

**INTRODUCTION TO POETRY:  
ARTHUR THE BRITON, BRETON, & BRITISH KING**

Fall 2016

ENGL 2305-005, Rm. 308 (MWF, 11-11:50 a.m.)

ENGL 2305-006, Rm. 305 (MWF, 12-12:50 p.m.)

Instructor: Sarah Sprouse  
E-mail: sarah.sprouse@ttu.edu  
Office Hours: TBD

**Course Description:**

While popular interest in poetry has declined in the last hundred years, King Arthur continues to be a mainstay in our culture. What is it about King Arthur (and his knights!) that fascinates us? Why is he the most enduring and memorable character from the medieval period? What role did he play in the development of poetic form and the clash of cultures in medieval Europe?

We will explore possible answers to all of these questions as we chart Arthur's rise from Welsh bardic poetry to T. S. Eliot's devastating poem "The Waste Land." This vast chronological landscape will give us room to consider the changing cultural expectations of entertainment in its poetic form. In order to conceptualize medieval engagement with poetry as "entertainment," we will engage in a multi-modal approach to our study by looking at manuscript images, listening to recordings of performances, and even performing poetry in class.

This course satisfies the Texas Tech University core curriculum requirement in humanities, contributing to the Competency Statement for the Humanities: "Students graduating from Texas Tech University should be able to think critically and demonstrate an understanding of the possibility of multiple interpretations, cultural contexts, and values."

**Required Texts:**

Wilhelm, James J., ed. & trans. *The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation*. Routledge, 2013.

Chretien de Troyes. *Perceval, or The Story of the Grail*. Ruth Cline, trans. University of Georgia Press, 1985.

Tennyson, Alfred Lord. *Idylls of the King*. Penguin Classics, 1989.

White, T. H. *The Book of Merlyn*. Ace Books, 1987.

Eliot, T. S. *The Waste Land and Other Poems*. Penguin Classics, 2003.

*Additional Supplemental Readings will be supplied by the instructor.*

**Learning Objectives:**

The University Catalog states that “the objective of the humanities in a core curriculum is to expand the student’s knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of the human imagination and thought. Through study in disciplines such as literature and philosophy, students will engage in critical analysis and develop an appreciation of the humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society.” By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Articulate and evaluate the historical contexts that shaped the development of Arthurian poetry.
2. Differentiate the poetic forms that contribute to region-specific Arthurian poetry and describe them.
3. Interpret and analyze Arthurian poetry from different regions and periods.
4. Develop an appreciation of the entertainment value of Arthurian poetry in its medieval contexts and think creatively about aesthetics of this tradition.
5. Assess the changing Arthurian tradition in the twentieth century.

**Learning Assessments:**

The objectives listed above will be assessed in the following ways:

1. In-class writing assignments, group-work, short essays, reading log.
2. Group-work, reading quizzes, homework assignments, reading log.
3. In-class writing assignments, class discussion, reading log.
4. Class discussion, creative group project, reading log.
5. Class discussion, in-class writing assignments, group-work, reading log.

**Assignments:****Grade Distribution:**

Participation: 10%

In-Class Writing Assignments: 5%

Reading Log: 10%

Reading Log Audit: 5%

Short Essay #1: 10%

Short Essay #2: 10%

Final Portfolio: 30%

Group Project: 20%

**Participation: 10%**

You will be evaluated on your participation throughout the semester based on work in the following activities:

- Small group discussion
- Full group discussion
- Individual in-class writing
- Reading quizzes
- Bringing required materials (including assigned text, reading log, and notebook/pen for taking notes)

Participation in class discussion means: listening attentively, contributing ideas, asking questions, taking notes, etc. There are many ways to participate, but if you sit in the back of the classroom with headphones, then you are clearly not participating.

If you are not in class, you cannot participate, and your grade will reflect not only your absences but also your reduced participation.

Each week, there are two possible Participation points to be earned:

1. Attendance and preparedness for class
2. Participation in class activities and discussion

**In-Class Writing Assignments: 5%**

3-4 times throughout the semester, you will be asked to write a short essay in class. A prompt will be provided and your work will be assessed based on your attention to the prompt and text as well as the clarity of the points you make.

