
Medieval French Literature: Arthurian Legends

COURSE DESIGNATOR: MONT 3021

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: French

NUMBER OF CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Who was King Arthur? How is it that a legendary figure from such a distant time still exists today in such a vibrant manner within the collective mind? From the Middle Ages to the present day in such popular works as George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones*, the myths and folklore surrounding the king have been ceaselessly renewed. Beginning with the pseudo-historical origins of Arthur and his knights in the old French literary tradition as depicted by Chrétien de Troyes and in iconic works of the *matière de Bretagne*, continuing through to Jean Cocteau's 20th-century theatrical adaptations and ending with Alexandre Astier's wildly popular television series, *Kaamelott*, this course will seek to shed light on the popularity and the mystery surrounding le *roi Arthur*. Over the course of the semester we will explore the legendary material in detail, consistently comparing and contrasting contemporary works with their medieval forbears with the ultimate goal of understanding how these creations function within the socio-cultural framework.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The goal of this course is to help students develop a thorough understanding of the Arthurian tradition as it has been depicted in French in the medieval period and the present day. Students will be able to see the strong parallels between the legendary material of the original *matière de Bretagne* and recurring themes in contemporary fiction and cinema. Students will also acquire critical thinking and analytical skills with respect to works of literature and television drama/cinema, and learn how these artistic creations function from a sociological/socio-cultural perspective.

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. The instructor will provide the students with regular feedback, focusing on essay structure, grammar, and stylistics.

METHODOLOGY

A presentation of the cultural, historical, and social context for the selected works will serve to frame the readings and discussion. PowerPoint 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, which 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.

REQUIRED READINGS/ MATERIALS

REQUIRED TEXTS

Lanval, Marie de France
Erec et Enide, Chrétien de Troyes
Lancelot ou Le Chevalier de la charrette, Chrétien de Troyes
Les chevaliers de le Table ronde, Jean Cocteau
L'enchanteur, René Barjavel

MATERIALS

Série télévisée: Kaamelott S1-S6

COURSE READINGS TAKEN FROM:

Delcourt, Thierry. *Littérature arthurienne 1*, PUF 2000.
Dubost, Francis. *La Merveille Médiévale*, Champion, 2016.
Walter, Philippe. *Arthur, l'ours et le roi*, Paris, Imago, 2002.

- *Perceval, le pêcheur et le Graal*, Paris, Imago, 2004.
- *Gauvain le chevalier solaire*, Paris, Imago, 2013.

GRADING

Grading Rubric		
A	93-100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90-92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87-89	
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77-79	
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D+	67-69	
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	30%
Participation	15%
Homework assignments and exposés	15%
Final presentation	20%
Final written paper	20%
Overall grade	100%

COURSE CONTENT

WEEK 1

Topic: Introduction – Arthur’s origins. Historical contexts and evolving perceptions/perspectives

Assigned reading: *Lanval*, Marie de France

WEEK 2

Topic: Mythical forbears and the pseudo-historical tradition. Introduction to Astier’s opus, *Kaamelott*

Activities: Analysis and discussion of *Lanval*, *Kaamelott*

Assigned reading: *Erec et Enide*

WEEK 3

Topic: Visions of courtly life and courtly love

Activities: Analysis and discussion of *Erec et Enide*, *Kaamelott S1*

Assigned reading: *Erec et Enide*

WEEK 4

Topic: Enduring myth: Philippe Walter's vision of Arthurian legend

Assigned readings: *Erec et Enide*, readings from *Arthur, l'ours et le roi*

WEEK 5

Topic: True Love and Betrayal- Erec and Enide vs. Arthur and Guenièvre

Activities: Discussion and analysis of *Kaamelott S1*

Assigned reading: *Erec et Enide*, readings from *Arthur, l'ours et le roi*

WEEK 6

Topic: Chivalry and knighthood, paragons and tragic heroes

Activities: Discussion and analysis of *Kaamelott, S2*

Assigned reading: *Lancelot*, readings from *Arthur, l'ours et le roi*

WEEK 7

Topic: Heroes and gods; Merlin and the King

Activities: Discussion and analysis of *Kaamelott, S2*

Assigned reading: *Lancelot*, readings from *Merlin ou le Savoir du Monde (P. Walter)*

WEEK 8

Discussion of the Lancelot. Presentation and analysis of themes and *topi* of the work. Mini-exposés by students.

Comparative study: *Kaamelott's depiction of Lancelot I*

WEEK 9

Discussion of Lancelot. Continuation of analysis of the themes and *topi*. Mini-exposés by students.

Comparative study: *Kaamelott's depiction of Lancelot II*; Dubost, Francis. *La Merveille Médiévale*

WEEK 10

Discussion of Chrétien de Troyes's Lancelot. Analysis of themes and symbolism, *merveilles and mythes*

Assigned readings: Dubost, Francis. *La Merveille Médiévale*

WEEK 11

Discussion of Chrétien de Troyes's Lancelot. Modern visions of the Arthurian legend. Student mini-exposés.

Assigned reading: *Gauvain le chevalier solaire* (P. Walter); *Les chevaliers de le Table ronde* (J. Cocteau)

WEEK 12

Discussion of Cocteau's *Les chevaliers de le Table ronde*. Contemporary visions and transformations of the Arthurian legend.

Activities: *Kaamelott, S4, S5 excerpts*

WEEK 13

Student presentations and discussion. Conclusions and analysis

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.