

ENGLISH 6105-01: MEDIEVAL MONSTER CULTURE (AND ITS MODERN AFTERLIVES)

Spring 2017 * M 5:30-8 * Pafford 309

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Office Hours: M 10:45-12:15; W 10:45-12:15 and 5-6; or by appointment



Course Description

What do J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling have in common besides their first initial? A fascination with medieval monsters, of course! In this class we will explore a variety of foundational medieval monsters, from the dragons and giants that lurk on the outskirts of England's earliest "national" myths, to the shapeshifters, hybrid bodies, and aggressive appetites that threaten an emerging sense of English identity from within. In addition to paying careful attention to how and why the rhetoric of monstrosity is employed at specific historical moments, we will seek to understand what the fears of our medieval forebears might teach us about being human, then as well as now. How are the depictions of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion and personhood suggested by medieval monsters in conversation with more modern discussions about these same identity markers? To what extent are certain identity markers privileged over others in the construction of any sense of community at the national and local levels? And why do twenty-first century audiences seem to have an endless appetite for medieval monsters? To answer these and other related questions, we will consider several modern adaptations of medieval monster culture alongside their source materials.

Fair warning: we will be reading many texts in their original Middle English using editions selected for their careful glossing and translation of particularly tricky words and passages. This will almost certainly slow down your reading process at first, but the more you do it, the easier it will become. You should also be aware of the fact that many of the texts we will be reading deal

with some heavy subjects, including rape, domestic abuse, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, racism, and the brutal realities of war. If you need to take a break while reading about any of these subjects, that is perfectly okay, as is talking to someone—me, a UWG counselor or trusted friend—about why you find a particular topic especially difficult to process.

Required Texts

Armitage, Simon, ed. and trans. *The Death of King Arthur*. Norton, 2012. ISBN 9780393343533.

Chandler, John, ed. *King of Tars*. Medieval Institute Publications, 2015. ISBN 9781580442046.

Gardner, John. *Grendel*. Random House, 1989. ISBN 0679723110.

Liuzza, R.M. ed. *Beowulf (Facing Page Edition)*. Broadview, 2012. ISBN 9781554811137.

Mandeville, Sir John. *Book of Marvels and Travels*. Ed. and trans. Anthony Bale. Oxford, 2012. ISBN 9780199600601.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. Houghton Mifflin, 2002. ISBN 9780618260300.

Winny, James, ed. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Facing Page Edition)*. Broadview, 1995. ISBN 9780921149927.

Supplementary readings due will be available via CourseDen or online

You will also need to view the following movies, which are on reserve in the library and can be rented from the English Department as well (where there three copies that can be checked out for a three day period of time):

300. Dir. Zack Snyder. Perf. Gerard Butler and Lena Heady. 2006.

[Streaming at iTunes, Vudu, and Amazon too.]

Beauty and the Beast. Dir. Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise. Perf. Paige O'Hara and Robbie Benson. 2001. [Streaming at Amazon too.]

Required Work

Fuller descriptions of your written assignments and study guides for your exams will be posted to CourseDen.

- *Daily Participation* (20%): You are expected to not only do the assigned readings, but also to come to class prepared to discuss said readings. This does not mean that you have to have everything “figured out” ahead of time; questions and clarifications are perfectly reasonable ways to contribute to class discussions, though you need to make an effort to share your opinions and insights too if you want higher than a “C” in this component of your grade. Challenge yourself to speak at least once every time we meet.
- *Midterm exam* (15%): a writing intensive take home exam covering class readings, discussions, and lectures, with questions designed to help you prepare for your oral exams.
- *Discussion Kickstarter* (5%): Each student will be responsible for starting one of our seminar discussions by sharing focused observations and questions about the texts read for that day. You should consult two additional scholarly sources while preparing for your “kickstarter,” which should last between fifteen and twenty minutes.
- *Middle English Recitation* (5%): You will be responsible for preparing and reading a passage of around 25-30 lines from one of the texts we read in Middle English. You can either record yourself reading or come to read during my office hours, whichever is easiest and most comfortable for you.

- *Liber Monstrorum Presentation* (15%): Drawing on the discussions we've had throughout the semester, each student will choose a text that they think might meaningfully be understood as a modern adaptation of a medieval monster. These do not need to be literal to be effective, and your text might include a wide range of mediums (book, movie, game, graphic novel, etc.) Each student will present their choice and explain their rationale in a ten-minute “pitch” during the designated class period. I must approve all choices ahead of these presentations.
- *Term Paper* (40%): a 15 to 18 page research paper about a well-constructed subject related to the course topic and chosen in consultation with me.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class daily and be on time. I take roll by asking the class a specific “attendance question”; if you show up after I am done with roll you will be considered late. You may miss one class with no questions asked. Your second absence will result in your final grade dropping by two percentage points. Three or more absences will result in you not passing this class. Two late arrivals count as one absence. Leaving class early without permission also counts as an absence, as does showing up more than twenty-five minutes late. If you are asked to leave class for any reason, that too will count as an absence. Should you miss a class at any point in the semester, it is your responsibility to talk to your peers to figure out what you missed.

