

Syllabus for English 219
MWF 2-2:50 pm, Palmer 205
CRN: 11630
Comparative Studies in Medieval Literature

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Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the cultural variety of the Western European Middle Ages through a series of paired medieval texts representing diverse genres and cultural traditions. Following a brief foray into medieval lyric verse, we will begin our in-depth study with the adventures of dragon-slaying Germanic heroes in the Old Norse *Saga of the Volsungs* and the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*. Next, we will enter the realm of Arthurian romance as portrayed in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and the Middle English *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Our third and final unit will involve the study of medieval story collections, including the Anglo-Norman *Lais of Marie de France* and the medieval Welsh *Mabinogion*. All texts will be read in modern English translation. In addition to its function as a comparative survey of medieval literature, English 219 is designed to develop and strengthen skills in reading, writing, and critical analysis. To this end, course requirements will also include close reading of numerous secondary sources and a substantial amount of formal and informal writing. *Prerequisite: English 151 or permission from the instructor. F2i, F4.*

Texts and Readings

- *The Nibelungenlied* (trans., Yale UP; Raffel)
- Chrétien de Troyes, *Ivain: The Knight of the Lion* (Yale UP; trans., Raffel)
- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Norton Critical Edition; trans., Marie Borroff)
- *The Saga of the Volsungs* (Penguin; trans., Byock)
- *Lays of Marie de France* (Penguin; trans., Burgess and Busby)
- *The Mabinogion* (Oxford World Classics; trans. Davies)
- Rhodes College, *Guide to Effective Writing*

Please note that translations vary greatly, and it is crucial that you have the assigned texts. If the bookstore is out of any of these books, please contact the textbook office as soon as possible to request copies. In addition to these primary texts, assigned scholarly articles and book chapters relevant to these works will be available through our class Moodle site.

Course Requirements

- three papers (5-7 pages each) 50%
 - Each of our three units will conclude with the submission of a 5-7 page paper (worth 15% each). Each of these papers should offer close textual analysis, engage one or more substantial and relevant secondary sources, and develop a clearly articulated and well-supported thesis. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided prior to each paper.
 - Prior to each paper submission, one day will be devoted to writing workshops. Preparation and participation in these writing workshops will determine 5% of your grade. Preparation might include such activities as draft writing, peer review, or related activities. Other paper-related work such as topic proposals or progress reports will also fall under this portion of your grade.
 - Revision: While drafting and revision will be an integral component of every unit and paper, at the end of the semester, you will submit a revision of the paper of your choice along with a cover letter detailing your goals and changes. The grade of the revised paper will be averaged with the original submission for a new grade. Keep in mind, however, that revision is mandatory and failure to submit a revised paper could result in the lowering of the original paper grade. Your revision will be submitted by or at the scheduled time of the final examination. (To help ensure

that students have ample time for revision, the final exam will not be cumulative and will be designed to take only 50 minutes.)

- weekly forum Posts (approximately 1 fully developed paragraph each) 10%
 - Weekly postings are intended to stimulate in-class discussions, to serve as starting points for formal papers (where appropriate), and to offer additional writing practice throughout the semester.
 - A new discussion topic will be added to the Moodle website each weekend, and all postings will be due by midnight the following Tuesday.
 - Posts submitted after this deadline but before the beginning of class Wednesday will be subject to a 10% deduction. Posts submitted after the beginning of classtime will not receive credit.
 - Postings may begin new threads (related to the assigned topic) or may respond to other students (again, in ways fulfill the assigned task).
 - Please note that you must post to the assigned board each week to receive credit. The two lowest scores will be dropped to allow for occasional illness and emergencies. Any special arrangements must be made ahead of time and outside of class.
- examinations (three, including the final) 30%
 - All examinations will include a combination of objective questions and essays. On review days, some class time will be devoted to the skills of in-class essay writing.
 - Keep in mind that your mandatory paper revision will be due by or at the time of the final examination. To compensate for the time taken in revising, the final examination will not be cumulative, covering only material since the last exam. It will be designed to take no more time than a regular class period.
- quizzes and in-class activities 5%
 - While the primary focus of the course will address skills in writing and analysis, frequent quizzes, exercises, and other class activities will allow you opportunities to demonstrate your knowledge and retention of readings and key concepts as well as stimulate ideas for writing and class discussion.
 - On research showing that frequent assessments develops a “much deeper fluency” in course material, see a 2007 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, linked through Moodle.
 - While the specific format and focus will vary from day to day, assessments will always address only the readings for that particular day and will generally require only approximately 5 minutes.
 - Sometimes these will be administered at the beginning of class and other times will need to be completed ahead of time on Moodle. If you miss class, be sure to check the website for any missed instructions. In-class questions will be given at the beginning of class. Students arriving late will not receive extra time unless special arrangements have been made ahead of time and outside of class. Online quizzes will be made available at least 24hours ahead of time and will become unavailable 10 minutes before the start of class. Please plan your time accordingly.
 - Because of the logistical problems involved in making up quizzes and in-class activities, two scores will be dropped to allow for occasional illness or emergency. Any special arrangements for extenuating circumstances must be made ahead of time and outside of class.
- participation 5%
 - Your participation grade will be determined on the basis of your attendance, the quality of your contributions to discussion, your participation in class activities, and your completion of any ungraded assignments.
 - Please note that while the course’s success will depend largely on class discussion, there are many ways to participate. Those who speak often will not automatically receive higher grades than more quiet students. If you seldom speak in class, you can participate by making more frequent contributions to online forums or contributing more actively in small groups.
 - In all cases, contributions to discussion (in class and online) should demonstrate careful reading of course materials and must be respectful of other students’ ideas and points of view. For information on the attendance policy, see below.

