MEDIEVAL STUDIES 315: MALORY’S KING ARTHUR
Tuesday-Thursday 2:00-3:15 PM
White-Gravenor 211

Instructor: Dr Kavita Mudan
Office Hours: New North 320, Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30 AM-1:30 PM
Contact Information: The best way to reach me is via e-mail at km589@georgetown.edu.

Course Description
Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* (c. 1469) is the second full-length treatment of the Arthurian legend in English (the first being Laȝamon’s *Brut* in the early thirteenth century), and the first to incorporate now-ubiquitous additions such as Sir Lancelot and the Grail quest. Malory himself was a soldier and criminal, writing from prison in the middle of the Wars of the Roses, and his work in many ways reflects that tumultuous backdrop, as well as his own interactions with and adaptations of many and varied source texts. This class will use *Le Morte Darthur* as a starting point to look at medieval treatments of the Arthurian legend and how Malory uses these different iterations to form a larger, cohesive narrative. Secondary selections include but are not limited to Chrétien de Troyes, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Geoffrey Chaucer, and the Prose *Lancelot-Grail* cycle. Malory’s text is in Middle English, and secondary texts will be a combination of modern translations from Latin and French and some Middle English. All students should be prepared to read carefully and critically, and to use contextual and secondary material judiciously.

Assignments will include three short response papers, one 8-10 page research paper, and a creative project.

Required Texts

General Course Policies

Attendance and Assignments
We are covering a lot of material in this course so it is extremely important that all students attend all classes. If you have a legitimate reason for missing class, get in touch with me at least 24 hours in advance and I will try my best to accommodate you. That being said, sometimes life happens, and as such, you are permitted two unexcused absences and three excused. For every additional absence, 5% will be deducted from your final grade.

This class has a heavy reading load and you are expected to complete all of the reading by the assigned date, so plan accordingly. Don’t worry if you do not understand
everything; that’s what class discussion is for. What is important is that you come to class with theories and ideas about that day’s reading.

All students are expected to bring all assigned texts to class (including printouts and BlackBoard downloads) and are expected to participate in discussion. As a matter of general policy, cell phones must be switched off during class.

You are expected to submit all assignments on time. If you require an extension, you must request it at least 2 days in advance and provide a very good reason and a concrete date by which you will submit the work. In all other cases, 10% will be deducted from your grade on that assignment for every day late.

**Note for online submissions:** If you are submitting assignments online, please include your name in the filename.

You are expected to use secondary sources that are not Wikipedia. Improperly researched or cited papers will not be tolerated. The MLA citation system is available for no charge on the MLA website, so you have no excuse not to use it.

**Communication**

Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns with me during office hours or via e-mail. That being said, you should plan for a twenty-four (24) hour turnover time for e-mails. In case of an emergency, I will get back to you as soon as possible, but keep in mind that a lack of preparedness on your part does not constitute an emergency on mine. Please indicate your question in the subject line.

My office hours, as listed above, are in New North 323 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. This is an ideal time to bring me ideas for papers or reading responses or to ask questions that you might not have felt like asking during class. If you would like me to look over a draft, please send it to me at least 24 hours beforehand and we can discuss it over e-mail or in office hours. As a final note, office hours end at 1:30 on the dot. Do not show up at 1:25 and expect an extended conversation.

In order for me to get to know you better, I have set aside time during office hours in the first two weeks of class to hold individual meetings of 15-20 minutes each. There will be a signup sheet going round on the first day of class. If you absolutely cannot make it because of other classes, let me know and I will do my best to accommodate you at some other time, most likely after class.

**Plagiarism**

Georgetown University has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. It is not that hard to find out if you’ve been doing it, and if you are caught, you will fail the class. Bottom line: Cite your sources and don’t plagiarize.

**Grading Rubric**

There is no curve in this class, and if the work merits it, I would be thrilled to give each
and every one of you an A. That being said, they are reserved for exceptional work and class participation, and that is what you will need in order to earn one.

**A-level work is exceptional.** An A paper does everything a B paper does, below, but also goes above and beyond. The distinguishing qualities of such a paper are the originality, clarity, and complexity of the argument; the depth and subtlety of the analysis; and the elegance of the prose. Most A papers take some real intellectual risks --for example, by advocating an interpretation that may be new, surprising, or controversial to readers. However, they also keep their analysis firmly grounded in the text and show how the author’s word choice and use of literary devices supports the student’s interpretation.

