

**ENGL 3300: Topics in Literature: *The Lord of the Rings* as Modern Mythology
Summer I, 2017**

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Office Hours: MW 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., and by appointment

Section Information: ENGL 3300-001

Place and Time of Class Meetings: 207 Preston Hall / MTWR 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

Course Description

In 1961, one of J. R. R. Tolkien's critics, Philip Toynbee—despite the fact that each volume of *The Lord of the Rings* was in its eighth or ninth hardcover impression!—opined that “today these books have passed into merciful oblivion.” Yet Tolkien's masterpiece has outlasted its early critics, not merely lingering into the twenty-first century, but thriving, bolstered by the phenomenal critical and commercial success of Peter Jackson's film versions from the early 2000s. Why? What are its sources of continued vitality? And what sets *The Lord of the Rings* apart from its many forgettable or already-forgotten imitators? We will explore these questions among others as we study Tolkien's attempt to make a modern mythology for England in *The Lord of the Rings* and in (excerpts from) *The Silmarillion*. 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 allusion to 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 what function, if any, myth retains in the twenty-first century; the logic of gift-giving and the webs of obligations it creates in Tolkien's work; and, as time allows, some of the ways in which Jackson's films remain true to and depart from the texts. 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 writing itself, especially the languages that Tolkien drew upon, extended, and, at times, invented during his creation of the most celebrated and influential secondary world in high fantasy: Middle-earth.

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, clearly and succinctly, ideas or arguments in oral and written 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* 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 Mifflin, 2004. Print. [ISBN: 978-0618640157] [Hardcover]
- ---. *The Silmarillion* (2nd ed.). 1977. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Mariner, 2001. Print. [ISBN: 978-0544338012] [Softcover]

Major Assignments

The major assignments for the course are as follows: 13 reading cards (2 lowest scores dropped), 13 reading quizzes (2 lowest scores dropped), and a final exam.

Grading Policy

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

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

A grade of "Incomplete" will be assigned only under documented cases of extreme medical, family, or personal emergency; in all cases, the incomplete must be resolved by the start of the next 15-week semester or else the grade will be changed automatically to an "F."

Attendance Policy

At UT Arlington, taking attendance is not required, but attendance is a critical indicator of student success. Each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. **As the instructor of this section, I require attendance and active participation.** Excluding the first day of class, we have **sixteen** scheduled meetings; however, because attending class is not always possible, you will have two (and only two) absences automatically excused. In other words, you are expected to attend at least **fourteen** classes; for each subsequent absence, **1%** will be deducted from your final grade for the course.

For the thirteen class periods that involve newly assigned readings, attendance will be tracked through the use of reading cards. A reading card is a 4x6 index card that contains (1) your name, (2) the date, (3) a 2-3 sentence summary of a single chapter or essay from the day's assigned readings, and (4) a comment or open-ended question that could be used to facilitate class discussion. Please keep the following in mind:

- Incomplete reading cards will receive at most half-credit.
- You must be present in class in order to submit a 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 30 minutes, please hand your reading card to me as soon as you enter the classroom. If I have not yet collected the cards, you will receive full credit; if I have already collected them, you will receive half-credit.
- Reading cards submitted later than 30 minutes after class has started will not receive credit; if you are uncertain about how late you are, please ask me after class.
- Reading cards that explain why you have not written a summary and question will not receive credit!
- Reading cards are used to track attendance, but they are also graded assignments (see "Grading Policy"); in other words, should you have an unexcused absence when a reading card is due, you will be penalized both for the missed reading card and for the absence as such.
- I expect you to complete at least 11 of 13 reading cards. If you complete 12 cards, you will receive 1% extra-credit toward your final course grade; if you complete 13 cards, you will receive 2% extra-credit.

