This course examines medieval vernacular romances from the 12th through the 14th century, paying attention to the context of the political struggles over marriage between the church and the aristocracy in the 12th century. Topics will include the development of the Arthurian tradition and the conventions of chivalry and courtly love. While traditional gender roles abound in medieval romance, with its lance-wielding knights and ladies awaiting rescue, these narratives also provide examples of cross-dressing woman warriors and knights who require rescue from their ladies. As we read these narratives, we will pay attention to the ways in which they establish, negotiate, and sometimes subvert concepts of masculinity and femininity and challenge modern expectations about sexuality. All texts will be read in modern English translation. This course counts towards the minor in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Prerequisites: English 151

The aims of this class include (but are not limited to) the following: become familiar with the conventions and techniques of medieval romance; think critically about gender and sexual conventions of the past and present, expand your knowledge of the European Middle Ages, cultivate your ability to read and analyze literary texts.

Required Texts (Available at the Rhodes College Bookstore)

Chretién de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances* (Penguin Classics)
Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (Signet Classics)
Jean Renart, *The Romance of the Rose or Guillaume de Dole* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press)
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Broadview Literary Texts)
Silence (Trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi)

Requirements:

Paper #1 (3-5 pages) 15%
Paper #2 (4-6 pages) 20%
Paper #3 (6-8 pages) 25%
Mid-term exam 10%
Final exam 15%
Attendance and participation 10%
Moodle posts 05%

The success of this seminar depends upon the active and engaged participation of everyone in the class. Make sure you come to class having carefully read the assignment and with at least one question or comment about the reading.

Moodle posts: every member of the class will post a question, a comment, OR a response to another student’s comment according to the schedule on the syllabus. For each designated class session, one student will sign up to be in charge of reviewing the postings, summing up the most interesting topics, and choosing a jumping off point for discussion. Moodle posts are due by 12:01am of the class day for which they are assigned. You may choose to post a comment/observation or question about the reading itself, or you may choose to respond to or extend a comment by one of your peers. The length of the post may vary from 2-3 sentences to a paragraph. It goes without saying that responses to your classmates should be civil and respectful. Disagreements are absolutely welcome, but they must be presented respectfully. Sarcasm is strictly forbidden.

Moodle Post Review (MPR): everyone will sign up to be the Moodle Post Reviewer for a particular class. Your job as moodle reviewer will be (after having prepared the reading for day) to carefully read through the postings, digest them as best you can, and then present the highlights of the comments and discussion to the class. Your job is to synthesize these comments and make decisions about which comments will be the most productive to bring into the class discussion. Most likely, you will NOT include every single comment in your presentation. You should not simply rattle
off a list of who said what. Plan to give yourself at least 30-40 minutes in advance of class to read and prepare the comments. The presentation itself should be no more than 5 minutes.

**Attendance/Absence Policy:** You can miss up to three for any reason without risking your grade. It is up to you to choose the best use of these “free” absences, and, of course, you may choose not to miss any classes at all. Except for cases of real emergency or truly extraordinary events (i.e. you are being hospitalized for the rest of the semester), *I do not wish to know the reason for your absence.* If you choose to make use of one or all three of these absences, I will assume that you are using them wisely. Further absences will affect your grade in the following way (based on a 4.0 grading scale):

- 4 absences will result in a deduction of .2 from your final grade;
- 5 absences will result in a .3 deduction from your final grade;
- 6 absences will result in a .6 deduction from your final grade
- 7 absences will result in a full point (1 full letter grade) deduction from your final grade
- 8 absences will result in an “F” for the course, no matter what your starting grade was

**Other Policies**

- All assigned reading and writing is due at the beginning of the class for which it is assigned, unless otherwise noted. *Always bring the assigned text to class; repeated failure to do so will cause you to be marked absent.*
- Be on time to class. Repeated lateness will cause you to be marked absent.
- Failure to complete one or more assignments or to attend class on a regular basis will result in a failing grade for the course.
- It is your responsibility to keep hard and electronic copies of all your written work. In the event that an assignment gets lost on its way to me, I will expect you to be able to produce a copy right away.
- The schedule of assignments is subject to change as needed, so *if you miss a class, make sure you check with a classmate to get notes and confirm the next assignment.* Except under extraordinary circumstances, I do not provide class notes to students who miss class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to catch up on what you missed from someone in the class.
- **Late assignments** will be penalized a third of a letter grade per day. Except in the case of documented illness or family emergency (and by prior arrangement with me), papers more than a week late will receive a failing grade. Under extremely special circumstances I may grant extensions on papers, but I will only consider requests made in advance of the due date. If you believe you have a legitimate reason to ask for an extension, you must contact me at least two class periods before the paper is due. Requests made for extensions on the night before or the day a paper is due will not be entertained. *Email is not an appropriate medium for requesting extensions or any other kind of dispensation.*
- **Email etiquette:** I am happy to answer quick questions over email as my time permits, but you need to make sure that you have used your own resources (like the syllabus or the college web page) first. *If there is something you need to discuss or negotiate, you need to do it in person or, failing that, over the phone.* In order to prevent email from interrupting my own work, I generally set aside one part of the day to respond to it rather than monitoring it throughout the day. I reserve the right to ignore emails that transgress these rules of etiquette.
- **Unless by prior arrangement, I do not accept work that has been, or is being, submitted for another class. Such work will receive a failing grade.**
- **Citation and Documentation:** The documentation style required for this class is MLA (Modern Language Association). Guidelines for MLA style can be found in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* Many writing handbooks used in Rhodes writing seminars (such as Diana Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference*), contain abbreviated versions of the MLA guidelines. If you do not already own one of these guides, you will need to purchase one.
- **Plagiarism:** failure to adequately document a source of any kind, whether or not intentional, constitutes plagiarism. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student, of convicted, will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Honor Council. For a reminder of how to recognize and avoid plagiarism, see the Rhodes Writing Center website: [http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group_b/plagiarism.html](http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group_b/plagiarism.html)

