressing your thoughts and reactions to the text. They also help me see where an entire class might be lost, or what you are particularly interested in. In the past, I have really enjoyed reading about your thoughts; I get the feeling that I am sharing your experience. Do not be afraid to express puzzlement and unfamiliarity, or even delight and interest. I am interested in your untutored, uncritical reactions to the text. We will leave more structured and analytical writing for the formal paper.

If you need some guidance, analyze why you think certain characters, themes, developments, motifs, etc. are significant. What do they mean in the context and culture they are used?

5. Class Discussion and Participation: One of my teaching philosophies is student ownership of text along with critical thinking. In order to facilitate good class discussion and involvement of all students, small groups of students pick sections of the text for the day and "warm up" on it for 5-7 minutes. As we work through a given text, each group contributes to the discussion. It is not enough to retell "the story," although sometimes things might be confusing and clarification is necessary. Generally, I want you to tell the class what you think is important in your section of the work—significance again—how this section propels the story forward, or what changes the characters undergo. The emphasis is on analysis.

6. Group Presentations: Please look at the instructions on the website and email me your choice by 2.1.2008.

7. Arthurian Film Festival: Attendance at the film nights counts toward your participation grade. You have to attend twice during the semester. It should be fun, and there will be dinner-type food and refreshments.

8. Assignments: Students must attempt **all** assignments to pass the course. You cannot simply skip an assignment because you are happy with your grade at the time; hence you cannot, for instance, skip the final.

9. Pertinent Websites: My own website contains a file for this class with links to pertinent Arthurian and other medieval sites. All handouts will be available from the website also. On my site, go to **Student Resources** and select the link for this class.

10. Plagiarism. Don't do it! For clarification, see **#102-107** in the *Guide to Style*.