



# Medieval French Literature: The Once & Future King

## Course Details

**Course Designator & Number: MONT 3024W**

**Number of Credits: 3**

**Language of Instruction: French**

**Contact Hours: 45**

**Instructor: Paul Rogers, PhD**

## Course Description

Who was King Arthur? How is it that a legendary figure from such a distant time still exists today in such a vibrant manner within the collective mind? From the Middle Ages to the present day in such popular works as George RR Martin's *Game of Thrones*, the myths and folklore surrounding the king have been ceaselessly renewed. Beginning with the pseudo-historical origins of Arthur and his knights in the old French literary tradition as depicted by Chrétien de Troyes and in iconic works of the *matière de Bretagne*, and ending with Alexandre Astier's wildly popular television series, *Kaamelott*, this course will seek to shed light on the popularity and the mystery surrounding le roi Arthur. Over the course of the semester we will explore the legendary material in detail, constantly comparing and contrasting contemporary works with their Medieval forbears with the ultimate goal of understanding how these creations function within a socio-cultural framework.

## Course Objectives

- The goal of this course is to help students develop a thorough understanding of the Arthurian tradition as it has been depicted in French in the Medieval period and the present day.
- Identify strong parallels between the legendary material of the original *matière de Bretagne* and recurring themes in contemporary fiction and cinema.

- Acquire critical thinking and analytical skills with respect to works of literature and television drama/cinema.
- Learn how these artistic creations function from a sociological/socio-cultural perspective.

## Writing Intensive

This course is intended to be writing intensive. It is paramount that students acquire strong writing skills to effectively analyze cultural artifacts/documents within the framework of the French studies curriculum.

- Writing is at the core of the academic experience and is the responsibility of every member of the academic community. By participating in the production and interrogation of the discourse in the field of French studies, students progress in their understanding of the discipline. Over the course of the semester, students will complete a variety of writing assignments, including three or four intermediate 1–3 page analytical essays or dissertations, a 2–3 page in-class writing assignment, and one 8–10 page final research/analysis paper/dossier. The instructor will provide the students with regular feedback, focusing on essay structure, grammar, and style.
- Students must correct at least three of their assignments, taking into account the instructor's feedback on their first version, and submit corrected versions to thereby improve their grade. The student's initial version will include commentary and suggestions for structural/analytical changes as well as indicate grammatical and stylistic errors.

## French 3101

French 3101 presents four distinct areas of inquiry and the modes of analysis proper to them. The areas of inquiry/modes of analysis are:

- **Language and codes:** Studying the language of a work includes the codes that operate within both the words and visual signs that constitute it.
- **Literature and literary studies:** This course will also provide an introduction to methods of literary analysis and explore aspects of literature that can provide insights into cultural mindsets and contexts. Some of the theories could include those that examine a work from the perspective of genre, gender, structure, narrative, historicism, and psychoanalysis.
- **Subjects and cultures:** Students will gain an understanding of how culture creates a space for the subject or the self.
- **Visual media:** This course will also introduce students to some of the theories of the visual arts that consider art as anthropological artifacts or cultural phenomena, rather than simply focusing on the works themselves or even the artists.

## Methodology

A presentation of the cultural, historical, and social context for the selected works will serve to frame the readings and discussion. PowerPoint presentations, in-class analysis of reading

passages, video clips, works of art, and outside readings will provide students with background information that they will be able to draw upon in their essays and presentations. Students must correct at least two of their shorter written assignments as well as the 8- to 10-page research paper and resubmit them, which will allow them to potentially improve their grade. The student's initial version will include commentary and suggestions for structural/analytical changes as well as indicate grammatical and stylistic errors. The student's final research project (an 8-10 page paper and a 15-20 min. presentation on a topic of their choice related to the course) will further enrich their learning experience.

## Course Prerequisites

Intermediate French: equivalent to 4 semesters of college-level French (FREN 1004 at the University of Minnesota).

This course may be approved for FREN 3101W for students who have completed FREN 3016. Email the FRIT Director of Undergraduate Studies for approval (frenstds@umn.edu).

