

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ENGL 3800. STUDIES IN SPECIAL TOPICS: KING ARTHUR AND THE MATTER OF BRITAIN
FALL TERM 2007 (3 CREDIT HOURS)

1/7

GENERAL INFORMATION

Course Number: **ENGL 3800** Section: **A01** Time: **TR 1000-1115** Location: **UC 238**
Instructor: **Dr D. A. Watt** Telephone: **474-8945** Email: **David_Watt@UManitoba.ca**
Office: **629 Fletcher Argue Building** Office Hours: **or by appointment**

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT

Jehan Bodel, a thirteenth-century French poet, classifies Arthurian material in Medieval Romance as the Matter of Britain. But Arthur is not bound to a single genre. Historical texts like Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, and those of his followers, Wace and Layamon, introduce to Latin, French, and English readers Arthur's narrative respectively. Letters and legal documents both relied upon and reinforced the historical authenticity of such texts by citing them in their claims of legitimacy. At the same time, other genres, from the *lais* of Marie de France to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, give Arthur's court a different kind of reality, making it come alive in narrative. But perhaps no text reflects and propagates the importance of Arthur's representation in historical and literary genres as well as Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*.

The first several weeks of this course will enable students to consider what was at stake in the use of Arthur to establish a British past in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest (1066), a period when French (Anglo-Norman) was used by the court, Latin and French by the bureaucracy, and numerous English dialects by the lower classes. It will introduce students to the historical and literary circumstances that shaped Arthurian material from the early twelfth century up to the fifteenth. We will examine in turn Geoffrey of Monmouth, Marie de France, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as well as a number of other literary and historical documents that provide a context for this study. This part of the course aims to help students feel comfortable studying primary and secondary texts drawn from the medieval period or written about it.

The remainder of the course will allow students to become intimately familiar with Malory's *Morte Darthur*. After spending some time becoming acquainted with the language of fifteenth-century England, students will read the text in Malory's English. This will give us the opportunity to explore the text's meaning as carefully as possible. But this part of the course also promises to give students the opportunity to explore and engage a variety of critical approaches to Malory's text, including formalism, archetypal criticism, gender criticism, post-structuralism.

You can help yourself and others to achieve this course's objectives by participating in lectures and seminar discussions, by consulting me outside the classroom for clarification and to challenge yourself further, and by using discussions and written assignments to refine your analytical skills and demonstrate your ability to apply them. I hope you find this course will enhance your knowledge of Arthur and his importance to medieval literature while also helping you to think critically and write clearly about these matters.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Geoffrey of Monmouth: History of the Kings of Britain. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin, 1966. ISBN: 0-140-44170-0.

Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte Darthur*. Ed. Stephen H. A. Shephard. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004. ISBN: 0-393-97464-2

Marie de France, *The Lais of Marie de France*. Ed. and Trans. Glynn Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin, 1999. ISBN: 0-140-44759-8.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Ed. James Winny. Peterborough, Broadview Press, 1992. ISBN: **0921149921**.

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS

Archibald, Elizabeth, and A.S.G. Edwards, eds. *A Companion to Malory*. Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000. ISBN: 0859915204.

Gillingham, John, and Ralph Griffiths. *Medieval Britain: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: OUP, 2000. ISBN: 0-19-285402.

McCarthy, Terence. *An Introduction to Malory*. Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1988. Repr. 2002. ISBN: 0859913252

METHOD OF EVALUATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
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Type of Work

Value Date

1. Written Assignments

Critical Response 1 (2-3 pp.)	5 %	20 January
Critical Response 2 (2-3 pp.)	5 %	10 February
Critical Response 3 (3-4 pp.)	10 %	3 March
Research Paper (8-10 pp.)	30 %	31 March

These three (3) critical responses pieces of writing will provide you with a chance to ponder, digest, and respond to material. Their form is flexible, and they should allow you to take up topics from previous classes and prepare for coming ones. I will provide comments on them, but I will not grade them for style or content. You will receive credit worth 5 % of your final grade for each of the two first critical assignments handed in on time. I will comment on late submissions, but they will receive no credit. The third critical response will be graded (i.e., it is not for credit only); it must also be handed in on time to receive credit.

2. Examinations

Value Date

Final Examination (3 Hours)	40 %	April Examination period
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The mandatory Final Examination will be held over 3 hours at a time and location appointed by the University during the April exam period.

3. Participation

Value: 10 %

Active participation is vital to the success of our class. I expect you to be prepared by having read the material and thought about appropriate questions or comments. This aspect of your mark considers not only how you contribute to discussions, but also assesses your ability actively to listen to others. I encourage you to learn from your classmates and to act in a way that enables others to learn.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

1. **Attendance:** Please make yourself familiar with the University's policy on attendance in the General Calendar (p. 26, Section 6.1). In accordance with the University and Department of English policy, I reserve the right to debar a student from the final examination if s/he has more than three (3) unexcused absences in a single term.

