

ENGL 612 - The Merveilous World of Medieval Romance

Instructor: Dr. Arielle McKee (she/her/hers)

Office: Craig 106-D

Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday – 10a-1p; Tuesday – 1:15-2:15p; Friday – 10a-12p

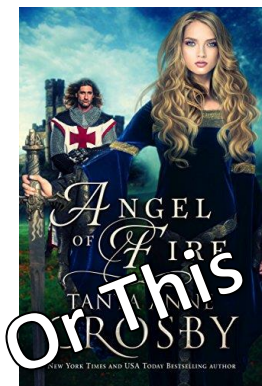
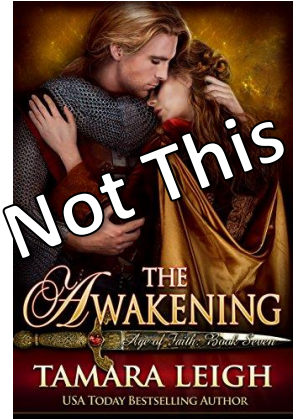
Virtual Office Hour: Thursday 1:15-2:15p (via Zoom or by appointment)

Email: amckee2@gardner-webb.edu (I will respond within 24-48 hours on weekdays. If you have not heard from me in 48 hours, please feel free to send a reminder email!)

Course Description

Welcome to English 612: The Merveilous World of Medieval Romance! What is medieval romance, you ask? Well, that's a great and somewhat unanswerable question!

The genre of medieval romance has been (and continues to be) much debated, as does the genre's degree of artistic merit, its cultural status and degree of sophistication, its likely audience(s), its popularity, and its primary mode of communication. Similarly, the term "Middle Ages" is capacious and yet ill-defined, coined primarily to describe which times the middle ages weren't than to describe when (and where) they were. While we will be focusing on French, British, and English works for most of this class, the medieval period was globally interconnected, with romances appearing in numerous languages and cultures and with myriad cultures and global powers likewise appearing—in some form, accurately and inaccurately—in the romances of England and France. So, when you come right down to it, medieval romance is perhaps best defined with recourse to Justice Potter Stewart's famous description of pornography as something "[you] know...when [you] see."



In fact, that's what we're going to do in this class, get to know medieval romance by "seeing" a whole lot of it. This seminar is designed in the manner of a traditional (and by no means exhaustive) survey of the texts and discourses that make up the medieval French, British, and English romance traditions. We will read works that span centuries, including Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* (and a graphic novelization thereof), Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale," and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In addition, we will examine these tales through the scholarly lenses of gender and sexuality studies, animal studies, disability studies, critical race theory, manuscript studies, and more. Lastly—while we will be working up to them—many of the texts you encounter in this class are written and will be read in Middle English (I am here to help and will provide you with a list of tips and tricks!).

CW: the content and discussion of many of these romances will engage with troubling and often violent events and experiences, including of intense violence, rape, instances of racism, and examples of other forms of bigotry. This can be emotionally and intellectually challenging for many. I will do my best to flag particularly troublesome weeks and to make this classroom a space where we can empathetically, bravely, and thoughtfully engage with difficult content. If you have concerns of any kind, you are *always* welcome to contact me.

Departmental Student Learning Outcomes

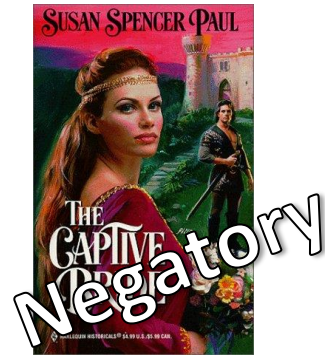
The Master of Arts in English program is designed to meet the following goals:

1. Demonstrate the ability to read, write, and think critically on a professional level according to discipline.
2. Demonstrate discipline-specific research methods.
3. Demonstrate the ability to carry out and complete a thesis or capstone project that is of publishable quality (specific projects determined in concentrations).

Course Student Learning Outcomes

In this course you will:

1. Consider the ways in which medieval romance shaped and was shaped by later cultures (including our own).
2. Develop an appreciation for the complexity of these medieval texts.
3. See the Middle Ages and medieval romance more globally.
4. Consider depictions of gender, race, religion, disability, monstrosity, and animality in medieval romance.
5. Discuss why this particular genre continues to interest us.
6. Explore and evaluate the fields of the public and digital humanities.
7. Investigate and challenge stereotypes about the Middle Ages, chivalry, romance, and so forth.
8. Consider the relationship and differences between medieval romance, romance novels, the fantasy genre, etc.