**Reading Log: 10%**

You will be required to maintain a reading log in a separate notebook. Each entry should be marked with Date, Time, and Text Read (including page numbers). In these entries, you should record your impressions, responses, and reflections on the assigned reading as you read. This is the place to note questions and difficulties you have with the assigned text as well as ideas that occur to you as you read. These logs should be helpful to you in the following ways:

- 1) they will help you figure out what you notice when you read (and therefore better understand your own reading practice),
- 2) they will provide you with places to begin during class discussion and remind you of what you read as well as your impressions, and
- 3) it is a low-stakes place to experiment with critical writing.

Your log will be evaluated not for the content of your entries, but for its thoroughness. In other words, you should make an entry each time you read. When reading a difficult poem, I encourage you to read it more than once and make notes of your developing comprehension with each re-reading. You must bring the reading log to class with you in order to be prepared to discuss the readings.

**Reading Log Audit: 5%**

**Due 9/21.** The reading log audit will be a short (1-2 pages) report on your reading log as a work in progress. Your report should have the following categories:

Description (A brief description of what your log looks like – How many entries have you written? What is the average length? How many are long or short or in between? How many poems have you written about? What does your log look like?),

Analysis (Discuss the content of your entries: What do you usually talk about in your entries? What elements of poems do you tend to comment on, or what is it that you tend to talk about in your commentaries on the poems? How have your log entries changed over the past few weeks? What might account for differences in the content, length, or quality of your entries? What else do you notice about your entries?),

and Reflection (Do you find any worthwhile writing in your entries? What value do you place on this log or on some of its entries? Have you found any reason for keeping a reading log other than because your instructor assigned it? If you were the teacher of this course, would you ask your students to keep a reading log? Why or why not? What do the sample entries you have included show your reader about your reading log?).

In addition to the report, you need to include three sample entries from your reading log. (You can photocopy these or type them up.)

**Short Essays: 20% (10% each)**

There will be two short essays (3 pages) assigned during the semester. **You will select your deadlines for each**, but those deadlines must be before or on the final deadline dates (**10/3 & 11/14**). **Sign-ups for short essay deadlines will be on September 9.** There will be no prompt for these essays, though you are welcome to discuss ideas with me during office hours. These short essays must be thesis-driven, formal pieces of writing that analyze one poem or compare two poems. You can also look at the historical context of a poem and write about the influences you see. You must include a works cited (even if you are only working with one poem). Essays should be in Times New Roman, 12-point font, and double-spaced.

**Final Portfolio: 30%**

The Final Portfolio is the product of your work throughout the semester. In it, you will include the following: one of the two short essays written earlier in the semester, a revision of that essay (5 pages), copies of ten pages of your reading log, and a two-page evaluation of your revisions, the work you did in the reading log, and your work completed this semester (including readings). This Final Portfolio will be submitted electronically and is due on **Monday, December 12, 2016 by 5:00 p.m.**

**Group Project: 20%**

The final group project can take a variety of forms, but it must demonstrate your group's critical engagement with one poem read for class this semester. This is a creative project, so you can create: a video dramatically reenacting one of the poems, a website edition of the poem (including character pages, introductions to important scenes, pages for important poetic forms, pages for the historical context, etc.), a Twitter or Facebook rendering of the characters' exchanges in the poem, a dramatic rewrite of a poem, a story written to explain one of the triads, a video reenactment of an important historical event relating to a poem, a video depicting a modern version of the events in a poem, a puppet show reenacting a scene from a narrative

poem, set the the poem to music, create a rap out of the poem, etc. How you wish to tackle this project is up to you, but you will need to demonstrate in a **Project Prospectus (due 10/24)**: what poem you are working with, how you are going to visualize or present it for the class, and how it will help you learn something about your chosen poem. Final presentations should be 15-20 minutes. **A more detailed rubric will be provided on September 9 with sign-ups for for groups.** Presentations of your projects will be on **December 2 & December 5.**

### **Grading Breakdown:**

#### **90 – 100 = A**

Strong, distinguished work. Student writing is prepared and organized. Student shows clear understanding of the literature and writing technique. Writing is sophisticated and coherent.

