

English 350-01
Monty Python and the Real Grail
Spring, 2001

T. L. Reed
East College 306 Ex 1216
Hours: M 2-3, T 2-4, and by appt.

Required Texts (available in the College Store):

Note: For ease of collective reference, please use these editions only:

(Indiana) Chrétien de Troyes, *The Complete Romances of Chretien de Troyes*, trans. Staines
Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain* (Penguin)
Hacker, Diana, *A Pocket Manual of Style*, 3rd ed. (Bedford/St. Martins)
Marie de France, *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Hanning and Ferrante (Baker)
Painter, Sidney, *French Chivalry* (Cornell)
The Quest of the Holy Grail, trans. Matarasso (Penguin)
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, trans. Borroff (Norton)
The Song of Roland, trans. Burgess (Penguin)

A significant number of readings will be available on the class Blackboard/CourseInfo site and/or on Reserve

The screenplay of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* is available on the web at various sites, including:

<http://www.intriguing.com/mp/scripts/mp-holy.txt> and
<http://www.oraclehumor.com/Humor/MontyPython.html>

This will be an historically-focused literature course with a cinematic "hook"; it is meant to look beyond *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* to the actual medieval texts and contexts on which the film "builds" – and, granted, which it explodes. Rather than a chance to master some loony dialogue, the course will offer substantial insight into the mind(s) of the Middle Ages – and, just as importantly, into the ways some medieval material has been understood and misunderstood, appropriated and distorted, by subsequent ages.

Requirements: 1) two 1250-2000-word essays, the second involving secondary research; 2) six or seven 10-to-15-minute quizzes (to guarantee the class keeps up on reading and in place of a final exam); 3) **regular attendance and class participation. All essays must be reviewed at the Writing Center** – and must be machine-printed, double-spaced, leaving one-inch margins on all sides. For further guidance on essay format – including page layout and MLA bibliographical style – see the **Departmental Writing Guidelines** accessible through the English Department pages of the Dickinson Website, as well as the Hacker text.

Make sure you **KEEP COPIES** of your work, hard and magnetic, when you turn essays in! Except when well-justified alternative arrangements are made in advance, assignments must be turned in personally at the specified time.

In terms of participation, we will spend some significant time "in conversation." I am always interested in exploring issues I might not have planned to highlight but about which you may have questions or comments. Moreover, your responses are my best evidence you're engaging with the material in more than a passive way. N.B., I consider e-mail as conversation!

Grading: First essay – 25%; second essay – 35%; quizzes -- 20%; attendance and class participation – 20%. For the system by which averages will be computed, please refer to the appropriate section of the college bulletin. All course work must be completed by the date of the final exam for you to receive credit for the class.

General: You are expected to know what plagiarism and cheating are and to avoid them completely. Ignorance of accepted College standards is sadly no excuse for violations. If you have any questions on what is expected of you, please see me.

I am available during office hours, but feel free to contact me at other reasonable times, should the need arise. I am usually in East College 306 (x1216) most of each work day, and I regularly answer e-mail ("reedt").

