Proposal for a New Course

NOTE: (1) All gray text boxes must be completed (even if you just put N/A into them), otherwise the committee must consider the form incomplete.
NOTE: (2) If the new course is to be accepted as fulfilling General Education requirements, a separate approval must be done through the General Education Committee.

Contact person Myra Seaman Email address seamanm@cofc.edu Phone 953-5760

1. Department: English

2. Course number and title: ENGL 361: Studies in Literature in History Pre-1700
   Number of Credits: 3   Total hrs/week: 3

   Lecture: ☒ Lab: ☐ Recitation: ☐ Seminar: ☐

   For Independent study courses:
   Research: ☐ Field experience: ☐
   Clinical Practice: ☐ Internship: ☐
   Practicum: ☐ Independent Course Work: ☐

3. Semester and year when course will first be offered: Fall 2011

4. Catalog Description (please limit to 50 words):
   A detailed study of literature written before 1700, focused on a special topic to be determined by instructor.

5. CIP Code: 23.1404 (This code must be determined for new courses. The codes can be found at http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/. If you are not sure what code to use, please consult with the Institutional Research).

6. Check if appropriate: ☐
   This course will be cross listed with:
   Rationale for cross listing:
   Please attach letters of support from the chairs of each department indicating that the department has discussed the proposal and supports it.

7. a) Could another department or program also be a logical originator of this course (i.e. History of American Education could originate in both the Teacher Education and the History departments)? If yes, what department/program? Please contact the department chair/program director and request a note or email that they are aware of the proposed new course and include that note with the proposal.
   no

   b) Please explain overlap with any existing courses.
   N/A
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8. Prerequisites (or other restrictions):
   ENGL 110 or equivalent

9. Rationale/justification for course (consider the following issues):
   a) What are the goals and objectives of the course?
      The course provides students the opportunity to study literary texts written by a range of authors within the context of a historical period prior to 1700. In particular, it allows them to study a specific issue as determined by the instructor for which there is currently no suitable course in the catalog.

   b) How does the course support the mission statement of the department and the organizing principles of the major?
      The course is one of a number of courses that may fulfill a requirement for all majors, a course in Literature in History Pre-1700.

10. a) For courses in the major, how does the course enhance the beginning, middle, or end of the major?
     This course is part of the end of the major, offering students the opportunity to pursue in depth with an instructor a special topic not regularly offered but fulfilling the requirements for Literature in History Pre-1700.

     b) For courses used by non-majors, how does the course support the liberal arts tradition including linkages with other disciplines:
        N/A

11. Method of teaching:
    lecture, discussion

12. a) Address potential enrollment pattern shifts in the department or college-wide related to the offering of this course:
    N/A

     b) Address potential shifts in staffing of the department as it relates to the offering of this course:
        The course will be offered as staffing is available, on a rotating basis.

     c) Frequency of offering:
        each fall: ☐  each spring: ☐
        every two years: ☐  every three years: ☐
        other ☐ (Explain): It will be offered when an instructor chooses to offer it; the course is not required for the major, though it may fulfill a major requirement.
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13. Requirements for additional resources made necessary by this course:

   a) Staff:
      N/A

   b) Budget:
      N/A

   c) Library:
      N/A

14. Is this course to be added to the Degree Requirements of a Major, Minor, Concentration or List of Approved Electives?
   a) □ yes  ☑ no

   b) If yes, complete the Change Degree Requirements form(s) and list the name(s) of the major, minor, concentration and/or list of approved electives here:

15. Paste syllabus, reading lists, or any additional documentation that can help the committee evaluate this proposal (a syllabus is mandatory).
Proposal for a New Course

16. Signature of Department Chair or Program Director:

______________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________

17. Signature of Dean of School:

______________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________

18. Signature of Provost:

______________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________

19. Signature of Curriculum Committee Chair

______________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________

20. Signature of Faculty Senate Secretary:

______________________________________________________________

Date Approved by Senate: ________________________

Completed form should be sent by the Faculty Senate Secretary to the Registrar. After implementation, information concerning the passed course and program changes will be provided by the Registrar to all faculty and staff on campus.
This course will investigate the legend of King Arthur as it was constructed in England throughout the Middle Ages. We will focus especially on how the figure of Arthur was used to establish and then promote a distinct national identity, from the early chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Layamon to the verse and prose romances of Malory and various anonymous writers of the later medieval period.

