

**Rice University**  
**Spring, 1997**  
**English 317**  
**Dr. Jane Chance**  
**11 MWF**  
**Rayzor 319**

## ***Arthurian Literature***

### **DESCRIPTION:**

A survey of the origins and development of the Arthurian legend from the earliest chronicles in the sixth century and later medieval French, Welsh, Irish, and English Arthurian poems to modern adaptations of Arthurian material, including films.

### **PURPOSE:**

This course will investigate the major traditions associated with King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. We will witness the growth of the Arthurian legend and investigate some of the reasons for its continuing allure. The course has the additional purpose of helping us see the way legends are developed and understand the forces which seem to contribute to their growth and popularity.

### **GRADES:**

Quizzes, midterm and final examinations = 50% Two papers = 50%

### **TEXTS: (ON RESERVE)**

James Wilhelm, *The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation* (Garland)

*The Mabinogion*, trans. Jeffrey Gantz (Penguin)

Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William Kibler (Penguin)

*Silence: A Thirteenth Century Romance*

Sir Thomas Malory, *Works* ed. Eugene Vinaver (Oxford U. Press)

*Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (film)

T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (Berkley)

Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon* (Knopf)

Recommended: Norris J. Lacy and Geoffrey Ashe, *The New Arthurian Handbook*, 2nd ed. (Garland)

## SYLLABUS:

### First Week

Jan. 13 Mon. Topic: Introduction--A Historical Arthur?  
Readings: Wilhelm, "Arthur in the Latin Chronicles"

Jan. 15 Wed. Topic: The Legendary Arthur  
Readings: Wilhelm, "Arthur in the Early Welsh Tradition"  
Giraldus Cambrensis, pp. 9-11

Jan. 17 Fri. Videotape on King Arthur (Meet in the Language Lab. Viewing Room)

### Second Week

Jan. 20 Mon. Holiday (Martin Luther King)

Jan. 22 Wed. Topic: The Mythical Context for the Emperor Arthur  
Readings: Wilhelm, "Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth"

Jan. 24 Fri. Topic: Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Layamon's *Brut*  
Readings: Wilhelm, "Wace: *Roman de Brut*" and "Layamon: *Brut*"

4 p.m. Required Lecture: Professor Geraldine Heng, English Department, University of Texas, will lecture on "Cannibalism, the First Crusade, and the Genesis of Arthurian Romance" (Kyle Morrow Room, 3rd floor Fondren Library)

### Third Week

Jan. 27 Mon. Topic: The Knights in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes  
Readings: Chrétien, *Erec et Enide*

Jan. 29 Wed. Topic: Chrétien's *Lancelot*, or The Knight of the Cart  
Reading: Chrétien, *Lancelot*

Jan. 31 Fri. (cont.)

### Fourth Week

Feb. 3 Mon. Topic: *The Mabinogion*--Welsh Materials  
Reading: "How Culhwch won Olwen," in Gantz, pp. 34-76

Feb. 5 Wed.  
Reading: "The Dream of Rhonabwy," in Gantz, pp. 177-92  
Essays in--Welsh Materials, II  
Reading: "Peredur Son of Efrawg" in Gantz, pp. 217-257

### Fifth Week

Feb. 10 Mon.  
Reading: "Gereint and Enid" in Gantz, pp.258-298  
MID-TERM ID'S AND ESSAY QUESTIONS DUE FOR STUDY GUIDE

Feb. 12 Wed. Topic: Gender and Chivalry: The Romance of *Silence*  
Reading: *Silence*, pp. 3-111 (facing-page translation)

Feb. 13 Thurs. Lecture, Terry Castle, English Department, Stanford University, "Lesbianism and the Aesthetic: The Case of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*" (Slide Lecture) (Kyle Morrow Room, 3rd floor Fondren Library)

Feb. 14 Fri.  
Reading: *Silence*, pp. 111-20

Sixth Week

Feb. 17 Mon.  
Reading: *Silence*, pp. 207-315

Feb. 19 Wed. Topic: "The *Alliterative Morte Arthure*": Arthur in the Matter of Britain  
Reading: Wilhelm, "The *Alliterative Morte Arthure*"

Feb. 21 Fri. MID-TERM EXAMINATION

Eighth Week

Feb. 24 Mon. Topic: Malory and the Coming of Arthur  
Reading: "The Tale of King Arthur," pp. 1-59

Feb. 26 Wed. (cont.)