**B-level work is competent.** It has a clear and arguable main idea, and the author maintains focus on this point. It addresses some of the complexities of the text -- for example, by exploring and responding to alternative interpretations. It uses appropriate supporting evidence, including quotations and original analysis, and any evidence from outside sources is cited and attributed correctly. The writing is free or nearly free of surface errors and infelicities of style (e.g., unnecessarily convoluted sentences). The author has a good sense of audience; the tone and level of detail are appropriate for academic writing.

**C-level work is promising but uneven.** It is on topic, and the writer has some sort of argument and has made an attempt to muster appropriate supporting evidence. Information from outside sources is cited. However, the paper may be too general and lack specificity; it may substitute plot summary for analysis or fail to cite appropriate textual evidence (e.g., quotations). There may also be pervasive mechanical errors or stylistic problems that distract the reader from the author’s message. But by far the most common problem is that the author fails to make a real argument -- he or she plays it safe and makes claims that no reasonable person would disagree with, and hence readers are left wondering why the essay was written in the first place.

**D-level work is seriously flawed.** Perhaps the essay does not meet minimal standards of college-level writing -- it lacks a clear point, evidence, and / or an organizing principle. Or, more often, it simply fails to engage in analysis: it consists of plot summary and / or biographical or historical information, with the occasional quotation, but no real interpretation on the author’s part.

**Failing work does not meet the guidelines for the assignment or is plagiarized.**

**Participation:** Generally, a student with strong (A-level) participation does *all* of the following:

- Attends class regularly.
- Turns in writing responses that show engagement with the text.
- Contributes substantively to class discussions, usually speaking up during every class period. Questions and comments show that the student has read the text closely and carefully.
- Listens attentively and responds to other students’ comments.
• Seeks help when appropriate, for example, by coming to office hours.

Students who do most of these things will earn a B. Students who do some of them -- for example, students who attend every class and are not disruptive, but rarely ask questions or contribute to class discussion -- will earn a C. Students who attend the minimum number of classes and are frequently unprepared or disengaged will earn a D or F.

Course Requirements

Grading Breakdown
35% Research Paper
5% Paper Proposal
15% Class Participation
15% Creative Project / Presentation
30% Short Response Papers (3 x 10%)

Response Papers
All students will be required to write three (3) 600-800 word (2-3 page) response papers, due on three designated days over the course of the semester. These may be on a topic of your choice, although optional prompts will also be provided as a guideline.

I do not expect you to have a thorough interpretation, but your response paper should offer some kind of evaluation or analysis. In other words, it should be more than simply random, unconnected thoughts. This assignment is designed to stimulate class discussion, and to help you remember the texts and generate paper ideas. These do not need to be polished essays, but please watch for spelling and grammar, and do not forget to cite your sources, even if they are among the suggested secondary readings.

Response papers may be submitted electronically, but they must be in my inbox before class starts on the designated day. These dates are as follows:

Tuesday September 27
Tuesday November 1
Thursday December 1

Research Paper
Students are required to write one major research paper for this class, of approximately 2500-3000 words (8-10 pages). Papers must include at least four (4) pieces of primary contextual material and secondary criticism (in any combination). Secondary criticism may be in the form of either books or articles, and may include material used in class (i.e. essays from the back of the Malory text).
All papers must be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font, and submitted in hard copy, with attached bibliography in proper MLA format. I will not accept electronic copies of research papers.

**Paper Proposal**
You must submit a one-page proposal for your final paper and list of at least two pieces of additional source material (primary or secondary) on Tuesday November 22. This may be submitted electronically. You are strongly encouraged to discuss your proposed topics with me before this date, either in office hours or by e-mail.

**Creative Project / Presentation**
Since much of this class will be focused on study of not just Malory, but also his source material and the ways in which he adapts that material, students will have the option of a creative project that they will submit on the designated date during the semester. If you would prefer a more straightforward option, you may choose to do an 8-10 minute presentation in front of the class.

Due dates/presentation dates will be chosen at the beginning of the semester and will correspond to different sections in Le Morte Darthur. Your project or presentation should in some way relate to the unit during which it falls. Please get in touch with me at least a week in advance if you will be choosing the class presentation option. If your presentation includes a handout, e-mail it to me by 9:00 AM on your designated date and I can make photocopies for you.