## Required Reading / Materials

- *Lanval*, Marie de France
- *Lancelot ou Le Chevalier de la charrette*, Chrétien de Troyes
- *Le Conte du Graal*, Chrétien de Troyes
- \**Les chevaliers de le Table ronde*, Jean Cocteau
- *Série télévisée: Kaamelott S1-S6*

## Course Bibliography

- Delcourt, Thierry. *Littérature arthurienne 1*, PUF 2000.
- Dubost, Francis. *La Merveille Médiévale*, Champion, 2016.
- Ferlampin-Archer, Christine. *Merveille et topique merveilleuse*. Paris : Champion, 2003.
- Ribard, Jacques. *Chrétien de Troyes : Le Chevalier de la Charrette, Essai d'interprétation symbolique*. Mayenne : AG Nizet, 1972.
  - *Le moyen âge : littérature et symbolisme*. Paris : Champion, 1984.
- Walter, Philippe. *Arthur, l'ours et le roi*, Paris, Imago, 2002.
  - *Perceval, le pêcheur et le Graal*, Paris, Imago, 2004.
  - *Gauvain le chevalier solaire*, Paris, Imago, 2013.

# Grading

## Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

## Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Essays	45%
Exposés	15%
Participation	10%
Final presentation	15%
Final written paper	15%
Overall grade	100%

## Assessment Details

### Essays

Students will complete 8 essays (each written assignment will be between 1-4 pages in length), choosing from one of the topics of the course provided by the instructor. The topics of these assignments will be directly related to the readings of the current unit being studied or one or more Kaamelott episodes. Written assignments should aim to include an average of 3 citations per page. For the longer written assignments (3-4 pages) students will be asked to include references (the nature and number of these references will vary depending on the type of assignment, 3-4 sources is a rough estimate). Students must correct at least three of their essays, taking into account the instructor's feedback on their first version, and submit corrected versions to thereby improve their grade. The student's initial version will include commentary and suggestions for structural/analytical changes as well as indicate grammatical and stylistic errors.

### Exposés

Students will complete 2 oral presentations over the course of the semester. Presentations should last between 5 and 7 minutes and provide a springboard for class discussion. Students will be asked to present their analytical work to the rest of the class; an example might be a thematic exploration / study of the Kaamelott series using one or more episodes. Students will be asked to include references (the nature and number of these references will vary depending on the type of assignment, 3-4 sources is a rough estimate).

## **Participation**

Attendance and active participation in class is very important to your success in this course. Students should be present at all classes and come prepared to discuss the readings as outlined in the syllabus.

## **Final written paper**

Each student will write an 8-10 page research paper, to be handed in during the last class meeting. The student should choose a topic related to the course material that they wish to explore in greater detail and share with the rest of the class. Sample topics include: a critical literary analysis of the texts or of a thematically-linked sequence of Kaamelott episodes studied over the course of the semester, a critical historical and analytical exploration of some of the contemporaneous events, noteworthy individuals, societal paradigms, or artistic creations (i.e. Romanesque architecture or sculpture) that were the backdrop for the creation of the literary works studied during the semester, a study of the cinematic techniques or artistic choices made by the director of the Kaamelott series, Alexandre Astier, a comparative approach to contemporary representations of the Arthurian legend, or a sociocultural analysis of the works (i.e. women's voices in the 12th century, problematic representations of the Other, etc.) By the halfway point of the semester, students should begin to have an idea of the approach they would like to take and consult with the instructor to narrow down their topic. Students should include roughly an average of 3-4 citations per page and use between 6 and 9 outside sources (this is an estimate and will depend upon the topic chosen). (8-10 pages, double spaced)

## **Final presentation**

During the last class meeting, students will present the research they conducted for their final written paper to the class. The goal of the presentation is to introduce the class to the research in as interesting a manner as possible. To that end, students are encouraged to use slideshows, handouts, and an interactive approach; they should avoid simply reading their paper. At the end of their presentation, the student should have questions prepared to involve the listeners and be ready to organize and moderate the group's discussion. (15-20 min.)

