

Fall 9-1-2003

# ENLT 323.01: Studies in Literary Forms - Medieval Romance

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Fall 2003

## EN 323: MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

Professor Joanne Charbonneau

LA 146A

Office hours: Tu and Thur 9:30-11; Tu 3:30-4:30 and gladly by appointment

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This course will explore the beginnings of the genre of romance and the ennobling power of romantic love in Western literature as it emerged full-blown out of folklore, legends (Arthurian and Celtic), practices of chivalry, the Cult of the Virgin Mary, and influences from Arabic love poetry brought back by the Crusading knights. This confluence occurred first in 12th-century France and extended into other vernacular texts in German and English through the 15th century. We will read translations of the early romances of Chrétien de Troyes, Gottfried von Strassburg's version of *Tristan*, a fascinating 13th century Old French romance *Silence* (a girl raised as a boy with all sorts of gender issues raised), selected Chaucerian Tales, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and other Middle English romances. We will read current scholarship and examine theories of the rise of Romance in medieval literature.

### Discussion:

- Problems of reading and criticism of medieval narrative; problems of how much or whether literature reflects medieval realities, a problem compounded by a paucity of records and a tendency to "authenticate" fiction.
- Background: intellectual, historical, and conceptual. Nature of chivalry, development of a chivalric ideal and persistence of that ideal.
- Origins of romance: 12th century matrix of artistic and intellectual temperaments. Emergence of clerk as teacher in secular society.
- Assumptions about romance, definitions, and nature of the genre.
- Historical developments from Chrétien chronologically to 14th century English adaptors and writers. Literary analysis of texts.

### Final Grade:

- 25% Research paper
- 25% Final essay exam (take home)
- 25% Reading/writing journal
- 25% Short assignments (1-2 pages) interspersed throughout the semester and active participation and engagement

### Required Texts:

- 1) Chrétien de Troyes' *Arthurian Romances*
- 2) Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*
- 3) *Silence*, ed and translated by Sarah Roche-Mahdi
- 4) Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in translation
5. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
6. Selected Middle English romances

## Requirements:

- Read medieval romances as represented in the French tradition by Chrétien de Troyes; in the German tradition of Gottfried von Strassburg and the continuation of his Tristan story by Thomas, a 13th-century text of *Silence*; later 14th-century Middle English treatment represented by Chaucer's romances in the *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and selected ME romances.
- Engage in lively, informed discussion. Come to class prepared to discuss and analyze.
- Watch a modern film version of medieval romance and write an analysis of its treatment of the medieval original. **Due Oct 23rd.**
- Read criticism and write one-page synopsis of a scholar's ideas. You will hand out copies to the class on the assigned day and present these ideas to class (5 minutes).
- Short assignments, 1-2 pages interspersed throughout the semester.
- Longer research paper (10-15 pages) **Due Dec. 2nd.**
- Final exam: Take-home essay exam.
- Reading journal to be brought to each class. Besides your observations, questions, analysis as you read, this journal will also include synopses or abstracts of 5 background pieces of criticism as well as responses to specific questions I pose.

## Reading Assignments (Subject to some change and flexibility as necessary)

Sept 2: First Day of Class: Orientation and Introduction

- a) cult of Virgin Mary
- b) Troubadour poetry of 12th century
- c) Arabic influence from Crusaders' knights
- d) Rise of vernacular literature

### Chrétien de Troyes and the beginnings of Romance in 12th c France

Sept 4: Beginning discussion of definitions of medieval romance, the beginning of the new genre, and its history and problematics. Read excerpts from *Ring of the Dove*.

Sept 9: Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec and Enide*

Sept 11: Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec and Enide*

Sept 16 Chrétien de Troyes' *Cliges*

Sept 18: Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*

Sept 23: Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot*

Sept 25: Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot*

Sept 30: Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval*. (See Oct 21st assignment)

Oct 2: Discussion of French romance according to Chrétien de Troyes on the basis of the extant romances that we have. Bring in copies of your one-page list of the major characteristics of his romance.