Sept 1 Introduction & Organization

In this first class we will introduce ourselves to one another, to the course, and to the cultures and concerns at the core of our upcoming engagement together. We will leap into the early history of the land which came to be known as England, tracing its occupants and their experiences, and will get a taste of the different types of appearances Arthur made in the writing of the 6th through 15th centuries there.

Key Question 1: Visit the following sites (and any others you find intriguing as you venture to these particular locations) and investigate the facts and issues surrounding King Arthur in the Middle Ages. After you have spent a good deal of time at these sites, write a two-page summary of your observations for the class, pointing out some things you discovered, and indicating your choices for the most useful resources.

Britannia’s King Arthur page
http://www.britannia.com/history/h12.html

The Arthuriana page
http://www.arthuriana.org

The Arthurian Resources page
http://www.arthuriana.co.uk

The Camelot Project
http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cphome.stm

The Arthurian Studies page of the Labyrinth website
http://labyrinth.georgetown.edu/display.cfm?Action=View&Category=Arthurian%20Studies

To prepare for next week’s class discussion, read Chapter 1 (pages 1-52) of the Arthurian Handbook. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the handbook’s offerings, including the maps and chronology in the prefatory material as well as the glossary starting on page 275. Read also two articles by Geoffrey Ashe that are available online; each article is four web-pages long. The articles are “Origins of the Arthurian Legend” at http://www.britannia.com/history/artorig1.html and “A Quest for Arthur” at http://www.britannia.com/history/arthur1.html
The Hunt for Arthur

In this class we will investigate the types of information available about King Arthur and will consider strategies for studying the traditions that developed around him throughout the Middle Ages, particularly in England. We will discuss the various available sources of such information and the implications of those sources. Our discussion will be inspired by, but not necessarily limited to, the ideas raised by Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff in the *Arthurian Handbook* as well as Ashe himself in his two online articles.

**Key Question 2:** King Arthur has intrigued people for centuries, yet we have precious little information about this culturally powerful figure. A consideration of the “Origins” of Arthur (as the title of the first chapter of the *Arthurian Handbook* makes clear) is no simple archaeological-historical pursuit of facts. Instead, what we find ourselves seeking is the “origins” of the myth of Arthur, rather than Arthur the historical man. What kinds of information and what sorts of sources of information, are available to us? What are some of the implications of relying upon such sources in our hunt for Arthur? What kinds of conclusions can we reach? What questions, in other words, are we in the end going to be able to answer, given our sources?

For next week’s class, read *Arthurian Handbook* Chapter II, “Early Arthurian Literature” (pages 57-133). In addition, you should read a few excerpts from a number of key early sources of information about Arthur, which are available online at the following addresses:

- Annales Cambriae (c. 970) at http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/annalescambriae.html
- Dream of Rhonabwy (c. 1200; from the *Mabinogion*) at www.cyberphile.co.uk/~taff/taffnet/mabinogion/rhonabwy.html
- Gildas’ *De Excidio Britanniae* (540) at http://www.britannia.com/history/docs/gildas.html
- Nennius’ *Historia Britonnum* (early 9th c.) at www.britannia.com/history/docs/nennius.html

**Sept 15**

**Celtic stories and early Latin histories**

We will develop ways of reading the slight presence of Arthur – or “Arthurness,” as in Gildas – in these Celtic and Latin texts, considering their purposes and audiences as well as what we might conclude from Arthur’s appearances, preparing for the way later writers build on what little evidence remained for many of them.

**Key Question 3:**

Consider the purposes of Gildas and Nennius in their works, based on the excerpts you read. Bearing that in mind, and the various theoretical concerns we’ve discussed in class, what do you think about the claim made in the introductory material to the excerpt from Nennius at the britannia.com Arthur page, that “Nennius was, as one modern historian writes, ‘unrestrainedly inventive.’ His work can neither be entirely trusted nor can it be dismissed, as he apparently had access to no-longer-available 5th century sources”?
For next week’s class, read the Arthur material in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain* (chapters 8-11), a much-read and much-maligned narrative history of England, written in Latin and covering the history of the British people up until the final conquering of them by the Saxons. Also read the article “Hoel-Hearted Loyalty and the Ironization of Arthur in Geoffrey’s *Historia regum Britanniae*” (e-reserve) by Carol A. N. Martin on Geoffrey’s representation of Arthur.

