
Medieval French Literature

COURSE DESIGNATOR: MONT 3021W

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: French

NUMBER OF CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the origins of French literature (~11th Century) and its development during Western Europe's first true Renaissance of the 12th and 13th centuries. It is a time of dramatic changes: though the power of the Church is at a peak, already cries of dissent can be heard. In some of the most horrifying acts of France's history, Simon de Montfort's crusading armies crush the mysterious Cathar Heresy of Southern France, but the legacy of the Heresy's parfaits remains to this day in castle ruins perched on dizzying heights of the Pyrenees. Efforts of the likes of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Marie de France, persistent feminist voices in a male world of feudal obligation and brutality temper the era's bloody epic poetry with rich and fanciful romance, while masterpieces of the Ancients, such as the Virgil's Aeneid or Ovid's Metamorphoses reemerge in a new form. Our goal will be not only to grasp the changes in the literature of the period (theater, poetry, prose) but also to study the art and architecture (from the Romanesque monasteries to the Gothic cathedrals of the region), social climate, mindsets, and history of the period in an attempt to provide a deeper comprehension of this often misunderstood time. In addition, throughout the course, students will uncover the strong parallels that exist between concrete artistic representations and the literary figures that dominate the written / oral landscape of the period (ex: gothic painting as static theater).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Developing thorough understanding of the literary tradition, culture, and mindsets of France in the 11th–13th centuries.
- Uncovering the parallels between the increasing complexity of each work's literary figures and the evolution from Romanesque to Gothic artistic forms
- This course is writing intensive. It is paramount that students acquire strong writing skills in order to effectively analyze cultural artifacts/documents within the framework of the French Studies curriculum. Writing is at the core of the academic experience and is the responsibility of every member of the academic community. By participating in the production and interrogation of the discourse in the field of French Studies, students' progress in their understanding of the discipline. Over the course of the semester, students will complete a variety of writing assignments, including: at least four short reaction-type essays, three or four intermediate 1–3 page analytical essays or dissertations, a 2–3 page in-class writing assignment, and finally one 8–10 page final research/analysis paper/dossier. The instructor will provide the students with regular feedback, focusing on essay structure, grammar and stylistics.
- Students will be required to correct at least two of their assignments taking into account the instructor's feedback on their first version, and hand in corrected versions to thereby improve their grade. The student's initial version will include commentary and suggestions for structural / analytical changes as well as indicate grammatical and stylistic errors.

METHODOLOGY

A presentation of the cultural, historical, and social context for the selected works will serve to frame the readings and discussion. Power-point presentations, in-class analysis of reading passages and works of art, and outside readings will provide students with background information that they will be able to draw upon in their essays and presentations. Over the course of the semester students will write four to five 1–3 page papers and about 4 ½-page reaction/brief analysis essays. One of the 1–3 page papers will be an in-class essay/dissertation. Students must correct at least two of their written assignments and resubmit them, this will allow them to potentially improve their grade. The students' final

research project (an 8–10 page paper + 15–20 min. presentation on a topic of their choice related to the course) will further enrich their learning experience. Contact hours for this course include one 8-hour excursion to the Cathar castles of Quéribus and Peyrpertuse west of Perpignan and one 2-hour guided tour of medieval Montpellier (including the well in the house of Saint Roch, remnants of la commune clôturé, la Tour des Pins, la Tour de la Babote, and the cathédrale St. Pierre, etc.).

COURSE PREREQUISITES

[Text here - only if there are prerequisites for this course. Use universal course descriptions instead of UMN course numbers.

Ex: “Completion of 4 semesters of Spanish,” **not** “SPAN 1004.” **Delete this section if there are no prerequisites.] FREN 1004**

REQUIRED READINGS

- Le Mystère d’Adam
- La Vie de Saint-Alexis
- La Chanson de Roland
- La Chanson de la croisade albigeoise (extraits)
- Les Lais de Marie de France
- Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion
- Le Roman de Renart (extraits)
- Menocal, Maria Rosa. *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990. (excerpts)
- Tolman, Rolf et al. *L’art roman: Architecture, peinture, sculpture*. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005. (excerpts)
- Tolman, Rolf et al. *L’art gothique: Architecture, peinture, sculpture*. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005. (excerpts)

GRADING

Grading Rubric		
A	93-100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D	60-66	
F	0-59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

SUMMARY OF HOW GRADES ARE WEIGHTED

Essays (4–5)	30%
Participation	15%
Homework assignments and exposes (4)	15%
Final presentation (15–20 minutes)	20%
Final written paper	20%
Overall grade	100%

COURSE CONTENT

WEEK 1

Topic: Course Introduction—the origins of French vernacular literature, medieval mentalities, the medieval conception of space and time; an introduction to Romanesque art and architecture. Paleographic examples taken from the Serment de Strasbourg.

Assigned reading: La Vie de Saint-Alexis. (11th–12th centuries).

WEEK 2

Topic: Discussion of La Vie de Saint-Alexis. Hagiography and the function of saints in medieval French society. Romanesque representations of sin, the role of relics, and analysis of 11th and early 12th century abbey façades, capitals, and tympana.