Tentative Schedule

Date	Day	Topic/Reading/Assignment
1-25	Thu	Organization of the Course
1-30	Tues	Organization of the Middle Ages Duby, "Medieval Society" (esp. 5-14) and "Youth in Aristocratic Society"; Petrarch, XVI/Letter 9 (Blackboard) <i>Dictionary of the Middle Ages (DMA)</i> , "Special Characteristics of Germanic Law" (xerox)
2-01	8PM Thu	Screening of <i>Monty Python and the Holy Grail</i> – EC405 Discussion of the Film (What kinds of things does the film parody? Does it manifest any general "themes"? Are any of them in any way serious?)
2-06	Tues	Painter I (read at least 1-63); Marie de France, "Chaitivel" and translators' commentary, 181-89 (late 12th-century text)
2-08	Thu	Painter II (finish text); Chaucer, "The Tale of Sir Thopas" (Blackboard: late 14th-century text) **10-15-minute quiz on Painter**
2-13	Tues	<i>The Song of Roland</i> I (read the entire poem, including the Introduction) **10-15-minute quiz on the poem**
2-15	Thu	<i>The Song of Roland</i> II
2-20	Tues	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>History of the Kings of Britain</i> , 9-31, 202 ["Uther, the brother of Aurelius . . ."] through 261 **10-15-minute quiz on the text**
2-22	8PM Thu	Screening of <i>Camelot</i> – EC 405 Geoffrey, <i>History</i> II
2-27	Tues	Merlin, Witchcraft, and Antifeminism Read Geoffrey, <i>History</i> , 166 ["In the end Vortigern . . ."] through 202; <i>DMA</i> , "Witchcraft" (<i>DMA</i> is in reference section of library – 940.103 D554 – and copies of the article will likely be on reserve)
3-01	8PM Thu	Screening of <i>Excalibur</i> – EC 405 Discussion of the film (and possible continuation of discussion of <i>Camelot</i>)
3-06	Tues	Duby, "Marriage in Early Medieval Society," "Love in Twelfth-Century France," and "On Courtly Love" (Blackboard; and review Painter, Ch. 4) **10-15-minute quiz on the reading**
3-08	8PM Thu	Possible screening of <i>First Knight</i> – EC 405 – TBA Chrétien de Troyes, <i>Yvain</i> I (read Introduction and the whole romance)
3-13	Tues	Chrétien, <i>Yvain</i> II **10-15-minute quiz on the poem**
3-15	Thu	Chrétien, <i>Yvain</i> III and a portion of <i>Lancelot</i> (185-202)
3-16	Fri	Probable due date for essay #1 -- 5PM -- EC 306 (slide under door) Topics and guidelines for Writing Center review will be distributed well in advance

SPRING BREAK

- 3-27 Tues Marie de France, "Prologue" and "Guigemar," including commentary (28-59)
3-29 Thu Logic and Riddles
Read selection from Bede, Anglo-Saxon Riddles, "Inter Diabolus et Virgo"
(Blackboard)
- 4-03 Tues *The Quest of the Holy Grail I*
Read at least the Introduction and pages 31-53 ("Departure"); 67-76
("Presumption Punished"/"The Castle of the Maidens"); 76-80 ("Sir Gawain Sets
Out"); 80-94 ("Lancelot's Conviction and Repentance" – Lancelot speaks with a
hermit); 140-44 ("Lancelot: The Slow Ascent"); and ALL RELEVANT
EXPLANATORY NOTES. (Review Painter, Ch. 3)
****There will be a 15-minute quiz on *The Quest* either this day or
Thursday**** – TBA
- 4-05 Thu *Quest II*
Read at least 94-134 ("The Peregrinations of Perceval"); 175-207 ("Trials and
Temptations of Bors"); 211-15 ("The Miraculous Ship" – Galahad joins
Perceval and Bors); 235-51 ("Adventures of the Three Companions"); and 269-
84 ("The Holy Grail").
- 4-10 Tues The Black Death: *DMA* "The Black Death" (*DMA* is in reference section of
library – 940.103 D554 – and copies of the article will likely be on reserve) ;
Petrarch, VIII/Letter 7, XVI/Letter 2; Froissart, "Black Death, Flagellants, Jews"
(Blackboard)
- 4-12 Thu **8PM**
Screening of *The Seventh Seal* – EC 405
Memento Mori: Lydgate, "The Daunce of Death"; Henryson, "The Thre Deid
Pollis"; "A Lyke-Wake Dirge"; "Ubi Sunt Qui ante Nos Fuerunt"
(Blackboard)
- 4-17 Tues Love and Aubades: Raimbaut, "Watchman on the Tower"; Shakespeare, *Romeo
& Juliet* III.5 (Blackboard; and review Painter and Duby on Courtly Love) –
Flytings/Ritualized Insults: Readings TBA (review boasts/taunts in *Roland*)
- 4-19 Thu Grotesques/Fabliaux: "The Priest Who Peeked," "The Villager and His Two
Asses," "Knights, Clerks, and the Two Churls" (Blackboard)
- 4-24 Tues *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight I* (read entire poem, inc. Introduction)
****10-15-minute quiz on the poem****
- 4-26 Thu *SGGK II*
- 5-01 Tues Chaucer: *General Prologue* portrait of the Knight and Squire (Blackboard);
"The Tale of Sir Thopas" II
- 5-03 Thu **8PM**
Final Screening -- Film TBA – EC 405
Final class -- Topic TBA
- 5-07 **Monday** Second essay due -- 5PM -- EC 306 (slide under the door if necessary)