**Sir Thomas Malory and the Arthurian Tradition:**

**Medieval & Modern**

**Arts & Sciences 1138: Freshman Seminar**

**1 Semester-hour Credit**

**Day/Time (Mon or Friday late morning, say 11, preferred) Room**

##### Professor Karen Winstead Office Hours: TBA

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# Description

King Arthur and his legendary entourage have for centuries captured the popular imagination. Their stories have been told and retold in art and literature—and now also in film, television, and video games. In this seminar we will examine the principal source of the Arthurian legends we know today, Thomas Malory’s *Morte Darthur.* Though written over five hundred years ago, Malory’s epic of Arthur’s rise and fallis eminently readable and surprisingly contemporary. In the best style of fantasy, knights and ladies have perilous adventures as they test their mettle and chase their dreams. But they also experience many of the same challenges that we do as they try to reconcile what they are with what others expect them to be and as they negotiate their often messy relationships with friends, siblings, parents, spouses, and lovers. Like us, they grow up, and they grow old.

By spending time with Malory’s engrossing and influential literary classic, you will deepen your knowledge of the Middle Ages and of the Arthurian tradition—medieval and modern. You will develop skills in literary analysis and critical thinking. And you will see how a work from the distant past can help you think in new ways about the world you live in and the issues you face.

Requirements include attendance/participation and a set of written responses to the readings. In addition to the week’s reading assignment, I’ll bring in film clips and modern adaptations of Malorian themes for us to discuss. We'll even play and discuss an Arthurian game over pizza and cookies.

# Texts

The required textbook for the seminar is Thomas Malory, *Morte Darthur,* trans. Dorsey Armstrong (Parlor Press). It’s important that you have this translation of Malory’s work so that we can all be on the same page for our discussions.

If you wish to tackle the *Morte Darthur* in its original “Middle English” language you can find it online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1251/1251-h/1251-h.htm>

or you can buy the Norton Critical Edition of the *Morte,* which is designed for student readers and has a great glossary and apparatus.

**Grading**

The course is graded S/U. To receive an S, you must earn at least 70 points and miss no more than 3 classes. Response papers are worth 65 points, attendance and participation 35.

**Course Policies**

Attendance and Participation: To foster a sense of intellectual community, it’s imperative that you attend class regularly and participate in the discussion. For each class meeting, you will receive up to 2.5 points towards your final grade (1 point for attendance, and up to 1.5 for participation). To allow for emergencies, you may miss up to three classes, but **missing more than three classes will result in a U**. If you must miss class, let me know (preferably beforehand). Arriving late or leaving early will count as missing class.

Written Responses: To help you think about the readings, and to make for a lively and intellectually vigorous discussion, I will give you a question or questions pertaining to the reading. You will bring to class a typed response of about 250 words that addresses the question(s) and includes any other thoughts you’d like to express about the material for the day. Each of your thirteen response papers is worth up to 5 points towards your final grade. If an emergency forces you to miss a class, you can email me your response.

**Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf>).

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform me as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

**Biographical Statement**

I’m a specialist in the Middle Ages who’s taught courses in Malory and the Arthurian tradition for undergraduates and graduate students. My teaching repertoire also includes courses in medieval women, Middle English literature, and literary history, as well as in film and popular culture. My current research deals with medieval popular culture, gender, and biography. In addition to scholarly books and articles, I have published editions and translations designed to make works of literature more readily available non-specialists. The English Undergraduate Organization named me the 2015-16 English Undergraduate Professor of the Year.

#### Weekly Schedule

### **Week 1 – Introduction to the Course**

### **Week 2 – Who *was* King Arthur?**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 3-9

DUE: Response #1

### **Week 3 – The Rise of Arthur: Revisiting the “Sword in the Stone”**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 10-33

DUE: Response #2

### **Week 4 – Enigmatic Merlin: What’s he really after?**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 54-76

DUE: Response #3

### **Week 5 – Knights in distress, predatory damsels, & the perils of the “courtly code”**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 77-103

DUE: Response #4

### **Week 6 – Everybody loves Lancelot (but whom does *Lancelot* love?)**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 135-156

DUE: Response #5

### **Week 7 – Sir Gareth & Sir Kay: The “new kid” meets the court bully**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 157-78

DUE: Response #6

### **Week 8 – Why disguise? Arthurian Game Day with pizza!**

DUE: Response #7

### **Week 9 – Sir Gareth & Lyonesse: How (not) to impress a woman**

### READ: *Morte Darthur* 179-200

DUE: Response #8

### **Week 10 – Sir Tristram and the dysfunctional family**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 201-220

DUE: Response #9

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### **Week 11 – Grail seekers**

READ: 422-32, 453-61, 473-86

DUE: Response #10

### **Week 12 – Sir Lancelot, ladies’ man**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 538-64

DUE: Response #11

### **Week 13 – Things fall apart: Factionalism, divided loyalties & treason**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 590-614

DUE: Response #12

### **Week 14 – Ruin and redemption (Plus: retrospective & pizza)**

READ: *Morte Darthur,* 615-36

DUE: Response #13