Feb. 28 Fri. Topic: Malory and the Coming of Arthur  
Reading: "The Tale of King Arthur," pp. 59- 110

MID-TERM RECESS (Mar. 3-7)

Ninth Week

Mar. 10 Mon. Topic: Malory and the Coming of Arthur  
Reading: "The Tale of King Arthur," pp. 59-110

Mar. 12 Wed. Topic: The Grail Quest: (selected readings, TBA)

Mar. 14 Fri. Mon Topic: Malory and the Fall of the Round Table  
Reading: "The Book of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere," pp. 609-670

Tenth Week

Mar. 17 Mon (cont.)

Mar. 19 Wed. Topic: Malory and the Fall of the Round Table  
Reading: "Morte Arthur"

Mar. 21 Fri FIRST PAPER DUE

Eleventh Week

Mar. 24 Mon. Topic: "Monty Python and the Holy Grail"  
Meet in the Language Lab. Viewing Room

Mar. 26 Wed. Topic: "Monty Python and the Holy Grail"  
Meet in the Language Lab. Viewing Room

Mar. 28 Fri. SPRING RECESS

Twelfth Week

Mar. 31 Mon. (cont.)

April 2 Wed. Topic: T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*, I  
Reading: The Sword in the Stone, 9-209  
LONG PAPER TOPICS DUE

April 4 Fri. Topic: T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*, II  
Reading: The Queen of Air and Darkness, 211-312

Thirteenth Week

April 7 Mon. Topic: T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*, III  
Reading: The Ill-Made Knight, 315-514

April 9 Wed. Topic: T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*, IV  
Reading: The Once and Future King, 517-639

April 11 Fri.

Fourteenth Week

April 14 Mon.  
FINAL PAPER DUE

April 16 Wed. Topic: A Feminist Morgan le Fay?  
Reading: *The Mists of Avalon*

April 18 Fri.  
Reading: *The Mists of Avalon*  
STUDY GUIDE AND QUESTIONS DUE FOR THE FINAL

Fifteenth Week

April 21 Mon.  
Reading: *The Mists of Avalon*

April 23 Wed.  
Reading: *The Mists of Avalon*

April 25 Fri.  
Summary

FINAL EXAMINATIONS

Requirements:

I. Short Paper (5-7 pp.) Due: Mar. 21 (Fri.)

Write a short paper on some aspect of any of the medieval works we are reading or write a short research paper on one of the following selected topics (a research bibliography follows). In the first instance, check your idea with me. In the second, you don't need to check with me unless you have questions, or you'd prefer a different topic.

List of Possible Topics  
Merlin the Magician

Wace's Contribution to the Story of Arthur: The Round Table  
The Legend of the Return of Arthur  
The Origin and Significance of the Isle of Avalon  
Chrétien and romance as a genre  
Andreas Capellanus: The Meaning of Courtly Love

Chrétien's Concept of a Knight  
Chrétien's Yvain and the Welsh "Lady of the Fountain"  
    Origins of Lancelot and Chretien's Presentation of him as Knight of  
the Cart  
Chrétien and Courtly Love  
    The Origin and Development of Gawain: The English and French Views of  
his Character  
    The Figure of Sir Kay: Welsh or French?  
The Medieval Wheel of Fortune  
The Alliterative Revival of the Fourteenth Century  
Who was Sir Thomas Malory?  
Theories of Grail Origin  
The Function of the Grail Quest in the Morte  
Malory and Amour Courtois  
The Victorian Interest in Medievalism

Scholarship Bibliography (on reserve in our library)  
Alcock, Leslie. *Arthur's Britain*.