2. **Late Assignments:** I hope not to deduct marks for late papers. I expect you to organize your time in order to submit papers **in class** on or before their due date; alternatively, you may set a new date by writing to me—and having me confirm it with you **in writing**—up to one week before the assignment's original due date. Papers handed up to a week late will be assessed a half-grade penalty (e. g. B + becomes B); papers handed in from one week late until the last day of the term in which they are due will be assessed a further half-grade penalty (e. g. B + becomes C +) and will receive limited comments. Penalties will be adjusted or waived in the case of emergencies, but you must ensure that you can supply appropriate documentation (e. g. a doctor's note) in such cases.

3. **Plagiarism:** Please make yourself familiar with the University's policy on plagiarism and cheating in the General Calendar (pp. 27-28, Section 7). The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism in a written assignment, test, or examination is F on the paper and F for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as the purchase of an essay or cheating on a test or examination, the penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty. The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

4. **Grades:** Please see the description of Letter Grades in the General Calendar (p. 24, Section 3.1).

SCHEDULE OF REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING

WEEK 1. INTRODUCTION

6 September *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*;
William Caxton, Prologue and Epilogue to *Morte Darthur* (814-819)

PART I. AFTER THE NORMAN CONQUEST

WEEK 2. HISTORY

11 September Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*
13 September Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*
Critical Response 1a Due

WEEK 3. GENRE

18 September Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*
20 September Marie de France, *Lais*
Critical Response 1b Due

PART II. THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

WEEK 4. ORAL AND WRITTEN CULTURE 1

25 September Marie de France, *Lais*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
27 September *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
Critical Response 1c Due

WEEK 5. ORAL AND WRITTEN CULTURE 2

2 October *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

4 October *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
Critical Response 2a Due

PART III. THE WARS OF THE ROSES

WEEK 6. HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGE
9 October Malory, *Lancelot* (151:32-177:6)
11 October Malory, *Lancelot* (151:32-177:6)
Critical Response 2b Due

WEEK 7. CRITICAL APPROACHES 1. FORMAL ANALYSIS
16 October Malory, *Gareth* (177:6-227)
18 October Malory, *Gareth* (177:6-227)
Critical Response 2c Due
Terence McCarthy, "On Malory's Style"
P.J.C. Field, "The Rhetoric of Dialogue"

PART IV. ARTHUR AND EMPIRE

WEEK 8. CRITICAL APPROACHES 2. CULTURAL MATERIALISM
23 October Malory, *The Tale of King Arthur* (3-112:25)
25 October Malory, *The Tale of King Arthur* (3-112:25)
Critical Response 3a Due
Carol Meale, "Manuscripts, Readers, and Patrons in Fifteenth-Century England"

WEEK 9. CRITICAL APPROACHES 3. GENDER STUDIES
30 October Malory, *Arthur and Lucius* (113:1-151:23)
1 November Malory, *Arthur and Lucius* (113:1-151:23)
Critical Response 3b Due
Catherine Batt, "Malory and Rape"
Geraldine Heng, "Enchanted Ground"

PART V. ARTHUR AND THE GRAIL

WEEK 10. CRITICAL APPROACHES 4. ARCHETYPAL (MYTH) CRITICISM
06 November Malory, *Tale of the Sankgreal* (496-587)
08 November Malory, *Tale of the Sankgreal* (496-587)
Last Day to Submit Term Paper Proposal
Northrop Frye, From *Anatomy of Criticism* (Either Essay 2 or 3)

WEEK 11. CRITICAL APPROACHES 5. DECONSTRUCTION
13 November Malory, *Tale of the Sankgreal* (496-587)
15 November Malory, *Tale of the Sankgreal* (496-587)
Critical Response 3c Due
Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences."

PART VI. ARTHUR AND THE END OF THE WORLD

WEEK 12. CRITICAL APPROACHES 6. PSYCHOANALYSIS

20 November Malory, *Launcelot and Gwennyvere* (588-645)

22 November Term Paper Due

Malory, *Launcelot and Gwennyvere* (588-645)

Helen Cooper, "Counter-Romance: Civil Strife and Father-Killing in the Prose Romances"

Mark Lambert, "Shame and Guilt"

Paul Strohm, "Mellyagant's Primal Scene"

WEEK 13. REVIEW

27 November Malory, *Mort Arthur* (646-698)

29 November Malory, *Mort Arthur* (646-698)

Felicity Riddy, "Divisions"

WEEK 14.

4 December Malory, *Mort Arthur* (646-698) and Review

8-20 December Final Examination Period

What does an essay's mark mean?

I mark essays subjectively. However, my marking is not arbitrary. I try to indicate to you how well your essay persuades a reader of its argument. This can really only be determined subjectively. Nonetheless, persuasion largely depends on the way that any essay employs matters of **content**, **style**, and **convention** to meet the assignment's requirements. Because these categories overlap, I cannot give you a formula for how much each of them is worth. On the bright side, this means that close attention to one area will often lead to improvement in others. When I hand back your essays, you will likely recognize in your comments one of the descriptions below.

