

## Medieval Movies and Mouvance

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Heures de permanence : MWF 9h30-10h30 et par rendez-vous

### Medieval Movies and Mouvance



Course Description: In 1972, Paul Zumthor introduced the concept of *mouvance*: the idea that in the Middle Ages, each text was in constant dialogue with those texts that came before it and that were yet to come, and that a text was never stable but rather in continual movement, evolution or transformation. According to Zumthor, it was this “instabilité fondamentale”<sup>1</sup> that distinguished the position of the medieval author from our modern notion of authorship.

This course takes as its point of departure Zumthor’s conception of *mouvance*, addressing the following questions:

- 1- When does a medieval text stop its continuous development? In other words, when does the “instabilité fondamentale” that characterizes medieval narratives become fixed, or stable?
- 2- Can modern reincarnations, interpretations, and adaptations of these narratives to be a continuation of this process? Why or why not?
- 3- In particular, how do our modern cinematic interpretations of medieval texts fit into this framework?
- 4- And, ultimately, how do our modern modes of narrative construction and transmission differ from the medieval ones characterized by fragmentation, adaptation, and exchange?

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1972), p. 507.



Aims and Objectives: This course is designed to be taken following FREN 104 or FREN 150, and to provide students with the basic frameworks, methods, and vocabularies necessary for the interpretation of literature in French. *The course is conducted entirely in French.*

By the end of this course, students will have been introduced to:

- basic terminologies related to the interpretation of French literature (*champs lexicaux, sonorité, métaphore, etc.*)
- basic methods of literary analysis, frameworks and implementations of the interpretation of literature, especially with respect to the *explication de texte*
- modes of interaction of literary texts with historical, political, and social frameworks

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- understand and implement basic concepts of literary analysis in describing and interpreting texts
- think critically about authors interpret the world around them in their works
- construct written and oral arguments about how texts are put together
- write concise and thoughtful analyses of literary texts
- reflect critically on how narratives are constructed and transmitted in different eras

Major foci of this class are thus literary analysis and critical reading, but equal emphasis will be placed on developing students' writing competencies.



### Required Texts

Bérout, *Le Roman de Tristan*

Thomas d'Angleterre, *Tristan*

Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot, ou, Le Chevalier de la charrette*

Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval, Le Conte du graal*

### Grading

Writing assignments (4): 30%

Reading Comprehension Worksheets: %15

Dramatic presentation (1): 5%

Exposé (1): 10%

Pre-Final Paper Writing Assignments: 10%

Final Paper: 30%

### Writing Assignments

Approximately every two weeks, you will write a 2-3 page paper focused in on a specific argument around the text we are reading. As revision is an important part of the writing process, you will have multiple opportunities to improve your work. You will turn this in on a Tuesday, and receive feedback on Thursday. We will then workshop your papers in class, and you will hand in the final (graded) draft the following Tuesday. For each paper, I am looking for a well-organized, clearly-written argument. This means that you should have an introduction, a number of body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Perhaps most importantly, you should have a clearly delineated argument, i.e., a thesis that either points out something no one else has noticed, or makes a debatable (but not incorrect) claim.

### Reading Comprehension Worksheets

Once a week, you will be asked to complete a worksheet with a number of reading comprehension questions, as well as a broader question requiring you to write a short paragraph. This assignment encourages you to attend to the reading carefully, and also to *think* about what you have read before we discuss it in class.

### Dramatic Presentation

Once during the semester, you and a group of two other students will present an interpretation of a scene from the reading to the class. The purpose of this assignment is twofold: 1) to help the class understand a passage that was difficult to picture in one's mind's eye and 2) to attend closely to the details of who said what, how, to whom, and why.

### Exposé

During the second half of the semester, you will present a twenty-minute discussion of a secondary source related to the text we are reading. This exercise helps you to delve deeper into the primary source materials by reading a very good analysis or argument, and then explaining this complex idea to the rest of the class. It also puts

you in my shoes for twenty minutes: you are not meant to simply speak to the class for twenty minutes, but also to engage their attention through a combination of organized activities, discussion questions, or visual resources.