

University Honors 402-001

# Tolkien Studies for Advanced Readers: A Less Traveled Road

Spring 2005

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Leslie Donovan  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Mon. 12:00-2:00, Thurs. 12:30-2:30, and by appointment  
**CONTACT INFO:** University College 20 (Honors Center office),  
 277-4313 (has voice mail), ldonovan@unm.edu  
**WEBPAGE:** <http://www.unm.edu/~ldonovan> (click link under “Current Courses”)

## DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES:

J.R.R. Tolkien once wrote that the popular attraction to *The Lord of the Rings* was “due to the glimpses of a large history in the background: an attraction like that of viewing far off an unvisited island, or seeing the towers of a distant city gleaming in a sunlit mist.” This class is for those who wish to journey through the mist with other like-minded student-scholars to examine those wonders that make the city of J.R.R. Tolkien's writings shine brightly for so many modern readers. Although recent attention has focused largely on Tolkien's most popular works, this course will examine the terrain of his less-familiar fiction, his work in medieval scholarship, his visual artwork, and some sources that influenced his thought. We will not be reading *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but prior knowledge of these works will provide the foundation for much of our analysis. Therefore, this is not a course for beginners new to the works of Tolkien or for those who have seen only Peter Jackson’s movie versions. Rather, this course allows students already highly familiar with the written texts of Tolkien’s Middle-earth to explore his other works in an academic context and to better understand the immensity of this writer’s impact on contemporary popular culture and the genre of imaginative fiction.

## TEXTS:

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (any version of the 2nd edition)  
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*  
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Unfinished Tales*  
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*  
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *Smith of Wootton Major*  
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader*  
 Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist and Illustrator*  
 Turgon, *The Tolkien Fan’s Medieval Reader*  
 Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* (trans. Victor Watts)  
 Tom A. Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (Optional text)  
 Humphrey Carpenter, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Optional text)

Other readings may be placed online through Electronic Reserves for this course, which may be accessed through the course webpage (see above) or through <http://ereserves.unm.edu/coursepage.asp?cid=2291> (password = luthien)

## GRADES:

Course requirements will earn up to 100 points distributed as follows:

Attendance .....	15% of total grade
Participation .....	40% of total grade
Electronic Discussion .....	10% of total grade
Short Paper .....	10% of total grade
Journal Article .....	25% of total grade

Grading scale: A = 93-100 points      CR = 70-92 points      NC = 0-69 points

## REQUIREMENTS:

### Attendance (15% of total grade):

It is essential that you attend every class. Material missed may never be completely made up, no matter how many notes you get from classmates. If you don't come to class, not only does your learning experience suffer, but you also deny others the opportunity of learning from what you have to contribute. Since so much of Honors education is the result of what happens in class, be aware that no distinction will be made between excused and unexcused absences (see Policies section #2). Therefore, you will earn ½ point for every class you attend in full. Since we have 30 classes, if you attend every class, you will earn 15 points.

### Participation (40% of total grade):

Honors courses are designed to encourage students to actively engage in the experience of learning. This is your class. Within the boundaries of my position as an instructor in a formal educational institution, I will facilitate and aid your efforts, not direct or dictate them. It will be up to you to determine and shape not only the directions our course will take, but also how effective this course will be in promoting your own education. Since our class will be conducted in seminar fashion with no formal lectures from me, you are expected to take your responsibility to yourself, your education, and your classmates very seriously. For this course, your participation score will be composed of four parts:

#### 1. *Sharing your thoughts in class discussions* (10 points)

In order to make the most of this particular educational experience, you must be prepared to speak up in class. If you choose not to contribute your ideas to class discussions, be aware that you both lower your grade for the course (maybe by as much as one letter grade) and inhibit your ability to work effectively within a collective structure (a skill graduate schools and employers recently ranked high on their list of desirable characteristics). In addition, and probably most important, by refusing to verbalize your ideas, you deny your classmates a valuable and unique perspective-- yours. In this class, every student's ideas are important. While all students cannot express their ideas in class all the time, if you wish to earn a high points for this activity, you are expected to contribute your ideas and views at least once in most every class session.