Course Texts:

- *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales (TEAMS)*, Ed. Thomas Hahn, ISBN: 978-1-879288-59-1
- *The Middle English Breton Lays (TEAMS)*, Ed.s Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, ISBN: 978-1-879288-62-1
- Heldris of Cornwall, *The Roman de Silence*, Ed. Sarah Roche-Mahdi, ISBN: 978-0-87013-543-9
- Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion*, Ed. Burton Raffel, ISBN: 978-0-300-03838-5
- *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion*, Adapted by M.T. Anderson, Illus. Andrea Offermann, ISBN: 978-0-7636-5939-4
- *The King of Tars (TEAMS)*, Ed. John H. Chandler, ISBN: 978-1-58044-204-6
- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Trans. Casey Finch, Ed.s Malcolm Andrew, Clifford Peterson, and Ronald Waldron, ISBN: 978-0-520-07871-0
- Marie de France, *Lanval* (on Blackboard)
- Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale” (on Blackboard)
- **Scholarly Essays & Resource Links** -- posted under each week’s folder as PDFs.
- *All texts published by TEAMS are available for free online at <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text-online>. Students are encouraged to purchase used books whenever possible (unless they prefer otherwise).*

Course Tools:

Blackboard (Bb):

Blackboard (Bb) will serve as our course hub or home base for all course interaction. Gardner-Webb has adopted Blackboard as its official Learning Management System (LMS), so all of our course content will be located inside of this shell. If there are third party applications used outside of Bb used, I will provide a link. Students should expect to access the site as much as every day but no less than every 2 days.

Flipgrid:

We will use Flipgrid for our online discussions. You will need to complete pre-reading activities and the reading itself before logging onto the course Grid to access and contribute to the discussion on that week’s Topic. I choose to use Flipgrid vs. Bb discussion forums because it presents you with a “technology with unique affordances” (CLO 4), such as video and audio responses and to promote interaction with classmates and their thoughts. In an asynchronous class like ours, this aural/video modality provides us a way of feeling like our comments are part of a “live” discussion as we explore the history and significance of these medieval texts and their afterlives (CLO 1 & 2). (Flipgrid can be used on your computer or as an app on your phone.)



Slack:

In addition to Flipgrid, we will be using Slack for course communications, process work, and assistance-seeking from peers and your Instructor. Feel free to use Slack to set up asynchronous writing groups, to ask questions and share resources, and to informally

develop project ideas with help from your peers. (Slack can be used on your computer or as an app on your phone.)

Accessibility

Everyone learns differently and I will incorporate techniques that draw on as many learning styles as possible. Please let me know, as soon as possible, if you have any individual learning needs. Remember, all students are encouraged to take advantage of the excellent resources offered by the University Writing Center (Tucker 237) and on the [Purdue OWL](#). Additionally, if you find yourself in need of assistance or support, I can direct you to additional resources, including the Noel Center.

Course Activities and Grade Distribution

Class weeks: Each class week begins on Monday and ends on Saturday at 11:59 PM. The Discussion Board study questions will be available by mid-day Monday, and all major assignments must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM, U.S. Eastern Standard Time (EST), on the Saturday they are due (unless otherwise specified).

Weekly Flipgrid Discussions

20%

Each week that we have discussion, a new Topic will be added to our course Grid. *At a minimum*, every week you should:

1. Respond to **at least one** of the Topic's discussion questions by 11:59 PM **Wednesday** night (initial videos should be a **minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 5**), and
2. Respond to **at least two** of your fellow students' videos by 11:59 PM **Friday** night. (Responses should be **no more than 3 minutes and no less than 30 seconds**.)

NB: Use of Flipgrid's additional features—such as the inclusion of images, stickers, white boards, etc. in your videos—is not required, but it is also not frowned upon.

Due: Initial post (by Wednesday), Responses (by Friday)



Final Project

80%

While each student's final project will be comprised of an annotated bibliography, a proposal abstract, a peer review experience, a final document submission, and a video presentation (to be shared with the class), your project make take the form either of a scholarly essay, a creative project, or curriculum for a unit on your chosen text. (*See assignment sheet for more details on the project and its components.*)

Annotated Bibliography	20%
Due: Saturday, February 29th by 11:59 PM via Bb	
Final Project Abstract	10%
Due: Saturday, March 14th by 11:59 PM via Bb	
Peer Review Exchange	10%
Due: Saturday, April 18 by 11:59 PM via Bb	
Final Project Submission	20%
Final Project Video Presentation	20%
Due: on Tuesday, May 5th	

Feedback Policy

I will respond to any questions, needs for additional context, and so forth raised in weekly Flipgrid discussions at the beginning of the next week (most commonly by posting a short video update). Each week's discussion will be graded on a pass/fail basis and grades will be posted to Blackboard by Tuesday of the next week (if there is a delay in grading, I will send out an announcement ASAP).

The components of the final project will receive written feedback and I will make a strong effort to return comments designed to help you enrich your final projects within two weeks of your submission. *NB: You are not limited to written feedback on submitted materials. AT ANY TIME, if you need guidance or feedback simply email me. I can meet with you via Slack chat or video conference.*

[NB: I will post final grades during the last week of class, but feedback on final projects may be sent after the end of the semester.]