Sept 22 Arthur’s Father: Geoffrey of Monmouth

This week we will look at Geoffrey’s significant contribution to the Arthur legend, his history of early Britain that was relied upon for six centuries and that was the written source for the incredibly popular literary tradition of the medieval Arthurian romance. We will also consider the ways he seems to make use of Nennius, Gildas, and perhaps even the *Annales Cambriae* as sources.

Key Question 4:
The britannia.com page on Geoffrey claims that the *Historia Regum Britanniae*’s “chief impact . . . was in changing the perceptions of the ‘civilized’ world (ie. France) about the Arthurian legend, which had previously been seen as merely the heritage of barbarians and thus unworthy of a cultured person's attention or interest.” At this point in your engagement with the written manifestation of the Arthurian legend, what is your response to this claim? I urge you to consider britannia.com’s Geoffrey material (http://www.britannia.com/history/geofmon.html ) before you write your response.

For next week’s class, read the Lawman selection in your *Arthurian Chronicles* text. Read also Kenneth J. Tiller’s article “The truth ‘bi Arthur than kinge’: Arthur’s Role in Shaping Lawman’s Vision of History” (pdf), available on e-reserve.

Sept 29 The Shift to Romance: Lawman

With this class we trace the transition from history to romance, from a focus by writers (and, presumably readers) on Arthur as a historical figure to Arthur as a historical-mythical figure, with the mainly militaristic legend transforming into courtly romance. Lawman’s English version of Wace’s French *Brut* appears after Chrétien establishes the romance tradition in 1160-80, but as a translation of Wace (who wrote before Chrétien) Lawman’s work usefully marks the transition, reminding us always that the English and French traditions shared a close relationship even as the English one, for historico-linguistic reasons, was delayed and addressed a rather different audience from Chrétien’s.

Key Question 5:
Carol A.N. Martin reads Geoffrey of Monmouth’s tone through a comparison with similar passages in Wace’s *Brut*. Extend her analysis to Lawman’s *Brut*: do you find Lawman’s translation follows suit?

For next week’s class, read Marie de France’s *Lais*, remembering that she was writing for the Anglo-Norman court, in England, but in a French that was the language of the aristocracy in England after the Norman Conquest a century earlier.
This week we will consider the dramatic transformation of the Arthurian material of the chronicles witnessed by Marie’s *lais*. Bearing in mind the audiences for these works, and their apparent purposes, we will investigate the apparent cultural use of Arthur and his court represented by Marie’s work.

Key Question 6: Compare the forms, apparent conventions, assumptions, purpose, and likely audience of Marie’s *lais* to those aspects of Geoffrey and, if you wish, Lawman.

For next week’s class, read Chrétien de Troyes’ *Lancelot, or The Knight of the Cart*.

**Key Question 7:** What kind of vision of its original aristocratic audience does Chrétien’s *Lancelot* offer? Consider not only the representation of the poem’s hero but also the other knights, the ladies, and the dynamics of the court and its representatives as we see them.

For our next class meeting in two weeks, read two anonymous English Arthurian romances, *Sir Perceval of Galles* and *Ywain and Gawain*, based on Chrétien. These poems are in Middle English, which you will find more familiar if you have read Chaucer in Middle English, but if you have not, you will quickly develop a vocabulary and an understanding of the syntax; the poems are heavily glossed for your assistance. Read also Alan MacColl’s article “King Arthur and the Making of an English Britain” (e-reserve).

**Key Question 8:** *Ywain and Gawain* is considered a relatively close translation of Chrétien’s romance *Yvain*, while *Sir Perceval of Galles* is described as bearing more marks of its English writer. Given that generalization, what do you see the writers of these two English romances as most interested in conveying to their audiences, and why? What sort of cultural work are these two writers, and the poems they translated, performing?
For our next class, read two Middle English versions of the Morte Darthur, the tragic conclusion of Arthur and his glorious Round Table.

Nov 3  

Two Morte: the Alliterative and the Stanzaic

These contrasting tellings of the story of Arthur’s demise are products of the 14th century which despite their occupying generally the same historical moment vary tremendously not only in their verse form – itself significant to a reader’s perception of the narrative – but also in their representations of Arthur and his court, clearly pursuing very different purposes. We will use the good fortune of this helpful contrast to remind ourselves that medieval England, even 14th-century England, was anything but monolithic.