#### 2. *Performing strong work on in-class exercises and assignments* (10 points)

Effective participation in this course involves more than simply coming to class and sharing your ideas. Short in-class assignments, group exercises, freewrites, e-mail exercises and other homework assignments will be given frequently. The majority of these assignments should take the average student about 15 minutes to complete. These assignments are designed to generate class discussion and to give you a place to start when analyzing the texts. These assignments will not be graded nor will they be collected during class. However, you are expected to perform these assignments to the best of your ability and have them ready when I ask for them. Consistent, responsible, and serious effort on these exercises is expected of those who wish to earn you high points for this activity.

#### 3. *Reading Report* (10 points)

During the first week of class, you will be randomly assigned a section either from *The Tolkien Fan's Medieval Reader* (an anthology of selections from medieval texts important to Tolkien's fictional works) or from *The Monsters and the Critics* (a collection of some of Tolkien's most important academic articles) on which you will make an oral Reading Report. You will be responsible for teaching your classmates about your assigned section. Although class members may also read your texts, the other members of the class will not be required to read your assigned section. However, your Responder (see below) will be as familiar with your section as you are and will be expected to add to, correct, or challenge material you include in your presentation. This means that you need to know and understand your section extremely well, which will require careful, thorough reading of the text(s) probably multiple times. These Reading Reports are meant to be informational and analytical; they are not to be simply reviews of the texts. In other words, do not

structure your entire report around what is good or bad about the text. Instead, explain the information and analyze how your ideas on the subject agree or disagree with the author's. Keep your audience firmly in mind as well as the subject of our course, so that you can tailor your remarks for our specific purposes. Although I will be awarding the points for your Reading Report, your primary goal should not be to please me, but rather to satisfy your classmates' need to learn about the material. When working on your Reading Report think about what you would want to know if you had not read the assignment in order to understand and assess its importance to our topic. In addition to these general guidelines, to earn full credit your Reading Report must:

- Take no longer than 15 minutes of class time (plus 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion);
- Be clearly and coherently organized;
- Provide brief examples from your section to summarize and explicate the content of your text(s);
- Explain at least 2 specific ways your section can help readers better understand Tolkien's works;
- Be prepared to address any issues raised by your Responder;
- Be prepared to answer questions from your classmates and me; and
- Turn in an outline of your presentation (1-3 pages) at the end of your report.

#### 4. *Report Response* (5 points)

In addition to your Oral Reading Report, also during the first week of the term you will be randomly assigned a section either from *The Tolkien Fan's Medieval Reader* or from *The Monsters and the Critics* for which you will give a Report Response. For your Report Response, you will respond to the Reading Report made about your assigned section by asking specific questions or by engaging the person making the Reading Report in a discussion that will improve your classmates' understanding of the text. This means that you need to know and understand your chapter extremely well, which will require not only careful reading, but probably several readings. Other members of the class will not be responsible for reading this chapter, although the person who makes the Reading Report to which you are responding will be as familiar with it as you are. Like the Reading Reports, these Report Responses are meant to be informational and analytical; they are not reviews or critiques of the Oral Reading Report. In other words, do not structure your response around what was good or bad about the Reading Report. Instead, it is your job as a Responder to improve your audience's comprehension of the section on which the Reading Report is based. If you disagree with anything in the Reading Report, it is up to you to present alternative views in a useful and constructive manner that will broaden discussion rather than dictate appropriate interpretations. However, it is also your job to correct any obviously faulty readings of the section that the person giving the Reading Report might have made. Above all, one of your most important tasks is to be prepared to ask intelligent, useful questions of the person making the Reading Report. In addition to these general guidelines, to earn full credit your Report Response must:

- Take no longer than a maximum of 10 minutes of class time;
- Ask at least 2 specific questions of the person making the Reading Report;
- Add at least 1 comment that further explains material presented in the Reading Report, or that broadens the Reading Report by challenging some interpretation it makes;
- Correct faulty readings, if any, of the text made in the Reading Report;
- Be prepared to discuss analytically the section with the person making the Reading Report;
- After your response, turn in at least 2 questions you were prepared to ask the person making the Reading Report, even though you may end up asking different questions in class.

#### 5. *Preparation of Online Journal and/or Mini-Conference* (5 points)

Since this is a 400-level course, your work for this class has been designed to help you strive for professional goals and experience. Therefore, during the second half of the semester, some of your participation score will be based on work necessary either to produce an the first ever public, online professional journal of undergraduate work in Tolkien Studies or to plan and organize a mini-conference on Tolkien Studies. All students are expected to contribute their time and energy to the success of one of these professional activities. While a more detailed list of possible contributions will be handed out later in the semester,

possible contributions for the journal might include any of the following:

- Soliciting possible journal titles from class members and tallying votes;
- Designing and producing graphics for the journal's homepage;
- Producing a template design for the appearance of all of the articles in Word or WordPerfect (i.e., what fonts and sizes of type will be used for the body text, title, and author line);
- Designing and producing connecting graphic elements for secondary pages; and
- Researching how to handle copyright issues for the articles.