# Course Content

## Unit 1

- Topic:
  - Introduction—Arthur's origins. Historical contexts and evolving perceptions/perspectives
  - Introduction to Astier's opus, *Kaamelott: Dies Irae*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, pp. 46-99

## Unit 2

- Topic:
  - La littérature courtoise, l'amour courtois, le merveilleux
- Activities:
  - Analysis and discussion of *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, *Kaamelott S1 Ep. 2: La Tarte aux Myrtilles*, *Ep. 3: La Table de Breccan*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, pp. 99-139

## Unit 3

- Topic:
  - *Le culte des reliques*; Mythical forbears and the pseudo-historical tradition.
- Activities:
  - Analysis and discussion of *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, *Kaamelott S1 Ep. 15: Les Défis de Merlin*, *Ep. 27: De Retour de Judée*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, pp. 139-179

## Unit 4

- Topic:
  - *L'origine de la légende : Le chevalier de la charrette : un texte lacunaire*; Christine Fermlampin Archer.
- Activities:
  - Analyse épisodique du texte. *Kaamelott S1 Ep. 30: Le Trois de Coeur*, *Ep. 31 : Basidiomycètes*, *Ep. 34: La Grotte de Padraig*, *Ep. 37: La Romance de Lancelot*
- Assigned readings:
  - *Le Chevalier de la charrette*

## Unit 5

- Topic:
  - Représentations iconographiques de la légende, enluminures
- Activities:
  - Discussion and analysis of *Kaamelott S2 Ep. 19 L'absolution, Ep. 20 Les Misanthropes, Ep.35 Merlin l'Archaïque*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, readings from *Arthur, l'ours et le roi*

## Unit 6

- Topic:
  - la Roue de Fortune, conceptions médiévales du temps
- Activities:
  - Discussion and analysis of *Kaamelott S2 T2 Ep.01 Arthur in Love, Ep.02 Excalibur in Love, Ep. 20 Les Voeux, Ep. 28 L'Anniversaire de Guenièvre, Ep. 31 L'Enragé*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, readings from *Arthur, l'ours et le roi*

## Unit 7

- Topic:
  - *Le Conte du Graal* : Roman d'éducation ou Roman d'initiation?
- Activities:
  - Discussion and analysis of *Kaamelott, S2 T2 Ep.32 Trois cent soixante degrés, Ep. 35 Le Rebelle, Ep. 46 Le Temps des Secrets*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Conte du Graal*
  - mardi 17 mars

## Unit 8

- Discussion *du Conte du Graal*. Présentation et analyse des thèmes et topi de l'oeuvre. Mini-exposés par les étudiants.
- Comparative study:
  - *S3 Ep. 01 Le chevalier errant, Ep. 02 L'aveu de Bohort, Ep. 05 Séfriane d'Aquitaine*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Conte du Graal*

## Unit 9

- Discussion *du Conte du Graal*. La dimension chrétienne de la légende, Mini-exposés par les étudiants.



- Comparative study:
  - *Kaamelott*; Dubost, Francis. *La Merveille Médiéval*.
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Conte du Graal*

## Unit 10

- Discussion *du Conte du Graal*. La dimension païenne de la légende. Analyse du symbolisme, *merveilles et mythes*
- Comparative study:
  - *Kaamelott S4 + parallèles avec la légende tristanienne*. Dubost, Francis. *La Merveille Médiévale*
- Assigned readings:
  - *Le Conte du Graal, extraits de Dubost, Francis*. *La Merveille Médiévale*

## Unit 11

- Discussion *du Conte du Graal*.
- Comparative study:
  - *Kaamelott S4*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Conte du Graal, Gauvain le chevalier solaire* (P. Walter)

## Unit 12

- Discussion *du Conte du Graal*.
- Activities:
  - *Kaamelott, S4, S5 extraits*
- Assigned reading:
  - *Le Conte du Graal*

## Unit 13

- Presentations and discussions.

# Policies

## Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

## University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

### Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

### Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).