Course Schedule

Week 1: 1/13 – 1/18

Intro to medieval romance

Critical Texts:

- Helen Cooper, Introduction to *The English Romance in Time*
- Selections from Nigel Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England* (Optional)
- Sarah Douglas, “Knighthood As It Was, Not As We Wish It Were” (Review: *Chivalry in Medieval England*) (<https://origins.osu.edu/review/knighthood-it-was-not-we-wish-it-were>) (Optional)

Week 2: 1/21 – 1/25

Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion* (Lines 1 - 3340)

Critical Text: Michael Ovens, “Masculine Identity and the Rustics of Romance in Chrétien’s *Erec* and *Yvain*” (article contains some spoilers)

Week 3: 1/27 – 2/1

Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion* (Lines 3341 – End)

Critical Text(s):

- Marc M. Pelen, “Madness in *Yvain* Reconsidered”
- The Camelot Project: Kara L. McShane, “Lion (Creature)” (<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/theme/lion>)



Week 4: 2/3 – 2/8

Yvain: The Knight of the Lion (graphic novel), adapted by M.T. Anderson, illus. Andrea Offermann

Critical Text(s):

- Parker Library on the Web, “The Making of Medieval Manuscripts,” <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/feature/current-exhibition-the-making-of-medieval-manuscripts>
- *Page and graphic design in medieval MSs and graphic novels*
 - “Designing English: A Curator’s Introduction” (YouTube Video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfYdSPwLIsY>
- *Additional, (optional) manuscript studies resources provided on Bb*

Week 5: 2/10 – 2/15

TW: Antisemitism and misogyny

Roman de Silence (Introduction and Lines 1 - 3214)

Critical Text(s): Nicole D. Smith, “Heldris de Cornuälle: Telegraphing Morality through Transvestism”

Week 6: 2/17 – 2/22

TW: Antisemitism, homophobia, and misogyny

Roman de Silence (Lines 3215 - End)

Critical Text(s): Sharon Kinoshita, “Heldris de Cornuälle’s *Roman de Silence* and the Feudal Politics of Lineage”

Week 7: 2/24 – 2/29

TW: Homophobia

Marie de France, *Lanval* (Bb) & Thomas Chestre’s *Sir Launfal* (in *The Middle English Breton Lays*)

Critical Text(s): Tory Vandeventer Pearman, "Refiguring Disability: Deviance, Blinding, and the Supernatural in Thomas Chestre's *Sir Launfal*"

Annotated Bibliographies Due Saturday, February 29th by 11:59 PM via Bb

Week 8: 3/2 – 3/7

Sir Orfeo (in *The Middle English Breton Lays*)

Critical Text(s):

- Elliot Kendall, "Family, *Familia*, and the Uncanny in *Sir Orfeo*"
- Ruth Evans, "*Sir Orfeo* and Bare Life"

Week 9: 3/9 – 3/14

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Final Project Abstract Due Saturday, March 14th by 11:59 PM via Bb

Week 10: 3/16 – 3/21

TW: Rape, incest, and violence

Sir Degaré & Sir Gowther (in *The Middle English Breton Lays*)

Critical Text(s):

- Emily Rebekah Huber, "Redeeming the Dog: *Sir Gowther*"
- James Simpson, "Unthinking Thought: Romance's Wisdom"

Week 11: 3/23 – 3/28

TW: Rape and abuse

Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" [and (Optional) "The Shipman's Tale"] (Bb)

Critical Text(s):

- Carissa M. Harris, "Rape and Justice in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*" (<https://opencanterburytales.dsl.lsu.edu/wobti/>)
- Holly Crocker, "Which Wife? What Man?: Gender Invisibility Between Chaucer's Wife and Shipman"

Week 12: 3/30 – 4/4

TW: Misogyny and Bigotry

Select Gawain Romances: *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, *Gawain and the Carl of Carlsile*, *The Turke and Sir Gawain* (in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*)

Critical Text(s):

- Cord J. Whitaker, "Moving Backward: Blackness in Modernity, Early Modernity, and the Middle Ages"
- Aisling Byrne, "The Intruder at the Feast: Negotiating Boundaries in Medieval Insular Romance"

Week 13: 4/6 – 4/10

TW: Bigotry

The King of Tars

Critical Text(s):

- Sierra Lomuto, "The Mongol Princess of Tars: Global Relations and Racial Formation in *The King of Tars* (c. 1330)"
- *Optional/Additional Resources:* Cord J. Whitaker, "Black Metaphors in the *King of Tars*" & Geraldine Heng, "Color"



Week 14: 4/13 – 4/18

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (fitts 1 and 2)

Critical Text(s):

- Sarah Stanbury, “The Framing of the Gaze in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*”
- Michael Twomey, “Travels with Sir Gawain” (<https://sites.google.com/site/travelswithsirgawain/home>)
- Bonus: [Interactive Map of Gawain’s journey](#)

Proof of Peer Review Exchange Due Saturday, April 18 by 11:59 PM via Bb

Week 15: 4/20 – 4/25

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (fitts 3 and 4)

Critical Text(s):

- Clare R. Kinney, “The Best Book of Romances: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*”
- Seeta Chaganti, “B-Sides: ‘Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’” (<http://www.publicbooks.org/b-sides-sir-gawain-green-knight/>)

Week 16 and 17 (4/27 – 5/2):

Instructor conferences as needed

Final Project Submission

Digital Conference (**upload Video Presentations by 11:59 PM on May 5th**)



And sometimes, this!