Deadlines and Submitting Assignments

All of your work is due on the days and times indicated by the schedule below. You will submit your work electronically via CourseDen (or email if there happens to be server trouble). Your grade will drop by two grade scales (four points) for every day that it is late, including weekends, and I will not accept work that is over a week late. If you are going to be absent the day that something is due, it remains your responsibility to make sure that your work is turned in on time. Failure to do so will result in your grade dropping. If you are having trouble with an assignment, come and talk to me **well ahead** of that assignment’s due date; I do not grant last minute extensions for assignments. It is your responsibility to regularly back up your work and to ensure that the submitted product is formatted correctly. “My computer ate my file” and “I thought I submitted that file” are not accepted excuses for late work, so I strongly suggest you save your work to a USB drive regularly (backing your work up on Google Drive or another cloud service might also be advisable) and double check that ALL of your submissions to CourseDen go through as planned. If you have questions or concerns about CourseDen, you should contact the Distance Learning office (<http://uwgonline.westga.edu/>).

Grading and Revision Policies

Grades are based on student performance on each assignment. Simply turning in every assignment does not guarantee that you will receive the grade you want on those assignments, nor does earning a “good” grade on one assignment guarantee that you will earn a similar grade on the next assignment. The grading scale and standards I use are detailed in the “Grading Scale and Guidelines for Formal Assignments” document on CourseDen. I do not offer extra credit for this class.

University Policies and Student Rights/Responsibilities

Please carefully review the following Common Language for all university course syllabi: http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf. It

contains important material pertaining to university policies and responsibilities. Because these statements are updated as federal, state, university and accreditation standards change, you should review the information each semester.

Academic Honesty

The act of plagiarism—claiming someone else’s ideas, language, images, or other original materials as your own without giving full credit to your source—is a serious offense. As members of an academic community, it is important that we engage in responsible and honest communication with one another. Plagiarism, whether accidental or intentional, will result in a failing grade for assignment and will, as a result, negatively impact your overall grade. Repeat offenders will fail the course and might be subjected to additional action by the University.

If you are unclear about how to cite a source, ask me **before** you turn your work in. Sources you should consult before talking to me include:

- The department's website: <http://www.westga.edu/%7Eengdept/Plagiarism/index.html>
- The Bedford/St. Martin student site:
http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting2e/#t_526483
- The research and citation section of Purdue’s online writing lab:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Submitting someone else's work as your own, resubmitting your own work done for another class, or collaborating with peers on individual assignments are also forms of academic dishonesty that will result in failing grades for the assignment in question.

Accessibility Services

UWG adheres to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that accommodations be made to make programs accessible for people with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability, please make sure to register at the Accessibility Services Office and provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Request as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services Office is located at 123 Row Hall. You may call them at 678-839-6428 or visit their website at <http://www.westga.edu/counseling/4486.php>.

Classroom Environment

Since everyone is expected to participate in class, it is important that you all feel comfortable doing so. Some of the content we will be discussing involves topics or perspectives with which you might not agree or feel wholly comfortable, and that is okay. Differing viewpoints are welcome in class discussions; however, disrespectful comments against specific individuals or groups will not be tolerated under any circumstances. In the event that such a statement is made, the speaker will be asked to leave class immediately and will be marked absent for the day.

Disagreeing with someone is one thing, disrespecting or attacking him or her is another—do not do it. On a related note, it is disrespectful to both me and your fellow classmates to let your cell phones ring during our time together, so please turn off your phones before class. Other portable electronics should, likewise, be turned off during class unless you are given permission to use them for a specific purpose. If I see you text messaging, emailing, checking facebook, or doing work for another class, I will ask you to leave and mark you as absent.

Additional Help

I am happy to meet with you outside of class to discuss Homework due, your progress on projects, or any other questions/concerns you might have. I will be in my office during the office hours listed at the top of this syllabus. (On the occasion that I need to reschedule office hours, you will be given as much advanced notice about these changes as possible.) If you are unable to come to office hours, let me know and we'll figure out another time to meet that is convenient for us both. I am also happy to answer specific questions over email and will do so as quickly as I can. That said, please don't panic if you don't hear from me right away, especially if you send your email at, say, midnight. If, however, I haven't responded in 24 hours, feel free to send a follow up email.

The University Writing Center is another excellent resource that I encourage you to take advantage of as all writing benefits from multiple sets of eyes; indeed, professional writers workshop their pieces all of the time. You may go to the Writing Center at any stage in your writing process. For more information or to make an appointment, call 678-839-6513, visit TLC 1201, or email writing@westga.edu.

