

Summer 2018
Tu/W/Th 10am-12pm

UC Berkeley
Mulford 240

**English 166:
Games of Thrones, Medieval to Modern**

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Office Hours: W 1-3pm and by appointment

Course Description

This course will show how *Game of Thrones* and *A Song of Ice and Fire* draw on a long literary-historical legacy, emphasizing the preoccupations that have made their way from medieval and Renaissance writers into modernity: namely, issues of gender, alterity, kingship and tyranny, and political division and civil war. Throughout the course, we will ask why writers from the twelfth century to today invent fantasies about the past to tell stories about the present.

We begin by exploring some themes and narrative topoi that, while essential to modern fantasy, actually emerge from medieval imaginative writing. The issues of honor, love, leadership, power, and violence at the center of *A Song of Ice and Fire* are anticipated by epics and romances written centuries earlier. (So are the dragons.) We then turn to Shakespeare's "Henriad," four plays which – like *Game of Thrones* – tell the story for their present by reimagining the medieval past. In Shakespeare, we will witness drunken revelry, bloody battles, and the evolution of a prince into a king. We will also see how political upheaval upends tradition and accepted values – a challenge that our own moment continues to confront.

We finish with the *Game of Thrones* phenomenon itself. As we read through the first book in *A Song of Ice and Fire* and sample from the TV series, we'll consider the broader cultural conversations that *Game of Thrones* has elicited – namely, around misogyny, sexual violence, race and representation, and the changing ways we read and watch today. In addition to one literary-critical essay, you will have an opportunity to try writing your own fan-fiction and your own critical "take" on *Game of Thrones*.

No prior knowledge of *Game of Thrones* is expected, but I can't promise to avoid spoilers.

Required Texts

- *Beowulf*, trans. Heaney (FSG), ISBN: 978-0374111199
- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, trans. Armitage (Norton), ISBN: 978-0393334159
- Marie de France, *Lais*, trans. Waters (Broadview), ISBN: 978-1554810826
- *The Norton Shakespeare Histories*, 3rd edition (Norton), ISBN: 978-0-393-93859-3
- George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones* (Bantam), ISBN: 978-0553588484

Note: **Please buy these specific editions of the first three books.** (If you own a Norton Anthology of English Literature with the Heaney translation of *Beowulf*, that's fine too.) If you already own a complete Shakespeare (e.g., The Riverside, The Pelican, other and/or older editions of The Norton Shakespeare), you are welcome to use it for this course. Good single-play editions—Signet, Folger, Arden, Oxford World Classics, Pelican also work.

Course Assignments

- **Weekly discussion posts – 30%** You'll be expected to post on our bCourses discussion page by Thursday of each week.
 - These posts should reflect a substantive engagement (~400 words) with the week's reading, but they need not be formal or complete thoughts: take the opportunity to raise questions, speculate, and draw connections to other works.
 - Pay attention to the discussion space, because some weeks I'll post prompts or questions. You're strongly encouraged to respond to classmates.
- **Paper – 25%** A substantive literary-critical essay (1500-2000 words) responding to prompts to be posted two weeks prior to the deadline.
- **Thinkpiece/cultural commentary – 20%** A “hot take” (1000-1500 words) that links *Game of Thrones* and a pressing social, political, or cultural issue that is important to you.
- **Fanfiction – 15%** A short story or poem either in the style of *Beowulf*, Marie de France, or the Gawain-poet *or* further developing the narrative of one of their characters (or both).
- **Participation and attendance – 10%** We're going to spend a lot of time together this summer, so come to class prepared to raise questions and engage with the views of others.

Course Policies

Attendance is mandatory; missing more than three classes will automatically lower your final grade.

Late work will lose a third of a letter grade per calendar day – that is, if you hand in a B+ paper a day late, it becomes a B; two days, a B-, and so on. When you turn in papers, please email me a copy as well as submitting a hard copy.

No make-up or late exams will be given without a documented emergency. If you need an extension, please request it in advance. You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

Laptops, phones, and tablets should be put away during class (except when we're discussing online readings). If this rule presents a hardship, let me know as soon as possible so that we can work out an alternative arrangement.

I will be available via email, and you should be as well. Discussion questions, essay prompts, and other course information will be made available via bCourses and email – so check your email! (Let me know what email address works best at the beginning of the semester.)

For my part, I'll try my best to answer all emails promptly: within 24 hours during the week, 48 during weekends. I'm happy to field logistical queries and answer basic questions over email, but conversations about papers are always more productive in person. If you can't make the set hours, email me and set up an appointment.