For the three class periods that do not involve newly assigned readings, attendance will be tracked through the use of a sign-in sheet passed around at the start of class. If you arrive before the sign-in sheet makes its way around the room, you will be considered "present"; if you arrive after the sign-in sheet has been collected but no later than 30 minutes after the start of the class, you will be considered "late" (i.e., which counts as a half-absence); and if you arrive later than 30 minutes, you are welcome to join the class for the remainder of the period, but you will be considered "absent."

Note: While UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients “begin attendance in a course.” UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

Schedule of Assignments

- 6/5 Introduction: Who Was J. R. R. Tolkien?
- 6/6 Introduction, continued
- 6/7 Reading period (class canceled)
- 6/8 *The Lord of the Rings*, Prologue (pp. 1-16)
The Lord of the Rings, Book I, Chapters 1-6
- 6/12 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book I, Chapters 7-12
- 6/13 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book II, Chapters 1-5
- 6/14 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book II, Chapters 6-10
- 6/15 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book III, Chapters 1-6
- 6/19 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book III, Chapters 7-11
- 6/20 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book IV (entire)
- 6/21 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book V, Chapters 1-5
- 6/22 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book V, Chapters 6-10
- 6/26 *The Lord of the Rings*, Book VI (entire)
- 6/27 *The Lord of the Rings*, Appendix A (excerpts): Section I.i, “Númenor” (pp. 1033-1037) / Section 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 and 1080-1081)
“On Fairy Stories” (available on Blackboard)
- 6/28 Film viewing, part 1
- 6/29 Film viewing, part 2
- 7/3 *The Silmarillion: Ainulindalë / Valaquenta / Quenta Silmarillion*, Chapters 1-7
- 7/4 Independence Day holiday
- 7/5 *The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion*, Chapters 8-13, 19

The final exam must be submitted via Blackboard no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, July 10th.

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 smartphones, books from other classes, etc. You may use a laptop or tablet **for the purposes of our course only** so long as you are mindful enough not to disturb the students around you.

Academic Integrity: Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code in their courses by having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University. Additional information is available at <https://www.uta.edu/conduct/>.

Library & Research Assistance: University-level research requires university-level sources. Contact the Library for personalized help in navigating research resources and locating the sources you need.

- **Librarian:** Your librarian is **Diane Shepelwich**, dianec@uta.edu. If you need help getting started with your research or have questions along the way, contact Diane for personalized assistance.
- **Research Coach:** Research Coaches are UT Arlington students trained to help you frame your research questions, develop search strategies, understand citation styles, and select and evaluate relevant resources, <http://libguides.uta.edu/researchcoach>.
- **Library Staff:** Find library staff at the Service Zone, Central Library first floor, or at the branch libraries, by phone at 817-272-3395, by text at 817-727-8395, email at AskUs@uta.edu, or chat on the library's homepage, <http://library.uta.edu/>.
- **Research Consultation:** To set an appointment with your librarian or research coach, visit <http://library.uta.edu/form/appointment-request-form>.
- **Research Guides:** For a list of useful guides to help you start your research, visit: <http://libguides.uta.edu/>.

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 by calling 817-272-2601, by following directions listed 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.

Student Support Services: UT 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. Resources include [tutoring](#), [major-based learning centers](#), developmental education, [advising and mentoring](#), personal counseling, and [federally funded programs](#). For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

Disability Accommodations: UT 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)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. 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 disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of **a letter certified** by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) online (www.uta.edu/disability) or via phone 817-272-3364. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at

www.uta.edu/disability. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (www.uta.edu/caps / 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

Non-Discrimination Policy: UT Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit www.uta.edu/eos.

Title IX Policy: UT Arlington is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or jmhood@uta.edu.

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. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

Campus Carry: Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in face-to-face and online classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" are directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback via the SFS database is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. Students' anonymity will be protected to the extent that the law allows. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law and aggregate results are posted online. Data from SFS is also used for faculty and program evaluations. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Final Review Week: For semester-long courses, 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. 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.

Emergency Phone Numbers: In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at 817-272-3003 (non-campus phone), 2-3003 (campus phone). You may also dial 911. The non-emergency number is 817-272-3381.