

ENGH 421-001/ENGH 625-001 Spring, 2012  
Rutledge; A430 Robinson, e-mail: [rutledge@gmu.edu](mailto:rutledge@gmu.edu) .  
Office hours: MW 11:00--12:00;  
W 5:00-6:00 and by appointment. .

## Arthurian Retellings

The legend of King Arthur coalesced around scattered records and story fragments, but hard evidence is sparse and problematical. Our concern will be less with the question "was there a King Arthur?" than with the affirmation "there are many Arthurs now." On the other hand, the scholarly discussion of this powerfully evocative legend is of interest in its own right, so each unit of the course will sample contributions made to the continuing conversations about Arthur.

After studying the earliest literary exemplars of the legend--Celtic, Latin, and French--we will examine several reconfigurations of the legends of Arthur and the cultural work such retellings perform; all legendary material must be reworked for new implied audiences in each era if it is to survive. The Arthurian material is characterized by the kinds of gaps and ambiguities that lend themselves to retellings that are also rereadings; "fixed" elements are surprisingly few. There is more material than any one course can cover, but once we trace the development and apparent "standardization" of the Arthurian legend, we will be equipped to confront the legend's malleability, focusing on how the retellings proceed rather than merely rating fidelity to a monolithic "tradition."

These texts are lengthy and complex, so be prepared for much reading in order to participate fully in the work of the semester. Secondary readings are required unless otherwise specified (as "see also").

You will be required on occasion to download supplementary materials from links to our [classweb](#) site. You will need to work on campus or use your personal account when off campus in order to reach some of the restricted links in the syllabus. Even if you use another e-mail service, you should activate your GMU account and have messages forwarded ([instructions](#)). The university sends important deadline and other information through the GMU account. You are encouraged to use e-mail if you have queries about class work or if emergencies occur, but e-mail is no substitute for conferences. **You may not submit any assignment by e-mail unless specifically directed to do so, and unreadable messages will not count.** Some assignments will require the use of Internet resources in literature, history, and medieval studies (the [Camelot Project](#) and the Arthurian sections of the [Labyrinth](#) will provide some of our texts). Issues of the journal *Arthuriana* since Spring, 2005 are available through *Literature on Line* (LION); the library owns the earlier issues. For general information, see the Medieval Filing Cabinet, a hypertext designed for this course at: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~rutledge/newmedfc.html>. There is also a brief [bibliography](#) based on the major Arthurian texts discussed in this course.

Requirements: Several short "reading papers" (25%), two extended essays (4-5 pp.) plus a longer final paper (12-20 pp.) (40%), and a final examination (35%). You must receive satisfactory grades in all categories in order to receive a satisfactory final grade.

All material to be handed in must be typed. The "reading papers" are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated. **NO late papers accepted. No papers in my mailbox or e-mail submissions at any time. The Honor Code will be observed on all class assignments.** See the statement about [plagiarism](#) at the end of this syllabus.

This syllabus is available on line at <<http://mason.gmu.edu/~rutledge/421-625spr2012.htm>>.

The [GMU Writing Center](#) can provide assistance for specific writing problems. It is **not** an editing or "quick-check" service.

**Classroom decorum: Until class begins, you may use electronic devices. Once class begins, you may use laptops\*only\* for note-taking (browsers only when directed). Hand-held devices must be silenced and may not be used once class is in session.**

The last day to add a class is 1/31/2012

The last day to drop a class without dean's permission is 2/24/2012.

### Texts

Bradley, M., *The Mists of Avalon*

Malory, T. (ed. P. J. C. Field), *Le Morte Darthur: the Seventh and Eighth Tales*  
*The Quest of the Holy Grail*  
 Springer, N., *I Am Morgan Le Fay*  
 -----, *I Am Mordred*  
 Sutcliff, R., *The Lantern Bearers*  
 Tennyson, A., *The Idylls of the King and a Selection of Poems*  
 Twain, M., *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court*  
 White, T. H. *The Once & Future King*  
 Whyte, J., *The Singing Sword*  
 Wilhelm, J., *The Romance of Arthur*

(res.) indicates a text on electronic reserve in the library (password \_\_\_\_\_)

\* indicates a text on reserve in JLC Library.

\*\* indicates a text provided by the instructor.

Two casebooks will be especially useful, although others are also listed below: *A Companion to Arthurian literature (CAL)* and *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend (Cambridge)*.

