Fall 2009
MW 10:20-11:40 206 Old Horticulture

John Rauk
214 Old Horticulture
Office Hours MW 12:00-12:30 F 10:30-12:30 (and by appt.)

Tess Tavormina
224 Morrill Hall
Office Hours MW 1:00-2:30 (and by appt.)

Course Description

This course examines the works of J. R. R. Tolkien in the context of legend, myth and mythmaking from Ancient Greece and Rome through the medieval period, with a special focus on the nature of myth and its relevance in the present day.

This is a reading-intensive course. In order to do well, you will need to budget your time appropriately and complete all the readings. We will not take attendance, but if you miss classes your grade will suffer.

Aims

- To understand the process of myth-making in European culture through the study of Tolkien’s “created” mythology
- To gain insight into the meanings discoverable through the exercise of imagination that is informed by myth
- To acquire knowledge of seminal myths that inspired Tolkien and the texts that preserve them
- To situate Tolkien’s moral and ethical universe in the context of 20th-century aesthetic, philosophical, and political concerns

Texts

The Odyssey of Homer, trans. Richmond Lattimore
The Tolkien Reader, by J.R.R. Tolkien
The Hobbit, by J.R.R. Tolkien
The Silmarillion, by J.R.R. Tolkien
Beowulf trans. Burton Raffel (with afterword by Roberta Frank)
The Farthest Shore (The Earthsea Cycle, Book 3), by Ursula K. Le Guin
Course-pack (available only at Ned’s Bookstore)
Class Format and Policies

Students prepare assigned reading for each class. We will introduce class topics and present background for readings in lecture format that encourages student discussion. All work, including the assigned readings, must be completed by the due date.

Turn off cell phones in class, and please do not bring any food or beverages into the classroom.

No electronic devices of any kind, including cell phones, laptops, and iPods, are allowed to be operating during exams.

If you miss an exam due to a university-sponsored activity (e.g., band, debate team), a make-up can be arranged, provided valid documentation is submitted one week in advance. Absences from exams due to sudden illness are excused only if valid documentation (e.g., signed record of doctor visit with phone number) is submitted within three calendar days of the time of the exam.

All exams will be multiple-choice. Questions will be based both on reading assignments and lecture materials.

Constructive contribution to class discussion may be taken into account for students whose grade falls on a borderline.

Students who have already had one or more semesters at MSU and have a GPA of 3.0 or higher, or who are in the Honors College, can take an Honors Option for this course. Please consult us if you are interested.

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tr>
<td>Two Exams @ 30% 60%</td>
<td>100-91 4.0</td>
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<td>90-88 3.5</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>81-77 2.5</td>
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<td>71-67 1.5</td>
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<td>66-62 1.0</td>
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Schedule

Sep 2. Welcome and Introduction to the Course

Sep 7. Labor Day: no class


Sep 14. *Odyssey*, Books I-VI
Sep 16.  *Odyssey*, Books VII-XII


Sep 23.  *Odyssey*, Books XIX-XXIV


Oct 5.  *The Hobbit*, Chapters VIII-XII


Oct 12.  **Exam I**


Nov 2.  *Fellowship of the Ring*, “Prologue” and Book One, Chapters I-VII

Nov 4.  *Fellowship of the Ring*, Book One, Chapters VIII-XII; Book Two, Chapters I-II


Nov 11.  *The Two Towers*, Book Three, Chapters I-XI

Nov 18.  **Exam II**

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Nov 23.  *The Return of the King*, Book Five, Chapters I-VI

Nov 25.  *The Return of the King*, Book Five, Chapters VII-X; Book Six, Chapters I-IV

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Nov 30.  *The Return of the King*, Book Six, Chapters V-IX


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Dec 9.  Conclusions

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**Final Exam**  **Friday December 18, 10:00-12:00 noon, 206 Old Horticulture**