#### **80 – 89 = B**

Above average, high quality work. Student writing is prepared and organized. Student understands a majority of the literature and writing technique. Writing quality is elementary, but clear. Student is coherent, but could be more sophisticated in his/her argument or writing quality.

#### **70 – 79 = C**

Average, passing work. Student meets bare minimum requirements for assignment. Assignment is complete but does not offer much introspection or deep-understanding of the literature. Argument and writing quality are elementary. Writing and organizational errors. Inconsistencies present.

#### **60 – 69 = D**

Below average work. Student does not meet the minimum requirements for assignment. Assignment is incomplete and unprepared. Basic understanding of text, but no argument – or vice versa.

#### **0 – 59 = F**

Fail. Student shows a very limited understanding of the literature or assignment.

### **Classroom Decorum & Course Policies:**

#### **Submission of Work:**

Unless granted special permission, students must type and print all assignments. The ONLY exception is the Final Portfolio, which will be due electronically. Assignments are due on the deadline at the beginning of class. I will not accept submitted materials in any other manner (i.e. via e-mail, under my door, in my box, etc.)

All submitted work MUST follow the standard MLA guidelines. This means: typed, double-spaced pages, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman 12-point font (in black ink), page numbers, and a works cited.

In order to pass this class, you MUST submit all required assignments.

**Late Work:**

Late work will only be accepted in extreme emergency situations. In emergency situations, students may e-mail me about submitting an assignment late, but must make specific arrangements for that submission; however, for each calendar day that the paper is late, the final grade for the work will decrease by one letter. Timeliness and personal responsibility is critical to succeeding in college-level coursework.

**Absences:**

You are allowed THREE unexcused absences. Any subsequent unexcused absences after three will result in one whole grade deduction PER ABSENCE. Only in extreme circumstances will an absence be excused (court-mandated appearance, mandatory sports or TTU-related function, or extended illness). With documentation, your absence may be excused and will not count against your three “free” absences. Please note that a hangover, headache, or a cold does not qualify as an “extended illness.” After TWO doctor’s notes, you will have used up your excused absences. You cannot succeed in this class if you are absent. After six unexcused absences, you automatically fail this class.

Unless you have made previous arrangements with me, your assignments are due on their scheduled dates regardless of your absences.

If you are in-class, but not present (i.e., on your phone, sleeping, passing notes, messaging on your laptop, listening to music, etc.), you will be considered absent. Physically being in-class does not warrant participation or attendance.

Two tardies (10 or more minutes late for class) will constitute one unexcused absence. If you are running from a class somewhere else on campus and anticipate being a few minutes late, you must notify me prior to class with evidence of the need to arrive late.

**Technology Use in the Classroom:**

Students must obtain permission from me **PRIOR** to class before using laptops. Texting during class is strictly prohibited. If you are caught texting, I will give you a verbal warning. Any subsequent time you are caught texting, I will simply mark you absent. Headphones and earbuds are strictly prohibited. If you are expecting a call you that must take due to an emergency, please notify me before class and take the phone call outside.

**Student Conduct:**

The readings we will encounter in this class may be socially, morally, or emotionally challenging for some. You do not have to agree with, or even like, all the texts, but you do have to be able to read and discuss them critically and sympathetically. Please be respectful of other students and your instructor. This classroom will be a safe place for all of us, regardless of our race, ethnicity, age, religion, social class, gender identity, or sexual preference. Please bring any breach of this standard to my attention immediately. Use common sense and be empathetic of others. If you engage in any distracting or delinquent behavior during class, you will be asked to leave and will be counted absent. If such behavior continues, you will be dropped from the course.

**Scholastic Dishonesty:**

“Scholastic dishonesty’ includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor) or the attempt to commit such an act.” It will not be tolerated and may result in the failure of the assignment, at the least, and possible course failure. Additionally, offending students may be referred to Student Judicial Programs. Bottom line: Plagiarism is easy to spot. Don’t do it.

