ENG 4973.003: Senior Seminar: The Literature of King Arthur
Spring 2012

Instructor:  Mark Allen
Office:  MB 2.478 (ext. 5358)  Hours:  MWF 9:30-10:30
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Texts:

Description and Requirements:
This course offers students opportunities to acquire knowledge of the stories associated with King Arthur, to examine how and when these stories developed as they did, and to explore the development of these stories in particular literary modes and cultural/historical contexts. Course work includes all assigned readings and regular quizzes (20%), a critical notebook (40%; see below), and a semester paper (40%; see below). For the purposes of the notebook, paper, and class discussion, students are expected to do research—primary and secondary—that ranges well beyond our reading texts. Successful completion of this course fulfills the Seminar for Majors, designed as a capstone experience and required for a B.A. in English.

Reading Schedule.
1/23  Introduction
1/30  Myth and History (Wilhelm, pp. 1-58)
2/6  Chronicle (Wilhelm, pp. 59-119)
2/13  Romance: Lancelot (Wilhelm, pp. 121-99; 529-76)
      [Notebooks due in class]
2/20  Romance: Gawain (Wilhelm, pp. 365-487)
2/27  Romance: Merlin (Wilhelm, pp. 305-63)
3/5  Allegory: *The Quest of the Holy Grail*
      [Notebooks due in class]
3/12  SPRING BREAK
3/19  Poetry: Tennyson, Selections from *Idylls of the King*: The Coming of Arthur (2-15), Gereint and Enid (73-97), Merlin and Vivien (113-37), Lancelot and Elaine (137-72), Guenivere (229-46), and The Passing of Arthur (247-58)
      Tennyson, “Lady of Shalott” (1842 ed.)
      <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/shalott.htm>
      William Morris, “The Defence of Guenivere”
      <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poem/1501.html>
      [Notebooks due in class, including statement of Seminar Paper Thesis/Topic]
4/16  Novel: White, *The Once and Future King*, pp. 9-209
4/23  White, *The Once and Future King*, pp. 213-514
4/30  White, *The Once and Future King*, pp. 517-639

5/10  (Thursday 1:30-4:00) **Seminar Projects due in class.** Each member of the class will summarize her/his research findings. Five-minute limit.

**Critical Notebook:**

Your notebook should be a record of your responses to primary and secondary materials that relate to the literature of King Arthur and a gauge of your progress as a scholar and critic. The precise format is yours to choose since any organized combination of outline, summary, and analysis should do. I ask, however, that you use a ring binder of convenient size that differs from your notebook for class. Label and date your entries and include complete bibliographic information, including URLs for Internet materials. You may wish to print or photocopy some materials for later reference, but be sure to include in your notebook a combination of analyses, summaries, and/or outlines of these materials. When and if you do outline, arrange your notes and observations to reflect the relative importance of the points you record; a list of “bullet” points is not as useful as a full-fledged outline.

I will assess both range and detail, evidence of your investigations of a number of topics and your thorough pursuit of several of them. For example, if you skim the article called “The Vulgate Cycle” in Roger Loomis’s *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, a short outline or summary may be in order. In the case of something more argumentative (like the essays in Stephen Knight’s *Arthurian Literature and Society*), you should respond more analytically or critically. A simple descriptive paragraph may be enough to clarify or comment on the enormity of Jack Whyte’s *Camulod Chronicles* (aka *Dream of Eagles* series). Feel free to mix in “popular” material along with more traditional literature, criticism, history, art, and archeology. There are many different kinds of Arthurian cultural artifacts, so feel free to adapt the style and content of your entries to the subject matter and format of individual items. The literature and its criticism should be central, however, and make sure to consider topics that concern early materials as well as contemporary ones.