### January 23

Introduction: the "Arthurs" of literature\*\* and the arts.

## The Many "Arthurs"

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The "historicity" discussion: Roman Britain in the twentieth century. Read article by Dumville (res.) and "The Historicity and Historicization of Arthur" by David Green <<http://www.arthuriana.co.uk/historicity/arthur.htm>>.

The "Arthurs" of the documents: In Wilhelm, read chapters I and II. [Saints' lives](#): St. Cadog (§22), St. Padarn (§21), and St. Carranog (§§4-6), and the [Gildas](#) handout of selections from *De excidio Britanniae*. Sutcliff, *The Lantern Bearers*. Transition to the romance retellings.

Read the article by Padel\*(res.) . Further discussion of the "historicity" arguments can be found in the article by M. Parins in *King Arthur: a Casebook*\* and the chapter "The Arthur of History" by T. Charles-Edwards in *The Arthur of the Welsh*\*. The articles in the two volumes *The Arthur of the Welsh*\* and *The Arthur of the English*\* supplement an authoritative older volume *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages (ALMA)*\*, which contains chapters on almost every aspect of the legend.

**Reading paper:** The Saints' Lives are among the most atypical of the earlier textual exemplars of Arthurian legend. What would our view of Arthur be if they were the sole surviving texts? Use one example from each "life." (2 pp.)

**NOTE:** All reading papers are to be precisely-focused essays, not responses to short answer questions. You must provide a clear "framing statement" (a mini-map of your response) and your paper must present an orderly progression of assertions and evidence. Empty generalizations (especially unsubstantiated "historical" or "common knowledge" assertions) will not suffice; your answers must be grounded in evidence from the texts with correct internal documentation (**provide page or paragraph numbers for your paraphrases as well as for quoted material**).

### February 6

Geoffrey of Monmouth and the romance legend (Wilhelm, chp. IV): read Fulton, "History and Myth: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*" (CAL). Myrddin/Merlin: the kings' wizard: in Wilhelm, read sections 1-8 of chapter XIV. Read the [Vita Merlini](#), the [Nennius selection](#), and "Merlin and Vivien" in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (see also sections 9-11 of chapter XIV in Wilhelm), [] Further discussion of Merlin can be found in the article "The Merlin Legend and the Welsh Tradition of Prophecy" by A.O.H. Jarman in *The Arthur of the Welsh*\*. **PAPER #1 assigned.**

**Reading paper:** In what ways do the texts listed here demonstrate that there are almost as many "Merlins" as

there are "Arthurs"? (2 pp.)

## The Arthur of Romance

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The Arthur of French romance: in Wilhelm *Lancelot, or The Knight of the Cart* (Chrétien de Troyes), and "[Celtic Analogues to the Abduction of Guenevere](#)". "Courtly" love-poetry ([Bernart de Ventadorn](#)) and the "[Rules of Courtly Love](#)." The articles by Sargent-Baur, "Dux bellorum..." in *King Arthur: a Casebook\** and Krueger, "Chrétien de Troyes and the Invention of Arthurian Courtly Fiction" (*CAL*) will be useful after you have read Chrétien's romance. See also the articles by Bruckner, "An Interpreter's Dilemma..." and Noble, "The Character of Guinevere..." in *Lancelot and Guinevere: a Casebook\**. **PAPER #1 DUE.**

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The Holy Grail: *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (exclude chapter 11) and Taylor "The Thirteenth-Century Arthur" and McCracken "Love and Adultery: Arthur's Affairs" (both in *Cambridge*).

**Reading paper:** The grail quest can at times seem incompatible with the ideals generally articulated in the stories about Arthur's court. Give three examples, using different characters, that demonstrate most effectively these tensions. (2 pp.)

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"Standardizing" the Legend: Sir Thomas Malory. Read books Seven and Eight of Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*. ([TOC](#) of Vinaver's edition showing the separate "works"). Read the article "Recovering Malory's Guenevere" in *Lancelot and Guinevere: a Casebook\** and the article by P.J.C. Field in *The Arthur of the English\**.

## "Arthur" Post-Malory

March 5

Recuperating the Legend: Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*. Read first the "Dedication" and "To the Queen," then--in this order--read: "Lancelot and Elaine," and "Guinevere"; next, read "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," "Balin and Balan," and "The Passing of Arthur." Read the article by Elliot Gilbert, "The Female King..." (available through JSTOR) and the article by Briden, "Arthur in Victorian Poetry" in (*CAL*).

