

Knights, ladies, tournaments! Magic, monsters, mysteries! Lots of adultery! Arthurian literature has fascinated readers for 1500 year for good reason – it is full of action, sex, and suspense. This course will explore one of the most popular and influential themes in English literature: King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. We will cover three important fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts in the Middle English tradition: the anonymous poems *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the *Alliterative Morte d'Arthur*, and Malory's prose *Le Morte Darthur*. Each one presents a different take on the adventures, desires, and morals of England's mythical heroes from the past, and how and why they were all ultimately destroyed forever... (or were they?!) How are masculinity and sexuality intertwined with nation building? How do these stories present the conflicts between personal and public loyalties that brought about the downfall of the Round Table? Our discussions will integrate close reading of the language and form of the Middle English texts with historical context, and analyze a range of academic criticism on the works. We will read the medieval texts *with* and *through* various different kinds of modern theoretical approaches, including queer studies and disability studies. No prior Middle English experience is needed; this class will train you to read Middle English, and some of the texts are slightly modernized or in facing-page translation. **Exam format:** Supervised term paper.

Preparation and course schedule: Please note this course is condensed into twice-weekly meetings the first four weeks of the semester (weeks 34-37). I strongly recommend you acquire the primary texts ASAP and take them along for summer reading so you are ready in August. Akademika already has several copies of the Malory and the Parker on the shelf. See the syllabus schedule on MittUiB for details: the readings for the first week of class are marked with an *asterisk below.

Primary Texts [at Akademika]

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Ed. James Winny. Broadview, 1992. ISBN: 0-921149-92-1

Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*. Ed. Helen Cooper. Oxford, 1998.
ISBN: 978-0-19-953734-1 *Intro + pp. 3-119

The Death of King Arthur. Ed. Simon Armitage. Norton, 2012. ISBN 978-0-393-34353-3

Secondary Texts

Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Legend*. Cambridge, 2009. [CCAL]: *Intro, Chapters *1, 4, *5 <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521860598>

Catherine Batt, "Malory and Rape," *Arthuriana* 7 (1997), 78-99
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27869277>

Carolyn Dinshaw. "A Kiss is Just a Kiss: Heterosexuality and Its Consolations in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Diacritics* 24: 1994, 205-226. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/465173>

Rick Godden, "Prosthetic ecologies: vulnerable bodies and the dismodern subject in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Textual Practice* 30 (2016): 1273-1290.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2016.1229910>

Jeff Westover, "The King's Emasculation in the Alliterative 'Morte Arthure,'" *The Chaucer Review* 32: 1998, 310-324. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25096019>

From Rivkin & Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology*

*Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?"

*Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author"

Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"

All online: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bergen-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4792586#>

From Parker, *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*

*Ch. 2: "New Criticism", Ch. 7: "Queer Studies", Ch. 12: excerpt: "Disability Studies"

Required writing guide: Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 3rd edition (Norton, 2014) [or any later edition]