Additional Notes

Class preparation: Please read all materials carefully before you come to class. Bring questions about what is difficult or confusing to you. Also come prepared to share your thoughtful insights and responses. It is your responsibility to notify me *before* classtime of any problems completing readings or assignments. While time spent completing readings and assignments will no doubt vary from student to student and from day to day, you should expect to spend several hours preparing for each hour that you are in class. See helpful tips on time management at <http://www.rhodes.edu/12089.asp>.

Honor code: All work must adhere to the honor code: "As a member of the Rhodes community, I pledge I will not lie, cheat, or steal, and that I will report any such violation that I may witness."

Plagiarism and academic integrity: The Rhodes College Honor Council Constitution defines plagiarism as follows: "Cheating includes plagiarism; specifically, it is the act of using another person's words or ideas and representing them as one's original work. This includes, without limitation, using information from any source without proper reference, getting ideas or words from a classmate's paper, failure to properly punctuate direct quotes, and obtaining a paper from someone else. Ignorance is not an excuse for these violations. It is the student's responsibility to consult the professor, an Honor Council member, or writing handbooks for procedure for properly acknowledging sources." Barret Library offers the following advice for avoiding possible plagiarism (<http://www.rhodes.edu/barret/15554.asp>):

- Acknowledge and cite all sources properly.
- Use quotation marks around words that are not your own.
- Properly introduce and indent longer quotations that are not your own.
- Use footnotes or endnotes to acknowledge another's words or ideas.
- Do not paraphrase too closely.

Please note also that all writing in English 190 must be original work produced specifically for this course. No paper or portion of a paper—even if revised—may receive credit if it has already received or will receive credit in another class. Please ask me or a Writing Center staff member if you have any doubt about even a small portion of a paper that you have produced.

Attendance: As the official Student Handbook explains, Rhodes College "considers interactive engagement with other students and the professor, in a structured setting, to be one of the essential and central components of the academic program. . . . Absenteeism is not to be taken lightly" (<http://www.rhodes.edu/studenthandbook/2176.asp>). Regular attendance is thus expected and counts as a part of your participation grade. Three tardies will be treated as one absence. In addition to the effect of absences on your participation grade, after three unexcused absences, your overall grade may automatically be reduced by 2 percentage points each day, down to 60%. (In other words, a student will not fail on the basis of attendance alone, but poor attendance could theoretically reduce a grade as low as D-.) For example, if your course average at the end of the semester is an 80% and you have 4 unexcused absences, your course grade will be lowered to 78%. I will take roll or distribute a roll sheet at the beginning of each class. I will have a sign-in sheet for late arrivals at the front of the room. Please note that it is *your* responsibility to sign the sheet if you arrive late in order to avoid recorded absences. Absences and tardies may be excused only if I have been notified ahead of time and outside of class. If you miss class, be sure to check the course website for missed material or assignments. Students whose reasons for absence raise privacy concerns should seek assistance from the Office of Student Affairs: <http://www.rhodes.edu/campuslife/1186.asp>.

Computer problems: Please be aware that computer and printing problems will not serve as an excuse for late assignments. Back up your hard-drive files frequently, and always keep a second hard copy of your assignments.

Extenuating Circumstances: If you need to discuss extenuating circumstances, please arrange a time to meet with me or contact me by email. Please avoid using the time immediately before and after class to ask for special arrangements. Information on late penalties can be found under course requirements.

Special Accommodations: If you require any disability-related accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. I am more than happy to help make any necessary arrangements. If you have not already done so, please contact the Office of Disability Services: 901-843-3885. For further information, go to <http://www.rhodes.edu/disabilityservices/default.asp>.

Library Reserve: Occasionally, books that might be especially helpful for your research may be placed on reserve in Barret Library. Books to be used for article reviews will also be held on reserve. For information on using Library Reserves, go to <http://www.rhodes.edu/barret/4446.asp>.

Additional Resources: Success in this course and others is likely to be enhanced with careful time management, good study habits, and a general sense of well-being. The Counseling Center offers free and confidential counseling to Rhodes students: <http://www.rhodes.edu/counselingcenter.asp>. In addition, helpful links and information on such issues as test anxiety, procrastination, homesickness, study skills, and stress are available at <http://www.rhodes.edu/12077.asp>.