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion: “Mentalités, le ciel, la terre, le paradis.”

Assigned reading: Le Mystère d’Adam. (12th Century); Selected readings from: Tolman, Rolf et al. L’art roman: Architecture, peinture, sculpture. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005.

WEEK 3

Topic: Discussion of liturgical theater and the Mystère d’Adam. The didactic role of theater in the Church, fighting against paganism and superstition, and the esthetics of Romanesque architecture.

Activities: Debate and analysis of le Mystère d’Adam; PowerPoint and discussion--- “La Représentation du péché”

Assigned reading: La Chanson de Roland (late 11th Century); Selected readings from: Tolman, Rolf et al. L’art roman: Architecture, peinture, sculpture. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005.

WEEK 4

Topic: Discussion of La Chanson de Roland. An introduction to the chanson de geste as early courtly literature (context, form, and themes) origins and themes of epic poetry.

Assigned reading: La Chanson de Roland (late 11th Century). Menocal, Maria Rosa. The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten History. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990 (excerpts).

WEEK 5

Topic: Discussion of La Chanson de Roland. Analysis of the work, discussion of the issues and themes raised by the text: The Other, le merveilleux, the Church, Roland's "sacrifice."

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion: "Exemples de sculpture romane: Thèmes bibliques."

Assigned reading: La Chanson de Roland (late 11th century); Selected readings from: Tolman, Rolf et al. L'art roman: Architecture, peinture, sculpture. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005.

WEEK 6

Topic: Discussion of the Cathar heresy and the divergent viewpoints within La Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise. Crusading mindsets and the chansons de geste.

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion: "Le Catharisme: Châteaux d'hérétiques- le refuge et la sauvegarde dans l'isolement » ; Reading troubadour and trouvère poetry—Guillaume de Poitiers/Bernard de Ventadour

Assigned reading: Les Lais de Marie de France (12th Century) Guigemar, Equitan, Le Fresne, Lanval; Selected readings from: Tolman, Rolf et al. L'art roman: Architecture, peinture, sculpture. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005.

WEEK 7

Topics: Introduction to la littérature courtoise. Eleanor of Aquitaine as patron of the arts, courtly mindsets, la chevalerie, la fin'amor, and the troubadours.

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion: "Aliénor d'Aquitaine: mécène des arts."

Assigned reading: Les Lais de Marie de France (12th century) Yonec, Laüstic, Milun, Eliduc; Selected readings from: Tolman, Rolf et al. L'art gothique: Architecture, peinture, sculpture. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005.

WEEK 8

Topics: Discussion of the Lais de Marie de France. Presentation and analysis of themes and topi of courtly romance. Mini—exposés by students.

Activities: PowerPoint “Beatus de Liébana: Commentaire de l’Apocalypse (~780) manuscrits illuminés du Xe et XIe siècles—La Peur avant l’an mil»

Assigned reading: Les Lais de Marie de France (12th century) Bisclavret, Les Deus Amanz, Chevrefoil, Chaitivel; Selected readings from: Tolman, Rolf et al. L’art gothique: Architecture, peinture, sculpture. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005.

WEEK 9

Topics: Discussion of the Lais de Marie de France. Continuation of analysis of the themes and topi of courtly romance, introduction to bestiaries, lapidaries, and herbals. Mini—exposés by students.

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion «Introduction à l’architecture gothique»

Assigned reading: Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion de Chrétien de Troyes; Selected readings from: Tolman, Rolf et al. L’art gothique: Architecture, peinture, sculpture. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005.

WEEK 10

Topics: Discussion of Chrétien de Troyes’s Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion. Analysis of themes and symbolism. Introduction to gothic architecture.

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion «Introduction au merveilleux: créatures et monstres du monde oriental»

Assigned reading: Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion de Chrétien de Troyes; Selected readings from: Tolman, Rolf et al. L’art gothique: Architecture, peinture, sculpture. Paris: Editions Place des Victoires, 2005.

WEEK 11

Topics: Discussion of Chrétien de Troyes’s Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion. The Arthurian legend in Old French literature. Gothic architecture as “static theater.”

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion «La matière de Bretagne. Le merveilleux/le miraculeux»

Assigned reading: Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion de Chrétien de Troyes.

WEEK 12

Topics: Discussion of Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion*. *La matière de Bretagne*. Symbolism and gothic architecture continued.

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion «Représentations iconographiques de la Vierge à l'Enfant (XIe---XVe) »; Extraits de la série *Kaamelott*—parodie du monde arthurien.

Assigned reading: Excerpts from *Le Roman de Renart*.

WEEK 13

Topics: Discussion of the *Roman de Renart*; *Voix de dissension*

Activities: PowerPoint and discussion «Le système féodal et l'Eglise critiques »; Extraits de la série *Kaamelott*—parodie du monde arthurien.

Assigned reading: Excerpts from *Le Roman de Renart*.

WEEK 14

Topics and activities: Student presentations and discussion. Excerpts from *Le Roman de Renart*—voices of dissent, social commentary, and parody.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the onsite syllabus for specific class requirements.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY:

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

STUDENT CONDUCT:

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.