## No class 3/12: Spring Break

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Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon*. Read the notes and questions for [Bradley](#) and "Morgan le Fay: Goddess or Witch?" by Spivack in *Slocum\** and the articles by Farwell "Heterosexual Plots..." and Thompson, "The First and Last Love..." in *Arthurian Women: A Casebook\** and Shaw, "Feminism and the Fantasy Tradition: *The Mists of Avalon*" (*CAL*). Some of the material in *The Spiral Dance...\** by Starhawk, who inspired some of the novel's rituals, may also be of interest. **PAPER #2 assigned.**

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Springer, *I Am Morgan le Fay* and *I Am Mordred*. **Topics and dates for paper #3 distributed.**

April 2

Whyte, *The Singing Sword*. **Topics and dates for paper #3 distributed.**

**Reading paper:** *The Singing Sword* is a prelude to Whyte's story of Arthur, this second narrative (of an eight-part sequence) establishing the utopian culture that Arthur is bred to defend. What qualities is Camulod designed to embody and who is destined to be capable of participating in this culture? What elements are either excluded completely or incorporated only with difficulty? (2 pp.) **PAPER #2 DUE.**

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Responding to Malory and to Tennyson: The Visual Arts and Arthurian Legend in the Nineteenth Century and Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court*. Read the article by Debra Mancoff, "To Take

Excalibur" in *King Arthur: a Casebook*\* and Archibald, "Questioning Arthurian Ideals" (*Cambridge*).

**Reading paper:** Twain considered nostalgic medievalism--the "[Walter Scott](#)" disease described in *Life on the Mississippi*--an appropriate focus for his satire; on the other hand, some characters are less harshly depicted than others. Discuss three characters, other than Arthur himself, who best demonstrate Twain's ambivalence toward the Arthurian legend. (2 pp.)

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Arthurian Cinema: Boorman, *Excalibur* and Bresson, *Lancelot du Lac* ([reading questions](#)). Read Gorgievski (res.). The articles about both films in *King Arthur on Film* (ed. K. Harty)\* and Coote, "The Art of Arthurian Cinema" (*CAL*).

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Responding to Malory, to Tennyson, and to World War: T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*. Read also the articles by Gallix, "T. H. White..." and R. Thompson, "Conceptions of King Arthur..." in *King Arthur: a Casebook*\* and Hadfield, "T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*" (*CAL*).

Note: the Lancelot to whom White is reacting is, in part, the knight depicted in Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" (read the 1842 Camelot Project [version](#)).

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Conclusions. **PAPER #3 DUE.**

**Final examination: May 14, 2012, 7:30-10:15 pm.**

## PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; **a simple listing of books and articles at the end of a document is not sufficient**, nor does a rearrangement of another person's phrasing (paraphrase) release one from the obligation to document one's source. **One must document paraphrased material just as one documents direct quotation.** Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual theft and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting.

If you have questions about documentation, ask your instructor. When in doubt, document.

(Adapted from an English Department Statement)

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS

1. Select a title that clearly reflects the thesis of your paper. Double-check to be sure that you have defined your topic and kept the essay focused on it.
2. Underline titles of novels and plays, use double quotation-marks for short stories and poems.
3. Use parenthetical citation, e.g., (author ##) or (title ## when referring to more than one work by the same author); note that no comma separates the page-number from the rest of the information. For non-indented quotations of poetry, indicate line-breaks with a "/"; cite lines (ll. #-##). For plays, cite act, scene, and lines (I, ii, #-##). For Biblical references, cite book, chapter, and verse (Deuteronomy #:#-##). Include a "Works Cited" list at the end of your paper. The assignments in this course do not require the use of secondary sources, although you may use the essays provided in the reader.
4. When describing the events of a story, use the convention known as the "historical present" tense. When quoting, indent passages longer than 5 lines (double-space). Avoid excessive use of extended quotations; they are not a substitute for analysis, nor should they be considered self-evident.
5. **PROOFREAD.** Final drafts of all papers should be typed. Use a header on the upper right corner (name--#) of each page after the first; learn how your word-processor creates and formats headers. Center the title on a

cover-sheet, and include the following information in the lower right corner:

Name

ENGH 421-001 (or ENGH625-001)

Rutledge

Date

This helps to avoid misplaced papers.