This class is intended to be as welcoming and inclusive as possible. If you would like to request accommodations, please tell me privately as soon as possible and make formal arrangements via the Disabled Students' Program (<http://dsp.berkeley.edu>) if you have not already done so. If there are concerns you need to share, or need assistance in case of emergency, please inform me immediately. This course will necessarily cover some upsetting material; I encourage you to speak to me privately if issues arise.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. *The English Department statement on plagiarism reads as follows:* All written work submitted in this course, except for acknowledged quotations, is to be expressed in your own words. It should also be constructed upon a plan of your own devising. The Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct defines plagiarism as “the use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source” and stipulates that plagiarism includes:

- 1.) Copying from the writings or works of others into one’s academic assignment without attribution, or submitting such work as if it were one’s own;
- 2.) Using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment; or
- 3.) Paraphrasing the characteristic or original phraseology, metaphor, or other literary device of another without proper attribution.

Unacknowledged use of the words or ideas of others from any medium (print, digital, or otherwise) is plagiarism. The submission of plagiarized work will, under University rules, render the offending student subject to an F grade for the work in question or for the whole course, and will also make him/her liable for referral to the Student Judicial Affairs Office for further disciplinary action.

This syllabus is subject to change – I will keep you updated if and when it does, but if you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask them in class, in office hours, or over email.

Schedule of Readings

Tuesday, June 19	Introduction
Wednesday, June 20	<i>Beowulf</i> ll. 1-1798
Thursday, June 21	<i>Beowulf</i> ll. 1799-3182
Tuesday, June 26	Marie de France: <i>Guigemar, Equitan, Le Fresne, Bisclavret</i>
Wednesday, June 27	Marie de France: <i>Lanval, Les Deus Amanz, Laiüstic, Yonec</i>
Thursday, June 28	Marie de France: <i>Milun, Chaitivel, Eliduc</i>
Tuesday, July 3	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> , Fitts 1-2
Wednesday, July 4	Holiday, no class
Thursday, July 5	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> , Fitts 3-4
Tuesday, July 10	<i>Richard II</i> , Acts I-III
Wednesday, July 11	<i>Richard II</i> , Acts IV-V; begin screening of <i>Richard II</i> (2012)
Thursday, July 12	Finish screening and discussion
Friday, July 13	Fanfiction exercise due

Tuesday, July 17	1 <i>Henry IV</i> , Acts I-III
Wednesday, July 18	1 <i>Henry IV</i> , Acts IV-V
Thursday, July 19	2 <i>Henry IV</i> , Acts I-III
Tuesday, July 24	2 <i>Henry IV</i> , Acts IV-V
Wednesday, July 25	<i>Henry V</i> , Acts I-III
Thursday, July 26	<i>Henry V</i> , Acts IV-V
Friday, July 27	Essay due
Tuesday, July 31	<i>A Game of Thrones</i> : Prologue, Bran, Daenerys, Eddard, Catelyn, Bran (end at 71)
Wednesday, August 1	<i>A Game of Thrones</i> : Daenerys, Eddard, Catelyn, Daenerys again (end at 199) Nussbaum, “The Aristocrats” Sturtevant, “Was Sexual Abuse Normal?” Anders, “Is <i>GOT</i> ’s Gratuitous Sex Worse than the Gratuitous Violence?”
Thursday, August 2	<i>A Game of Thrones</i> : Eddard, Eddard, Catelyn, Sansa, Eddard, Arya (end at 293)
Tuesday, August 7	<i>A Game of Thrones</i> : Eddard, Catelyn, Eddard, Daenerys, Tyrion, Eddard, Catelyn, Tyrion, Eddard (end at 393) Ahmed, “Is <i>Game of Thrones</i> Too White?” Young, “ <i>Game of Thrones</i> ’ Racism Problem”
Wednesday, August 8	<i>A Game of Thrones</i> : Eddard, Daenerys, Eddard, Arya, Sansa, Jon, Sansa, Eddard, Catelyn (end at 543) Herman, “The Very Last Piece of TV Monoculture” McCormack, “How <i>Game Of Thrones</i> Feeds Its Own Thinkpiece Industry”
Thursday, August 9	<i>A Game of Thrones</i> : Daenerys, Tyrion, Daenerys, Arya, Sansa, Daenerys, Jon, Catelyn, Daenerys (end at 674) Thinkpiece due