For the mini-conference, possible contributions might include the following activities.

- Arrange for and set-up the refreshments for the audience;
- Organize the furniture in the UHP forum and return it to the usual set-up afterward;
- Determine session titles and the order in which they will be presented;
- Create and produce a program for the audience;
- Handle publicity for the event (flyers in honors, announcements sent to listserv, etc.)

#### Electronic Discussion (10% of total grade):

In addition to participating actively in regular in-class discussion, you will dialogue with each other throughout the semester on an electronic discussion forum housed on the UNM Hobbit Society's electronic bulletin board. This discussion may be accessed through our course website (<https://www.unm.edu/~ldonovan/tolkien/tolkienmain.htm>), through the UNM Hobbit Society webpage (<https://www.unm.edu/~tolkien/>) or directly at the EZBoard homepage (<http://p206.ezboard.com/bunmhobbitsociety>). The first time you access the site, you will need to register for a free account that is attached to a pseudonym you select for yourself. The electronic discussion area we will use for this class is the section called LORIEN. While you may interact with each other in the other areas on the bulletin board, only discussion in this area will count toward your grade for the course.

LORIEN is meant to encourage all students to discuss topics in an informal, but highly public manner. In addition, it will broaden the scope of class discussion and provide more avenues for discussion than our in-class time allows. Through it, you will make weekly postings on topics generated by yourself, me, and other students in our class. Posted topics, exercises, suggestions, and questions will be largely related to assigned materials, materials related to our topic but not on the syllabus, and larger concepts associated with the topic. Since your responses and discussion on this electronic forum will frequently be used to stimulate or expand in-class discussion, it is important that you keep up with material posted on LORIEN. I may also post material on LORIEN that I want you to work on before you next come to class, so check this electronic discussion as often as possible during the week.

During the semester, you will be expected to make an average of two postings a week for a total of 30 or more postings on topics pertinent to our course. Although individual postings will not receive points, you will earn a grade based on the quality and quantity of your total entries combined. For instance, a student who makes 30 entries during the semester, most of which contain thoughtful responses or questions about the course topic, will earn a higher grade for electronic discussion than either a student who makes 20 thoughtful entries or a student who makes 40 less thoughtful or off-the-topic postings. Postings to LORIEN must be made consistently throughout the term to earn a high grade. You will NOT earn an A for this requirement if you make all or most of your postings together in a short period of time (at the beginning or end of the term, for example). For those of you who have never worked on a chatroom or discussion list, you will need little prior experience with such forums to succeed in this portion of the class. I am happy to give you individual instruction on how to use such technology for the purposes of our course. The LORIEN part of your grade will be based on the following scale:

- 30 or more thoughtful postings turned in regularly throughout the semester = 10 points;
- 20-29 thoughtful postings turned in regularly throughout the semester = 7-9 points;
- Less than 20 postings or 20-29 postings submitted mostly in large groups = 4-6 points;
- Less than 10 postings or 10-20 postings submitted mostly in large groups = 2-3 points.

Short Paper (10% of total grade):

During the first half of the semester, you will write one short paper (4-6 pages, excluding bibliography) on how one or more of the medieval texts in *The Tolkien Fan's Medieval Reader* or in Tolkien's *Sir Gawain and the Green Green, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo* informs Tolkien's fiction. In other words, this paper is designed to help you express for yourself how some medieval theme, character type, or idea is reused by Tolkien. While I would prefer that you focus your paper on either a part of *The Silmarillion* or a piece of *The Unfinished Tales*, you may use another of Tolkien's fictional works, if you wish. While it may be an analytical or informative paper, your Short Paper must include: an introduction; supporting paragraphs that include examples from the texts, both medieval and Tolkien's; a conclusion; and correctly documented references, including a bibliography.

