LS 395.01: Arthurian Film

Joanne Charbonneau

University of Montana - Missoula

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LS 395: ARTHURIAN FILM

Prof. Joanne Charbonneau
Office LA 146A and phone: x4894
Office hours: Tu 10:30-noon and Thurs 4-5:30 and gladly by appt
email:

"...out of a mass of legend, fairy story, crude adventure, and distorted chronicle history, it forged an ideal society of such grace and beauty, of such nobility set in the glowing colors of an imagined earthly paradise, that it became an inspiration not only to the finest spirits of its age, but also for the centuries which were to follow."

---W.T.H. Jackson

For each film we view, we will follow the viewing with a discussion (except for the very longest films which will be discussed at the beginning of the next class). You will turn in—the following week—your analysis of the movie which may include its use of symbolism, use of lighting, flashbacks, juxtapositions of scenes, adaptation of the medieval legend; characters, plot, themes. In other words, approach each film from any perspective you choose (cinematography or literary, historical, aesthetic appreciation). Your analysis may also include your criticism or commentary on its effectiveness on the multiple levels you experience it. I expect these to be 2-4 pages each (500-1000 words) and typed or computer-generated. Your final grade will be based on these papers as well as a 10-15 page journal of your responses to the medieval sources and materials I will ask you to read as well as your final thoughts about the various versions of the Arthurian legend we have encountered.

Sept 2: Brief introduction and discussion of key elements of Arthurian legend. Discuss enduring quality of the legend, its almost infinite capability of changing with milieu and adapting to vastly different political, historical, and thematic agenda. Watch Excalibur (1981). John Boorman, director; Nigel Terry as Arthur; Nicol Williamson as Merlin; Helen Mirren as Morgana with Patrick Stewart and Liam Neeson. 140 min.

Sept 9: Discuss readings and review origins of Arthurian legend. Will have short videos on Arthurian legend. Continue reading from medieval sources.

Adaptations of Lancelot legend
Sept 16 Sword of Lancelot (115 min) dir Cornel Wilde, UK, 1963
Sept 23 Bresson's Lancelot du Lac 1974 (80 min)

Adaptations of the Tristan legend:
Oct 7: Tristana (1970) dir Luis Bunuel with Catherine Deneuve. 95 min.

Oct 14: Cocteau’s L’Eternel Retour (Eternal Return) (1946) dir Jean Dellanoy with Jean Marais

Adaptations of Perceval/Parzifal legend:


Loose Modern Adaptations or Treatments: Arthuriana
Nov 4 Fisher King (1991) dir Terry Gilliam with Jeff Bridges, Robin Williams and Mercedes Ruehl. 137 minutes.

Nov 18: Monty Python and Holy Grail (1975) dir Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones. 90 min. If new King Arthur film is out in DVD, we will watch that as well.

Nov 25: During Thanksgiving week, watch on your own Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) dir: Spielberg with Harrison Ford and Sean Connery.

Dec 2 Knightriders (1981) dir: George Romero with Ed Harris. 145 minutes

Dec 9 Camelot (1960 musical) with Richard Harris and Vanessa Redgrave. 180 min.

December 16: Last analysis and Reading Journal are due.