Each essay's mark should inform you of how well you have met not only my expectations, but also those of the Department, Faculty, and University. I hope that you will use it to understand your achievement and seek areas for improvement. If you are confused or frustrated about the essay's mark—or you believe it should be described differently—please see me for clarification, bringing the essay with you.

Letter Mark	Written description
A + (Exceptional) A (Excellent)	This essay's style and content work together to respond to the assignment by presenting a persuasive argument. Its content demonstrates literary insight while engaging the reader through its use of a rhetorically effective or original approach to its topic. It is free of major errors in style (grammar and diction) and convention (mechanics, presentation, and format). It may be improved by integrating more effectively matters of style and content or by handling its evidence slightly differently.
B + (Very Good) B (Good)	This essay's argument responds to the assignment soundly and clearly. Its style and content convey its ideas directly, and it makes effective use of evidence to support its main points. This paper could likely be improved in one of three ways: (1) it needs to stress how its content demonstrates a significant literary insight or originality; (2) it needs to use its style (grammar and diction) more effectively to present its argument; (3) it needs to address a major error in convention (mechanics, presentation and format).
C+ (Satisfactory) C (Adequate)	This essay's style and content are both generally competent. It presents a thesis that responds to the assignment reasonably, and it uses appropriate evidence to support its main points. This paper could be improved in one or more of the following ways: (1) it needs to present its content (thesis, organization, paragraphs) more clearly or to focus its ideas more effectively; (2) its style (grammar and diction) needs to be refined so that it meets expectations for University-level writing; (3) it needs to address major errors in convention (mechanics, presentation, and format).
C- (Marginally Adequate) D (Marginal Pass)	This essay likely contains a number of important ideas and it may at times present its points clearly. However, the essay makes it difficult for its reader to determine what these ideas are or the connection between them. It requires improvements in two or more of the following areas: (1) its content (thesis, organization, paragraphs) needs to be presented in a more consistently competent manner or it may need to ensure that its thesis responds to the assignment; (2) its style (grammar and diction) needs to be refined so that it meets expectations for University-level writing; (3) it needs to address major errors in convention (mechanics, presentation, and format).
F (Failure)	This essay is inadequate in its present form. It requires improvements in all of the following areas: (1) its content (thesis, organization, paragraphs) needs to be presented in a more competent manner or in a way that responds to the assignment; (2) its style (grammar and diction) needs to be refined so that it meets expectations for University-level writing; (3) it needs to address major errors in its use of convention (mechanics, presentation, and format).

Bibliography

I. Primary Texts:

1. Editions of Malory

*Malory, *Works*, ed. Eugène Vinaver (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971).

Also consult in a library the edition from which the text is drawn, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3 vols. ed. by Eugène Vinaver (rev. P.J.C. Field, 1990).

Malory, The Morte d'Arthur: the Winchester Manuscript, ed. and abridged by Helen Cooper, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998).

Morte d'Arthur, Everyman ed. (Caxton's text).

NB: Use the latter two editions only for comparative purposes.

2. Editions of Malory's Sources

The Quest of the Holy Grail (Penguin Classics) (translation of French source of Book VI)

The Death of King Arthur (Penguin Classics) (translation of French source of Books VII and VIII)

King Arthur's Death, ed. Larry D. Benson (1986). Contains the two major Middle English analogues, the alliterative and stanzaic *Morte Darthur*.

II. Critical Texts:

*Archibald, Elizabeth and A.S.G. Edwards, *A Companion to Malory* (1996).

Archibald, Elizabeth, 'Malory's Ideal of Friendship', *Review of English Studies*, 43 (1992), 311-28.

Bennett, J.A.W., *Essays on Malory* (1963).

Brewer, Derek, "Malory: The Traditional Writer and the Archaic Mind," *Arthurian Literature* 1 (1981) 94-120.

Brewer, D.S. and T. Takamiya, *Aspects of Malory* (1981).

Carpenter, Christine, 'Sir Thomas Malory and Fifteenth-Century Local Politics', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53 (1980), 31-43.

Edwards, Elizabeth, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur* (2001).

*Field, P.J.C., *Romance and Chronicle* (1971).

Field, P.J.C., *Malory: Texts and Sources* (1998).

Field, P.J.C., *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (1993).

Kennedy, Beverly, *Knighthood in the Morte Darthur* (1985, 2nd ed. 1992).

*La Farge, Catherine, 'Conversation in Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Medium Aevum*, 56 (1987) 225-38.

*Lambert, Mark, *Malory: Style and Vision in the Morte Darthur* (1975)

Lumiansky, R.M., *Malory's Originality* (1964)

Lynch, Andrew, *Malory's Book of Arms: The Narrative of Combat in Le Morte Darthur* (1997)

Mahoney, Dhira B., 'Narrative Treatment of Name in Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Journal of English Literary History*, 47 (1980) 646-56.

McCarthy, Terence, *An Introduction to Malory* (1991); reprint of *Reading the Morte Darthur* (1988).

Riddy, Felicity, *Sir Thomas Malory* (1987).

*Schroeder, 'Hidden Depths: dialogue and characterisation in Chaucer and Malory', *PMLA*, 98 (1983), 374-87.