Notebooks need not be confined to secondary reading only. Include plot summaries and/or reactions to the primary literature that you read for class and on your own. Comment thoughtfully on the Arthurian art or maps that you find in book illustrations and paintings (with photocopies?). Include thoughts and analyses of class discussions. Include observations, questions, and/or discoveries that excite, intrigue, or fascinate you. Leave out diary entries and mere impressions, and be sure to allow space for later commentary (mine and your own). Strive to write clearly in both senses—pointedly and legibly. Be organized. You are welcome (encouraged?) to use a word processor, print the pages, and include them in your ring binder. I will be happy to assess your notebook any time during the semester, but they must be turned in three times: 2/13, 3/5, and 4/9.

**Seminar Papers or Projects: Due Thursday May 10 (exam date) at 1:30.** NOTE: Include a description of the thesis/topic for your Seminar Paper as the last entry in your Critical Notebook (Due 4/9)

A seminar paper should be a sharpened, focused argument that you derive from research and sound critical thinking. For example, if you become interested in the minor character such as Palomides, Gareth, or one of the several Elaines, you may wish to research multiple stories in which the character appears, while your paper might zero in on a specific version or comparison of one or more related versions, analyzing how the character functions or develops. Dealing with a major character such as Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, or Merlin will require very careful narrowing and focusing. Similarly, if you wish to investigate depictions of the Round Table in art or the motif of the undying king in literature, you have a broad territory to survey from which you should generate a focused argument in your paper. Seminar papers should be about 15-18 pp., typed, one-inch margins, 12-point font, and otherwise consistent with MLA format for citation and documentation. Please discuss your topics with me, often and earnestly. I will be happy to look at sample thesis statements, outlines, and drafts of your work. If you would like to discuss with me an optional project rather than a traditional research paper, please do so early in the semester. All
projects must be accompanied by a written critique of the project, which explains the nature and goals of
the project and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the finished product.

**Reserve list and library policy.** The following works are on reserve and are therefore available to all of
you throughout the semester. The scholarship and criticism of Arthurian literature is sizable, so there is
much more out there than is represented in the list below. Use the stacks, the journals, and your own
research skills to seek out topics of interest, but don’t be afraid to just explore impulsively. I’ll be happy to
try and help whenever you ask. The ones included below are intended to help get you started. See also the
annual journal called *Arthurian Literature* (PN685.A684).

**Archaeology and History**
Littleton, C. Scott, and Linda A. Malcor. *From Scythia to Camelot: A Radical Reassessment of the Legends

**Collections of Critical Essays**
Sklar, Elizabeth S., and Donald L. Hoffman, ed. *King Arthur in Popular Culture*. Jefferson, N.C.:

**Collections of Primary Texts**

**Reference and Bibliography**
Taylor, Beverly, and Elisabeth Brewer. *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian
Literature Since 1900 [i.e. 1800]*. Cambridge: Brewer, 1983.

**Arthurian Art and Film**

I have in my office copies of several Arthurian journals you are welcome to peruse and, perhaps, borrow. I
also have copies of seminar papers written for this class in the past, which you are welcome to look at.
Stop by when you will. As you get involved in your research and notebooks, competition for other books
will develop; so let me make some suggestions:

1) **Carefully** reshelve all books pertinent to our seminar when you are done using them in the
library; if left on tables, re-shelving will be delayed. If mis-shelved, a book is effectively lost.

2) **Talk to each other** about what you’ve used and what you yet want to see, sharing books as they
appear important, interesting, and/or pertinent to your seminar paper.

3) Use the other libraries in town (Trinity, St. Mary's, S. A. Public, etc.); their holdings include
materials we do not have. Use our library’s Interlibrary Loan system when necessary.
Internet Note: There is much Arthurian material on the Internet, some of it excellent, some of it very unreliable. Use it with the same caution as you would a “popular” bookstore, and always give credit where credit is due. An excellent place to begin is The Camelot Project at the University of Rochester http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cphome.stm.

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to be above reproach in scholastic activities. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to plagiarism or collusion, are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the University. “Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

Disability Services: UTSA offers support services, including registration assistance and equipment, to students with documented disabilities through the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS), MS 2.03.18. Students are encouraged to contact that office at 458-4157 as early as possible in the semester.

Important University-wide Dates:  
Census date: Wednesday, February 1, 2012. 5:00 p.m.  
Drop date: Monday, April 30, 2012