Examples of plagiarism include (but are not limited to):

Outright plagiarism: using someone else’s entire paper as your own;

Ghostwriting: having someone else write your paper for you;

Cut and paste: taking sections from another paper and/or website and including it in your own work; and

Insufficient Citation: failing to cite information obtained from other sources and/or your research.

**Writing Assistance:**

Students looking for extra assistance during this course should contact the Writing Center, located in Eng/Phil 175. Students can meet with writing tutors to discuss ideas and arguments in texts; the center is not a “fix-it” shop set up to correct errors in grammar and mechanics, although they will assist you with questions regarding any issues. You will need to make an appointment in person, online (<http://uwc.ttu.edu>) or by phone (806-742-2476) and with plenty of time before your due date. Appointments fill up fast, so think ahead!

**Americans with Disabilities Act:**

“Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor’s office hours. Please note instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. [...] Contact Student Disability Services in 335 West Hall or (806) 742-2405.”

**TTU Resources for a Safe Campus:**

Texas Tech University is dedicated to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for all students. Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to The Student Resolution Center: (806) 742-SAFE (7233). The TTU Counseling Center (<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/>) provides confidential support (806-742-3674) and the Voices of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center has a 24-hour hotline: (806) 763-RAPE (7273). For more information about support, reporting options, and other resources, go to: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/sexualviolence>

**Tentative Class Schedule:**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS</b>	<b>Unit</b>
<b>8/29 M</b>	Syllabus & Introduction to the Class	
<b>8/31 W</b>	Unit Introduction; RoA, Ch. 2 “Arthur in the Early Welsh Tradition”	Briton Arthur
<b>9/2 F</b>	The Dream of Rhonabwy (provided by instructor); Triads (provided by instructor) <b>Sign-ups for Short Essay deadlines</b>	Briton Arthur
<b>9/5 M</b>	<b>HOLIDAY</b>	Briton Arthur
<b>9/7 W</b>	RoA, Ch. 3 “Culhwch and Olwen”	Briton Arthur
<b>9/9 F</b>	RoA, Ch. 3 “Culhwch and Olwen” <b>Sign-ups for group projects</b>	Briton Arthur
<b>9/12 M</b>	Taliesin, “The Battle of the Trees” (provided by instructor) “The Prophecy of Prydein the Great” (provided by instructor) “The Death Song of Uther Pendragon” (provided by instructor)	Briton Arthur
<b>9/14 W</b>	Unit Introduction; RoA, Ch. 4 “Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth”	Verse & Prose Chronicles
<b>9/16 F</b>	RoA, Ch. 5 “Wace, <i>Roman de Brut</i> : Merlin Episodes and “The Birth and Rise of Arthur”” – Intro (pp. 88-89); Selections from Gerald of Wales	Verse & Prose Chronicles
<b>9/19 M</b>	Geoffrey of Monmouth’s <i>Vita Merlini</i> (provided by instructor)	Verse & Prose Chronicles
<b>9/21 W</b>	RoA, Ch. 6 “Layamon, <i>Brut</i> : “The Death of Arthur”” <b>Reading Log Audit DUE</b>	Verse & Prose Chronicles
<b>9/23 F</b>	Unit Introduction; RoA, Ch. 15 “Marie de France, <i>Chevrefueil</i> (“The Honeysuckle”) and <i>Lanval</i> ”	Breton & French Arthur
<b>9/26 M</b>	RoA, Ch. 7 “Chretien de Troyes, <i>Lancelot</i> or <i>The Knight of the Cart</i> ” – Introduction, pp. 112-113; Chretien de Troyes, <i>Perceval</i> – Introduction & Prologue	Breton & French Arthur
<b>9/28 W</b>	Chretien de Troyes, <i>Perceval</i> – “The Meeting with the Knights” “The Maiden in the Tent” “The Red Knight”	Breton & French Arthur
<b>9/30 F</b>	Chretien de Troyes, <i>Perceval</i> – “Gornemant” “Blancheflor, Anguigeron, and Clamadeu”	Breton & French Arthur
<b>10/3 M</b>	Chretien de Troyes, <i>Perceval</i> – “The Grail” “Perceval’s Cousin” “The Proud Knight of the Moor” “Blood on the Snow” <b>Short Paper #1 Final Deadline</b>	Breton & French Arthur
<b>10/5 W</b>	Chretien de Troyes, <i>Perceval</i> – “The Ugly Maiden and Guingambresil” “The Maid with Little Sleeves”	Breton & French Arthur