UWG Cares

College can sometimes feel stressful. Please know that everyone at UWG is committed to supporting you to the best of our abilities; we've been in your shoes. If at any point during the semester you or someone you know starts to feel overwhelmed, I'd encourage you to call the Counseling Center (it's free and anything you discuss can remain confidential) at 678-839-6428. If you need me to help you find a particular support service or walk with you to an office, I am happy to do that; you need to know, however, that I am legally obligated to report any incident of sexual assault. If you are worried about someone who does not seem to want to ask for help, visit <http://www.westga.edu/uwgcares/> to file an anonymous report on that person. In case of emergency, don't be afraid to call national help lines, like the national suicide prevention lifeline at 800-273-8255 or the national sexual assault hotline at 800-656-4673.

Schedule of Homework due and Assignments (due the date on which they are listed)

This syllabus is a general plan for the course and might be modified as the semester progresses to meet course objectives or address the needs of the class. Most (if not all) of the changes made will be in consultation with the class as a whole. I will announce any changes made in class before sending out a revised syllabus. It is your responsibility to check CourseDen and your email regularly to ensure you are up to date on all class announcements, etc.

Week One: Introductions

Jan. 9	Historical overview and course expectations. Sign up for Discussion Kickstarters.
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Week Two

Jan. 16	MLK Day: No class.
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Week Three: At the Border of Two Cultures

Jan. 23	<i>Homework due: Beowulf; Gardner, Grendel; and Sharma, "Metalepsis and Monstrosity" (e-reserve)</i>
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Week Four: Empire Building

Jan. 30	<i>Homework due:</i> <i>Death of King Arthur</i> ; watch 300; and Bartlett, “Cracking the Penile Code”
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Week Five: Beheading Giants, Past and Present

Feb. 6	<i>Homework due:</i> <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> ; <i>The Carl of Carlile</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-carle-of-carlisle); <i>The Turke and Sir Gawain</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-turke-and-sir-gawain); Geoffrey of Monmouth, excerpts (e-reserve); and Cohen, “Exorbitance” (E-reserve)
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Week Six: Loathly Ladies

Feb. 13	<i>Homework due:</i> Chaucer, Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale; <i>The Wedding of Gawain and Dame Ragnalle</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-wedding-of-sir-gawain-and-dame-ragnalle); <i>The Marriage of Sir Gawain</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-marriage-of-sir-gawain); and Caldwell, “Brains or Beauty” (e-reserve)
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Week Seven: Beasts Within

Feb. 20	Discuss midterm. Marie de France’s “Bisclavret” (e-reserve); <i>Arthur and Gorlagon</i> (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Folk-Lore/Volume_15/Arthur_and_Gorlagon); Brady, “Feminine Desire” (e-reserve); Perrault’s “Beauty and the Beast” (http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/beauty.html); and watch <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> .
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Week Eight: Domestic Horrors

Feb. 27	<i>Homework due:</i> Chaucer, Clerk’s Prologue and Tale, Man of Law’s Prologue and Tale (e-reserve); <i>Emaré</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-emare); and Mitchell, “Ethical Monstrosity” (e-reserve) <i>Midterm due by 5 p.m. on Friday (3/3).</i>
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Week Nine: Unnatural Legacies

Mar. 6	<i>Homework due:</i> <i>King of Tars</i> ; <i>Sir Gowther</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-sir-gowther); Charbonneau, “Devil to Saint” (e-reserve); and Whitaker, “Black Metaphors”
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Week Ten: Ghostly Warnings

Mar. 13	<i>Homework due:</i> <i>Awyntyrs off Arthur</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-awntyrs-off-arthur); <i>Sir Amadace</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/foster-sir-amadace); and Martin, “Economy of Pain” <i>Last Day to Complete Middle English Recitations.</i>
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Week Eleven: Break

Mar. 20	No class: Spring Break.
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Week Twelve: Hellish Landscapes

Mar. 27	<i>Homework due:</i> <i>The Vision of Tundale</i> (http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/foster-three-purgatory-poems-vision-of-tundale); and Harte, “Hell on Earth” (e-reserve)
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Week Thirteen: The World Elsewhere

Apr. 3	<i>Homework due:</i> Mandeville, <i>Book of Wonders and Travels</i> ; Chaucer, The Prioress’s Prologue and Tale (e-reserve); and Sobecki, “Mandeville’s Thought of the Limit” (e-reserve)
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Week Fourteen: World Building

Apr. 10	<i>Homework due:</i> Tolkien, <i>The Hobbit</i> ; and Jakobsson, “Talk to the Dragon”
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Week Fifteen: Liber Monstrum Presentations

Apr. 17	<i>Presentations</i>
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Week Sixteen: Individual Meetings

Apr. 24	Individual meetings about papers and/or work day.
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Week Seventeen: Conclusions

May 1	Course evaluations and paper workshop. <i>Seminar Papers are due 5pm on Friday (5/5).</i>
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