Tentative Schedule of ReadingsWeek 1

W 8/25: Introduction to Class

UNIT I: GERMANIC HEROES AND DRAGONS

F 8/27: Read/Listen to lyric poems on Moodle: "Sumer is icumen in" (Middle English), "Perspice Christicola" (Latin), "Cantigas de amigo" I and II (Galician), Deor (Old English), "Owê dirre nôt" (German *minnesang*); "Reis glorios" by Giraut de Borneil (French troubadour song); *Nibelungenlied* note "To the Reader," pp. xxiii-xxiv, and "Translator's Notes," pp. 331-336 and 350-51 only (to avoid plot spoilers); stanza 1 only, on p. 3. Note: If you are unable to listen to recordings on your own computer, you may utilize one of the computer labs in Barret Library, which are equipped with headphones.

Week 2

M 8/30: *Nibelungenlied* 3-55;

W 9/1: *Nibelungenlied* 56-109; Listen to audio recordings of Middle High German text

F 9/3: *Nibelungenlied* 109-159

Week 3

Labor Day: No class 9/6

W 9/8: *Nibelungenlied* 159-209

F 9/10: *Nibelungenlied* 209-278

Week 4

M 9/13: *Nibelungenlied* 278-329; Introduction by Edward R. Haymes, xiii-xxi; translator's notes, 336-350.

W 9/15: *Saga of the Volsungs* 33-55. Please read endnotes along with the text, pp. 111ff.; The glossary of names beginning p. 125 may also be helpful.

F 9/17: *Saga of the Volsungs* 56-78 ; View in class images of Sigurd portal in Sweden

Week 5

M 9/20: *Saga of the Volsungs* 78-109; Introduction, 1-29

W 9/22: Read two scholarly articles under Unit 1 on Moodle

F 9/24: Writing Workshop

Week 6

M 9/27: **Paper #1 Due at beginning of class**

W 9/29: **Examination #1**

UNIT II: ARTHURIAN ROMANCE AND LEGEND

F 10/1: *Yvain* 3-29

Week 7

M 10/4: *Yvain* 29-84; listen to audio recordings of *Yvain* in Old French

W 10/6: *Yvain* 84-138; view manuscript images of *Yvain*

F 10/8: *Yvain* 139-175

Week 8

M 10/11: *Yvain* 175-203; Afterword by Joseph Duggan, 205-26.

W 10/13: *Mabinogion*, "The Lady of the Well" (pp. 116-38)

F 10/15: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Part I (3-15); "The Metrical Forms" (xv-xxvi); "Translator's Note" (xxvii-xxix)

Week 9

Fall Recess: No class 10/18

W 10/20: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Part II (15-30); view manuscript images, available on Moodle

F 10/22: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Part III (31-51); Burns, "Courtly Love: Who Needs It?" (on Moodle)

Week 10

M 10/25: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Part IV (51-64); Read two scholarly articles (on Moodle under Unit 2 and/or Norton Critical edition)

W 10/27: Writing Workshop

F 10/29: **Paper #2 Due.**

Week 11

M 11/1: **Exam #2**

UNIT III: STORY COLLECTIONS

W 11/3: *Lais* Prologue, "Guigemar," "Equitan" (41-60)

F 11/5: *Lais* "Le Fresne," "Bisclaveret," "Lanval" (61-81)

Week 12

M 11/8: *Lais* "Les Deux Amanz," "Yonec," "Laustic" (82-96)

W 11/10: *Lais* "Milun," "Chaitivel" (97-108)

F 11/12: *Lais* "Chevrefoil," "Eliduc" (109-126); Introduction (7-36)

Week 13

M 11/15: *Mabinogion* First and Second Branches (3-34), Translator's Note (xxxi-xxxiii), Guide to Pronunciation (xxxiv-xxxvi)

W 11/17: *Mabinogion* Third and Fourth Branches (35-64)

F 11/19: *Mabinogion* "Peredur Son of Efrog" (65-102); excerpt from *Perceval*, Chretien de Troyes (3-13, on Moodle)

Week 14

M 11/22: *Mabinogion* "How Culhwch Won Olwen" (179-213)

Thanksgiving Break: No class 11/24 or 11/26

Week 15

M 11/29: *Mabinogion* "The Dream of the Emperor Maxen" (103-10), "Lludd and Llefelys" (111-15), "Rhonabwy's Dream" (214-26), Introduction (ix-xxxiii)

W 12/1: Read two scholarly articles, on Moodle under Unit 3

F 12/3: Writing Workshop

Week 16

M 12/6: **Paper 3 Due**; Review for Final Exam

W 12/8: Revision Workshop

Reading Day: 12/10

Final Exam: Wednesday 12/15 at 1pm, regular classroom