ENGL 2303: Topics in Literature: J.R.R. Tolkien and the Making of a Modern Mythology
Maymester 2014

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Office Hours: MW 12:15 p.m.-1:15 p.m., and by appointment

Section Information: ENGL 2303-001
Place and Time of Class Meetings: COBA 243, MTWRF 8:00 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

Course Description

In 1961, one of Tolkien's critics, Philip Toynbee—despite the fact that each volume of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy was in its eighth or ninth hardcover impression!—opined that "today these books have passed into merciful oblivion." Yet Tolkien's work has outlasted its early critics, not merely lingering into the twenty-first century, but thriving, bolstered by the phenomenal success of Peter Jackson's film versions. Why? What are its sources of continued vitality? And what sets Tolkien's work apart from its many forgettable or already-forgotten imitators?

We will explore these questions among others as we read and discuss as much of Tolkien's work as is feasible within the confines of a Maymester course: *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (which Tolkien did not think of as a trilogy at all, since each text cannot stand on its own) and *The Silmarillion* (completed by his son, Christopher). Secondarily, we will learn about Tolkien's life and career; his personal and professional interests in philology, mythology, and medieval studies; his elaborate writing and revising processes; and some of his many wellsprings of inspiration in literary, mythological, linguistic, or historical sources—some obvious, like the calque of the creation story in Genesis that we find in the opening of *The Silmarillion*, and some subtle, like the name of the dragon Smaug (from *The Hobbit*), which is the past tense of the reconstructed Germanic verb "smaugen" (i.e., "to squeeze through a hole"). We will also talk about the ways in which Jackson's films depart from Tolkien's texts, and why; the function, if any, that myth retains in the twenty-first century; and the logic of gift-giving and the webs of obligations that it spawns as they play out in Tolkien's work. But beyond discussing all of these topics, I wish to encourage a greater appreciation for and enjoyment of the aesthetics—both aural and visual—of the language(s) that Tolkien draws upon, extends, and, at times, creates.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students should be able to respond critically to course material, using synthesis and analysis.
- Students should be able to assimilate existing information to formulate new ideas.
- Students should be able to express ideas or arguments in oral form.
- Students should be able to recall and explicate key passages of the text that deal with characters or plot.
- Students should be able to develop active listening skills including paraphrasing and synthesizing ideas expressed in class.
- Students should be able to develop methods and strategies for analyzing and interpreting texts.
- Students should be able to compare and contrast major themes of *The Lord of the Rings* (texts and films) and *The Silmarillion*.

Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials

Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings* (50th Anniversary, One Volume Edition). 1954-55. Boston: Houghton, 2005. Print. [ISBN: 978-0-618-64561-9] [Hardcover]

---. *The Silmarillion* (2nd ed.). 1977. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton, 2004. Print. [ISBN: 978-0-618-13504-2] [Hardcover]

Major Assignments

The major assignments will be daily reading cards, daily reading quizzes (lowest score dropped), and a cumulative take-home final examination.

Grading Policy

Your final grade for the course will likely be calculated as follows:

Reading cards	20%
Reading Quizzes	50%
Final Exam	30%

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory, and active participation is expected. Attendance will be taken in the following way. At the start of each class, you must submit a 4x6 index card that contains the following:

- *Front of card*: name, date, 1-2 sentence summary of a single chapter from the assigned reading
- *Back of card*: a comment or open-ended question that could be used to facilitate class discussion

Excluding the first day of class, we have 8 scheduled meetings that involve newly assigned readings; however, since it is not always possible to attend class, I will expect from you a maximum of 7 cards, which means that you have one excused absence. If you submit 8 reading cards, then you will receive 1% extra credit toward your final course grade. Note: You should always bring a separate copy of your comment or question to class so that you can refer to it during class discussion.

Please note:

- Incomplete cards will receive at most half-credit.
- You must be present in class in order to submit reading card; I will not accept cards that are submitted via email, put in my mailbox, shoved under my office door, etc., even if are turned in early.
- If you are late for class by no more than 20 minutes, please hand your card to me as soon as you enter the classroom. If I have not yet collected the reading cards, you will receive full credit; if I have already collected them, you will receive half-credit.
- Cards submitted later than 20 minutes after class has started will not receive credit; if you are uncertain about how late you are, please ask me after class.
- Cards that explain why you have not written a summary and question will not receive credit!

Schedule of Assignments

5/14 Introduction to course: Who was J. R. R. Tolkien?

5/15 Reading period (class canceled)

5/16 Reading period (class canceled)

5/19 *The Fellowship of the Ring*: Prologue and Book I

5/20 *The Fellowship of the Ring*: Book II

5/21 *The Two Towers*: Book III

5/22 *The Two Towers*: Book IV

5/23 *The Return of the King*: Book V

5/26 Memorial Day holiday

5/27 *The Return of the King*, Book VI

5/28 *The Return of the King*, Appendix A: Section I.i ("Númenor"): pp. 1033-1037; I.v ("Here Follows a Part of the Tale of Aragorn and Arwen"): pp. 1057-1063; Section II ("The House of Eorl"): pp. 1063-1067; Section III ("Durin's Folk"): pp. 1071-1078, pp. 1080-1081.
"On Fairy Stories" (This text will be emailed to you.)

5/29 *The Silmarillion*: "Ainulindalë" / "Valaquenta" / From the "Quenta Silmarillion": Chapters 1-13, 19
Final exam assigned

The final exam is due by 1:00 p.m. on Monday, June 2nd. **Late exams will be penalized at a rate of -10% per half hour.**

Miscellaneous Policies

Classroom Decorum: I treat students with utmost respect and courtesy; when teaching, conferencing, and grading, you and your work will have my full attention. In return, I ask the same from all of you: Please turn off and put away all cell phones, pagers, books from other classes, etc. You may use a laptop to take notes during class, so long as you are mindful enough not to disturb the students around you.

Subject Librarian: Rafia Mirza is the Reference and Instruction Librarian for English, History, and Communication. She is available to answer questions about how to access and use the resources provided by the library; and she is also happy to meet with students for a one-on-one research consultations. She may be contacted at rafia@uta.edu or 817-272-7428.

Writing Center: The Writing Center, Room 411 in the Central Library, will assist you with any writing assignment while you are a student at UT-Arlington. You may schedule appointments online by calling 817 272-2601, by following directions available at www.uta.edu/owl/appointments, or by visiting the Writing Center. If you come to the Writing Center without an appointment, you will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis as tutors become available. Writing Center tutors are carefully chosen and trained, and they can assist you with any aspect of your writing, from understanding an assignment to revising an early draft to polishing a final draft. However, the Writing Center is not an editing service; tutors will not correct your grammar or rewrite your assignment for you, but they will help you learn to solve your grammatical and organizational problems.

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Academic Integrity: It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. According to the UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

Student Support Services Available: The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit www.uta.edu/resources for more information.

Electronic Communication Policy: The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University "MavMail" address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the

University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington. To obtain your NetID or for logon assistance, visit https://webapps.uta.edu/oit/selfservice/. If you are unable to resolve your issue from the Self-Service website, contact the Helpdesk at helpdesk@uta.edu.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory will be asked to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS) about the course and how it was taught. Instructions on how to access the SFS system will be sent directly to students through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback data is required by state law; student participation in the SFS program is voluntary.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures: Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located across from the elevators. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.