Journal Article (25% of total grade):

For this course, you will write one fully developed, analytical paper of 7-10 pages (excluding bibliography) on a topic of your choice related to Tolkien Studies. You may write on any Tolkien-related text(s) or topic you wish, even if we have not covered the material in this class. Like any college analytical paper, it must conform to standard essay structure, which includes an introduction, supporting paragraphs using specific examples; a conclusion, and correctly documented references as well as a bibliography. As with all analytical arguments, your paper will focus its analysis by means of a strong, specific thesis statement supported and explained using appropriate examples. Make sure your paper does not simply give an overview or summary of your topic. Instead, work to bring something unique, original, significant and all your own to an understanding of the material. As with any college paper, the more specifically focused your paper is, the more effective it is likely to be. Work to construct a fairly narrow topic that you develop in great depth.

However, this assignment is more than just another longish, college analytical paper. This is a paper that you will write with an advanced audience in mind for possible professional publication. As much as possible, this paper should be written as a professional article for serious students and scholars interested in further study of Tolkien and his works. All papers will be submitted for publication in the online journal of undergraduate work in Tolkien Studies that we are producing as part of this class. While only 5-6 papers from the class will be published in our journal, each of you will present your papers at our mini-conference at the end of the semester. In addition, all of you will have the experience of going through the editorial process of selecting works to be published and then editing them for that publication. All of your classmates will read your Journal Article and vote on whether it will be accepted for publication. If your paper is accepted for publication, then you will revise it according to the instructions given by me and your classmates by the due date in order for it to be published.

Your score for this part of your grade will be earned for the overall success of the finished product (i.e., how well it meets the assignment, displays serious and significant thought, its presentation of thorough and convincing evidence, establishes and supports an appropriate logical structure, meets acceptable standards of written English, etc.) as well as for the professional quality of your work. While your effort as a student is a substantial part of your work, your paper must be able to speak persuasively for itself to its hypothetical readers. Seek to construct a paper that will substantially change the way other readers think about Tolkien's work. Papers that do not successfully accomplish these goals will not earn a high score. In addition, papers that do not attend carefully to the conventions of form and grammar will not earn a high score, no matter how insightful the argument. If you are unfamiliar with MLA bibliographic style, consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or the link to a summary of MLA style on our class website. Five points will be deducted from your final course grade, if you omit proper text citations and/or a bibliography of works cited. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation style and format, please see me as soon as possible so that we can work together to teach you these professional skills.

A list of potentially successful Journal Article topics will be made available on the course website. While I am not requiring that you submit an abstract of your Journal Article, I encourage you to clear your topic with me as early as possible before you start working on your paper.

## **POLICIES and GUIDELINES:**

### Grades and Absences

1. Although students usually consider me a “tough grader,” I honestly want you to learn and succeed in this course. Therefore, by following the guidelines here, you have ample opportunity to earn a passing grade if you put forth diligent effort. While only truly superior work will earn an A, work making sincere effort rarely earns lower than a CR.
2. If you miss class, informing me of your situation demonstrates professional courtesy and willingness to take your responsibility to the class seriously, which will count in your favor when I determine your participation score. However, I make no distinctions between excused and unexcused absences. An absence is counted as an absence, regardless of the reason for it.
3. If you must miss class, you are responsible for acquiring notes from your classmates. In-class exercises may not be made up.
4. I do not automatically drop students who stop attending class. Therefore, you must take responsibility for dropping or withdrawing or be willing to accept the consequences.
5. Incompletes will be given only if you complete work through the 12th week with a passing grade.

### Written Work

6. Short papers may be turned in 1 class session after the due date without penalty. No late journal articles or oral reports will be allowed.
7. All written work should follow these conventions:
  - Typed (12 point type in Times New Roman or something very similar), double-spaced, on white 8½” x 11” paper, 1” margins all around.
  - Your name, course title, and assignment appears at the top right of the first page above a centered, appropriate title (Analytical Paper is NOT an appropriate title!). Number and staple all pages.
  - Sources must be documented according to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.
8. For your own protection, keep copies of all work you turn in for a grade.
9. You must do your own work and should not under any circumstances let others use your work. If you copy from others or sources without acknowledging the sources, you are guilty of plagiarism. If you have someone else write assignments or allow another person to copy work, you are guilty of dishonest scholarship. In addition to risking being expelled from UNM, if you are found guilty of plagiarism or dishonest scholarship, you will receive a 0 for the assignment and probably a NC for the course.