<b>10/7 F</b>	Chretien de Troyes, <i>Perceval</i> –“Escavalon” “Perceval’s Hermit Uncle” “Greoreas and the Evil Maiden”	Breton & French Arthur
<b>10/10 M</b>	Chretien de Troyes, <i>Perceval</i> -- “The Wondrous Bed” “The Guiromelant”	Breton & French Arthur
<b>10/12 W</b>	RoA, Ch. 11 “Selected Lyrics”	Breton & French Arthur
<b>10/14 F</b>	Unit Introduction; RoA, Ch. 19 “ <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> ” – Introduction & Part 1	British & English Arthur
<b>10/17 M</b>	RoA, Ch. 19 “ <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> ” Parts 2-3	British & English Arthur
<b>10/19 W</b>	RoA, Ch. 19 “ <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> ” Part 4	British & English Arthur
<b>10/21 F</b>	“The Feast of Bricriu” (provided by instructor)	British & English Arthur
<b>10/24 M</b>	RoA, Ch. 20 “ <i>The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle</i> ” <b>Project Prospectus for Group Projects DUE</b>	British & English Arthur
<b>10/26 W</b>	RoA, Ch. 21 “ <i>The Alliterative Morte Arthure</i> : Excerpts” – Introduction, “Invocation”, “Arthur’s first dream and the battle with the giant”	British & English Arthur
<b>10/28 F</b>	RoA, Ch. 21 “ <i>The Alliterative Morte Arthure</i> : Excerpts” – “The Battle with Lucius” , “Arthur’s second dream and the news of Mordred’s treachery”	British & English Arthur
<b>10/31 M</b>	RoA, Ch. 21 “ <i>The Alliterative Morte Arthure</i> : Excerpts” – “Gawain’s last battle”, “Arthur’s last battle”	British & English Arthur
<b>11/2 W</b>	Unit Introduction; Alfred Tennyson, <i>Idylls of the King</i> , “The Coming of Arthur” “Gareth and Lynette” “The Marriage of Geraint”	Medievalisms
<b>11/4 F</b>	Alfred Tennyson, <i>Idylls of the King</i> , “Gareth and Lynette” “The Marriage of Geraint”	Medievalisms
<b>11/7 M</b>	Alfred Tennyson, <i>Idylls of the King</i> , “Geraint and Enid” “Balin and Balan” “Merlin and Vivien”	Medievalisms
<b>11/9 W</b>	Alfred Tennyson, <i>Idylls of the King</i> , “Lancelot and Elaine” “The Holy Grail”	Medievalisms
<b>11/11 F</b>	Alfred Tennyson, <i>Idylls of the King</i> , “Pelleas and Ettarre” “The Last Tournament”	Medievalisms
<b>11/14 M</b>	Alfred Tennyson, <i>Idylls of the King</i> , “The Passing of Arthur” “To the Queen” <b>Short Paper #2 Final Deadline</b>	Medievalisms

<b>11/16 W</b>	T. H. White, <i>The Book of Merlyn</i>	Modernist Medievalisms
<b>11/18 F</b>	T. H. White, <i>The Book of Merlyn</i>	Modernist Medievalisms
<b>11/21 M</b>	T. H. White, <i>The Book of Merlyn</i>	Modernist Medievalisms
<b>11/23 W</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING</b>	
<b>11/25 F</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING</b>	
<b>11/28 M</b>	Unit Introduction; T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"	Modernism
<b>11/30 W</b>	T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"	Modernism
<b>12/2 F</b>	Project Presentations	
<b>12/5 M</b>	Project Presentations	
<b>12/7 W</b>	Class Wrap-up & Course Evaluations	
<b>12/12 M</b>	<b>Final Portfolio DUE by 5:00 p.m.</b>	