If you choose the creative option, remember that this is a different form of interpretation and I expect some thought to have gone into that interpretation. All creative projects must include a short introduction (3-4pp, double-spaced) explaining the interpretation and backing it up with in-text references.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Important Note**: Topics of discussion may vary as the term progresses. If there are any changes to the syllabus, I will announce them in class.

**Week 1**
Thursday September 1
For class: Read Kat Howard, ‘Don’t Let it Be Forgot: The Once and Future Story’ (online)
In class: Introduction; choose project/presentation dates

**Week 2 – The Birth of Arthur**
Tuesday September 6
For class: Read Geoffrey of Monmouth (BlackBoard); Meale, ‘Manuscripts, Readers, and Patrons in Fifteenth-Century England’ in Malory, pp. 865-882.
Thursday September 8
For class: Read Malory, pp. 3-39 (How Uther Pendragon Gate the Noble Conqueror Kyng Arthur)

**Week 3 – Merlin and Guinevere**
Tuesday September 13
For class: Read Malory, pp. 40-61 (The Tale of Balyn and Balan); Excerpt from Vulgate Cycle in Malory, pp. 709-711.

Thursday September 15
For class: Read Malory, pp. 62-94 (The Wedding of Kyng Arthur)

**Week 4 – Early Quests**
Tuesday September 20
For class: Read Malory, pp. 94-112 (After Thes Questis); Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘The Wife of Bath’s Tale’ (BlackBoard)

Thursday September 22
For class: Read Malory, pp. 113-151 (The Noble Tale Betwyxt Kynge Arthure and Lucius the Emperour of Rome)

**Week 5 – Lancelot and Gareth**
Tuesday September 27
For class: Read Malory, pp. 151-77 (A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake); Excerpts from Prose Lancelot in Malory, pp. 720-23; Response Paper #1 Due

Thursday September 29
For class: Read Malory, pp. 177-227 (The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney)

**Week 6 – Tristram**
Tuesday October 4
For class: Excerpts from Béroul and the Prose Tristan

Thursday October 6
For class: Read Malory, pp. 228-71.15 (Syr Trystrams de Lyones I)

**Week 7 – Tristram, cont’d**
Tuesday October 11
For class: Read Malory, pp. 271-316 (Syr Trystrams, II-IV)

Thursday October 13
For class: Read Malory, pp. 316-345:41 (Syr Trystrams, V-VI)

**Week 8 – Tristram, cont’d**
Tuesday October 18
For class: Read Malory, pp. 345-388:36 (Syr Trystrams,VII-VIII)
Thursday October 20
For class: Read Malory, pp. 388-428:7 (Syr Trystrams, IX-XI)

**Week 9 – Tristram, cont’d**
Tuesday October 25
For class: Read Malory, pp. 428-462:15 (Syr Trystrams, XII-XIII)

Thursday October 27
For class: Read Malory, pp. 462-495 (Syr Trystrams, XIV-XV)

**Week 10 – The Grail Quest**
Tuesday November 1
For class: Read Malory, pp. 496-531:30, (Sankgreall I-III); Response Paper #2 Due

Thursday November 3
For class: Read Malory, pp. 531-57 (Sankgreall IV-VI); Excerpts from *Le Queste del Saint Graal* in Malory, pp. 733-39

**Week 11 – Conclusion of the Grail Quest**
Tuesday November 8
For class: Read Malory, pp. 557-87 (Sankgreall VII-IX)

Thursday November 10
For class: Chrétien de Troyes, *The Knight of the Cart* (BlackBoard)

**Week 12 – Lancelot and Guinevere**
Tuesday November 15
For class: Read Malory, pp. 588-624:25 (Lancelot and Guinevere I-III)

Thursday November 17
For class: Read Malory, pp. 624-46 (Lancelot and Guinevere IV-V)

**Week 13 – Camelot is a very silly place**
Tuesday November 22
For class: Paper Proposals Due
In class: Watch excerpts from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*

Thursday November 24
NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Day)

**Week 14 – The Death of Arthur**
Tuesday November 29
For class: Read excerpts from *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* and *Le Morte le Roi Artu* (BlackBoard)
Thursday December 1
For class: Read Malory, pp. 646-679 (The Mort Arthur Saunz Guerdon I-III); Response Paper #3 Due

**Week 15 – Conclusion**
Tuesday December 6
For class: Read Malory, pp. 679-698 (The Mort Arthur Saunz Guerdon IV-V)
In class:

**FINAL**
Wednesday, December 14
Final paper due in my mailbox (New North 306) *before 12:00 noon*. 