**Resources for writing papers and documenting sources:**
“A Guide to Effective Paper Writing” (distributed to all Rhodes students), also available on-line: http://www.rhodes.edu/9076.asp
The Writing Center (Barret Library) http://www.rhodes.edu/4680.asp

Schedule of Assignments (subject to adjustment as needed)

W 8/24 Introductions

Precursors to Medieval Romance

F 8/26 Topics: Roman Love
Reading: Book 4 of Virgil’s Aeneid; “Roman Love” handout

M 8/29 Topics: “Medieval” love, courtly love
Readings: “Modes of Love” Packet M (selections from Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love and Ovid, The Book of Love, and Boethius) MPR__________________________

W 8/31 Topics: Courtly love cont’d
Readings: Salisbury, “Gendered Sexuality” M
Selected troubadour poetry M MPR__________________________

F 9/2 Topics: Chivalry and Romance
Readings: Bouchard, “Chivalry and Nobility”; M
Chivalry selections M
Marie de France, “Prologue” and “Lanval” M

M 9/5 Labor Day

W 9/7 Marie de France, “Laustic,” “Le Fresne,” “Bisclavret” M
MPR__________________________

Romancing the Arthurian World

F 9/9 Duby, “Medieval Marriage” M
Chretien de Troyes, Erec and Enide pp 37-50
MPR__________________________

M 9/12 Hand out first paper assignment
Erec and Enide pp51-71

W 9/14 Erec and Enide pp71-104
MPR__________________________

F 9/16 Erec and Enide pp105-122
MPR__________________________

M 9/19 Erec and Enide cont’d
Discuss papers/writing

W 9/21 Chretien de Troyes, The Knight and the Lion/Yvain pp 295-326
MPR__________________________

F 9/23 Yvain, pp 326-355
M 9/26  Yvain pp 355-380

W 9/28  Yvain cont’d

F 9/30  Paper #1 due in class
Reading: TBA

M 10/3  Film Screening in class

W 10/5  Film Screening in class

F 10/7  Midterm exam

M 10/10  Chretien de Troyes, *Lancelot/The Knight of the Cart* pp 207-246

W 10/12  *Lancelot*, pp246-272

F 10/14  *Lancelot* pp272-294

M 10/17  Fall Break

**Gender Trouble in 13th-century Romance**

W 10/19  Chretien de Troyes, *Perceval*

F 10/21  *Perceval*

M 10/24  *Perceval*

W 10/26  *Perceval*

F 10/28  *The Romance of Silence* pp3-103

M 10/31  *Silence* pp 103-143
Bullough, “Cross Dressing and Gender Role Change in the Middle Ages”

W 11/2  *Silence* pp143-153

F 11/4  *Silence* pp153-315

M 11/7  Film Screening

W 11/9  Film Screening

F 11/11  *The Romance of the Rose or Guillaume de Dole* pp19-71
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment/Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 11/14</td>
<td><em>The Romance of the Rose</em> pp71-94</td>
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<td><strong>Romance Goes to Hell</strong></td>
<td><strong>Romance Goes to Hell</strong></td>
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<td>W 11/16</td>
<td>Dante’s <em>Inferno</em>, Canto 5 (Paolo and Francesca) M</td>
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<td><em>Rime petrose</em> (selected) M</td>
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<td><strong>Romance Comes Down to Earth</strong></td>
<td><strong>Romance Comes Down to Earth</strong></td>
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<td>F 11/18</td>
<td>Boccaccio, <em>The Decameron</em>, Prologue and Introduction/First Day</td>
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<td>M 11/21</td>
<td><em>The Decameron</em></td>
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<td>W 11/23</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<td>F 11/25</td>
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<td>M 11/28</td>
<td><em>The Decameron</em></td>
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<td>W 11/30</td>
<td><em>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</em></td>
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<td><em>SGGK</em></td>
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<td>M 12/5</td>
<td>Chaucer, <em>The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale</em> M</td>
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<td>W 12/7</td>
<td>Paper #3 Due Wrap-up and Review</td>
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**Final Exam:** Monday December 12, 1pm