### Extra Credit

10. You may earn a maximum of 3 extra credit points toward your final score. Other forms of work may benefit your learning, but will not count toward your grade. Extra credit may be earned as follows:
  - 1 point if you attend all of the presentations at our class mini-conference at the end of the semester;
  - 1 point if you maintain perfect attendance throughout the semester (i.e., miss no classes at all!);
  - 1 point if you attend class on the day Course Evaluations are given. These will be given sometime during the last 2 weeks of class, but you will not know the exact date beforehand.

### Special Circumstances

11. Students with disabilities or other unusual circumstances are encouraged to see me as early as possible concerning any special accommodations that need to be made in order for you to succeed in this class.
12. Under EXTREMELY extraordinary circumstances exceptions to the above policies may be made with the following conditions. You must be willing to discuss the circumstances with me in person and provide any written documentation I might require (doctor's statement, death certificate, etc.).

**SYLLABUS (subject to change)**

Due dates for graded work appear in **bold**. Texts on the syllabus are by Tolkien, except where noted. Page numbers in parentheses correspond to standard paperback texts ordered for this class, but may vary depending on the edition. Abbreviations are as follows: TFMR is *The Tolkien Fan's Medieval Reader*; MAC is *The Monsters and the Critics*. ER denotes texts available on the library's electronic reserves website, which may be accessed through the UNM library homepage or through our course homepage.

Week 1	Tues. 1/18/05	Introduction/Syllabus
	Thurs. 1/20/05	Backgrounds and Beginnings
Week 2	Tues. 1/25/05	"On Fairy-Stories" (in <i>The Tolkien Reader</i> , 31-99)
	Thurs. 1/27/05	<i>Silmarillion</i> , Prefatory material, "Ainulindale," and "Valaquenta" (vii-xxxii, 1-26)
Week 3	Tues. 2/1/05	<i>Silmarillion</i> , "Quenta Silmarillion" through "Of the Darkening..." (27-83) <b>Oral Report: TMFR, Old Norse (164-246)</b>
	Thurs. 2/3/05	<i>Silmarillion</i> , "Quenta Silmarillion" through "Of Maeglin..." (83-163) <b>Oral Report: TMFR, Celtic: Welsh, Four Branches (246-292)</b>
Week 4	Tues. 2/8/05	<i>Silmarillion</i> , "Quenta Silmarillion" through "Of the Fifth Battle..." (163-236) <b>Oral Report: TMFR, Celtic: Kilhwch and Olwen, Irish (292-335)</b>
	Thurs. 2/10/05	<i>Silmarillion</i> , "Quenta Silmarillion" through "Of the Voyage of Earendil..." (236-307) <b>Oral Report: TMFR, Finnish (335-391)</b>
Week 5	Tues. 2/15/05	<i>Silmarillion</i> , "Akallabeth" and "Of the Rings of Power..." (307-367) <b>Oral Report: TMFR, Old English (13-77)</b>
	Thurs. 2/17/05	<b>Oral Report: MAC, Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics, not Appendix (5-34)</b> <b>Oral Report: MAC, Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics, Appendix (34-44)</b> <b>Oral Report: MAC, On Translating Beowulf (49-71)</b>
Week 6	Tues. 2/22/05	<i>Unfinished Tales</i> , "Introduction" and "Part 1: Of Tuor..." (1-19, 19-61) <b>Oral Report: Middle English (<i>Sir Gawain and Sir Orfeo</i>, Tolkien's translation)</b>
	Thurs. 2/24/05	<i>Unfinished Tales</i> , Part 1, "Narn i Hin Hurin..." (61-173) <b>Oral Report: MAC, <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> (72-108)</b>
Week 7	Tues. 3/1/05	<i>Unfinished Tales</i> , all of Part 2 (173-283) <b>Oral Report: TMFR, Middle English section, <i>Pearl</i> through end (127-164)</b>
	Thurs. 3/3/05	<i>Unfinished Tales</i> , Part 3, sections I-II (283-335) <b>Oral Report: MAC, English and Welsh (162-197)</b>
Week 8	Tues. 3/8/05	<i>Unfinished Tales</i> , Part 3 (335-393) <b>Oral Report: MAC, <i>A Secret Vice</i> (198-223)</b> <b>Short Paper Due</b>
	Thurs. 3/10/05	<i>Unfinished Tales</i> , all of Part IV (393-434) <b>Oral Report: MAC, <i>Valedictory Address</i> (224-240)</b>
Week 9	SPRING BREAK – No Classes	