Barber, Richard. *King Arthur in Legend and History*.

Benson, Larry D. *Malory's Morte D'Arthur*

Bradbook, Muriel C. *Sir Thomas Malory*

Bruce, James Douglas. *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*. (2 vols.)

Chambers, E. K. *Arthur of Britain*.

Dean, Christopher. *Arthur in the Middle Ages*

Lambert, Mark. *Malory: Style and Vision in Le Morte d'Arthur*.

Loomis, Roger Sherman, ed. *Arthurian Literature of the Middle Ages*. (ALMA)

\_\_\_\_\_. *he Development of Arthurian Romance*.

Matthews, William. *he Ill-Framed Knight: A Skeptical Inquiry into the  
Identity of Sir Thomas Malory*.

Moorman, Charles. *Knight There Was: The Evolution of the Knight  
in Literature*.

Moorman, Charles and Ruth. *An Arthurian Dictionary*.

Newman, F. X., ed. *The Meaning of Courtly Love*.

Paton, Lucy. *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*.

Steinbeck, John. *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights*.

Stewart, Mary. *The Crystal Cave*.  
*The Hollow Hills*.

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The Sword at Sunset*.

Tatlock, J.S.P. *The Legendary History of Britain.*

Vinaver, Eugene. *The Rise of Romance.*

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory.* (3 vols.; Winchester manuscript; 3rd vol. is notes)

Weston, Jessie. *From Ritual to Romance.*

## II. Final Papers (approximately ten pages due at the end of the semester)

The major written project in this course will be a paper on a modern treatment of the Arthurian legend which you will read in addition to the assigned reading material. In this paper you are asked to consider two points: the author's use of Arthurian sources and the work's artistic merit. In other words, you should consider how the writer makes use of the medieval materials related to Arthur and his knights and then determine whether or not the author has written an effective story or work of art. In writing this paper, also be sure to consider the following:

1. Does the writer reach a different conclusion or provide a different outlook on the character(s) than does his or her medieval source?
2. How does the writer's source differ from the medieval sources? What does the author gain by altering his or her medieval source or including Arthurian materials in the story?
3. Is the author's use of Arthurian materials appropriate to the point s/he or she wishes to make? Why?

Choose one from the following list to write your paper on:

Berger, Thomas. *Arthur Rex.*

Bradshaw, Gillian. *Hawk of May.*  
*Kingdom of Summer.*  
*In Winter's Shadow.*

Chapman, Vera. *The King's Damosel.*  
*the Green Knight.*  
*King Arthur's Daughter*

Labenthal, Sanders Ann. *Excalibur.*

Lewis, C.S. *That Hideous Strength*

Malamud, Bernard. *The Natural*

Monaco, Richard. *Parzival or the Knight's Tale.*

Pyle, Howard. *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights.*

Seton, Anya. *Avalon.*

Steinbeck, John. *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights*

Stewart, Mary. *The Crystal Cave.*

*The Hollow Hills.*

*The Last Enchantment.*

*The Wicked Day.*

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The Sword and the Circle.*

*King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.*

\_\_\_\_\_, *Sword at Sunset.*

Twain, Mark. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.*

White, T. H. *The Book of Merlin.*

Williams, Charles. *Taliessen through Loges.*

*Region of the Summer Stars.*

*War in Heaven.*

The long paper must be typewritten, doublespaced, with adequate margins, and submitted on the date due. Assignments will be graded on both form and content: strive for originality of thesis and cogency of argument, clear, coherent organization, and sufficient specificity and development. For additional help with writing pro.

Any student who wishes to do a creative project instead of the longer paper should see me well before the end of the course. In the past, exceptions have been allowed in my other courses for students who have done various kinds of original projects, including a videotape of the first five ca of the *Inferno*, a poem from Virgil's point of view upon having to leave Dante at the end of the *Purgatorio*, a boardgame of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a *Second Cook's Tale* (in Middle English), and a cardgame based on *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Most students attempt to work into their projects special avocational or professional interests.

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