Key Question 9:
The Alliterative Arthur and the Stanzaic Arthur are very different figures, produced by the unique sensibilities of the writers of these two poems. In addition to reflecting the poetic mind behind each, though, these sometimes-conflicting representations of Arthur reflect two strands of the Arthurian legend. Offer evidence to support a description of each, tying it to texts we’ve read and discussed this semester.

For next week’s class, read three significant contributions of the English later Middle Ages. The longest of these, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, is available to you in an edition that provides both the original Middle English (written in a dialect whose vocabulary is a challenge to Modern English speakers) and a Modern English translation. The other two, Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s Tale and the anonymous Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell, are available online, the first at http://icg.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/wbt-par.htm#TALE and the second at http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/ragintro.htm. The (Middle) English of these two poems is much closer to ours, but even so the Chaucer text is offered with an interlinear translation.

Nov 10  

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s Tale, and The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is generally considered the finest English Arthurian poem. We will discuss what this representation of Arthur’s court suggests about the status of England at the time, in the later fourteenth century, and what our appreciation of it suggests about our preferred conception of the medieval past. Chaucer’s tale questions and critiques many elements of the courtly Arthurian tradition, while the anonymous Wedding reflects a thread of the later English tradition of Arthur that many have seen as a corruption of it.

Key Question 10:
What is your sense of the ways these three writers are making use of the Arthurian materials we have seen elements of in our reading thus far this semester? What do their different contributions suggest about the possibilities people in late-fourteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries in England saw in the well-established tradition of Arthur?

For next week’s class, read Malory’s “From The Marriage of King Uther Unto King Arthur”; “The Noble Tale Betwixt King Arthur and Lucius the Emperor of Rome”; “A Noble Tale of Sir Lancelot Du Lake”; and “The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney.”
Nov 17 Malory: Arthur’s beginnings, Sir Lancelot and Sir Gareth

This week we shift to the writings of Thomas Malory, whose contribution to the Arthur tradition is hugely important. At the tail end of the Middle Ages, Malory collected and translated the stories popularized by Chrétien and others, providing the English literary tradition with a more coherent product. You will probably notice a significant change in the “feel” of the text because of the shift from the verse we’ve been reading ever since Marie to the prose of Malory, which might make it initially seem closer to the early chronicles.

Key Question 11:
Malory’s source for “The Noble Tale Betwixt King Arthur and Lucius the Emperor of Rome” is the Alliterative Morte. Consider these two versions of the story in relation to one another and offer your sense of how Malory is reworking his source material, and to what possible ends.

For next week’s class, read “The Book of Sir Tristram of Lyonesse” and “The Noble Tale of the Sangrail.”

Nov 24 Malory: Sir Tristram and the Holy Grail

In this class we will tackle the Quest for the Holy Grail, the most famous episode of the Arthurian legend but one which is perhaps best known to us today through Monty Python. We will work to determine the significance of this quest as Malory employs it, and we will get to know Sir Tristram’s brand of knighthood and what it suggests about late-medieval attitudes in England.

Key Question 12:
What vision of Christianity do you see represented in “The Noble Tale of the Sangrail”? What sort of Christian knight – an image familiar from Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and elsewhere – does Galahad portray? How are the Christian virtues of humility and peace reconciled with the aggressive militarism of Arthur’s time?

For next week’s class, read “The Tale of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere” and “The Death of Arthur.”

Dec 1 Malory: Lancelot and Guinevere, and the Morte

We conclude our engagement with Malory today, with his version of the Lancelot and Guinevere affair and its suggested influence on the crumbling of the Round Table and Arthur’s kingdom. We will debate Malory’s apparent intentions in presenting the conclusion to the glorious reign this way, and we will look back over the past three weeks’ reading material and discussions to determine our sense of Malory’s vision of Arthur and his world and the way it might tell us something about late-medieval English conceptions of and attitudes toward England as a nation.

Key Question 13:
We have read other versions of both the Lancelot-Guinevere story and the tragic Morte conclusion, representatives of the stories available to Malory (who used the Stanzaic Morte for the Lancelot-Guinevere and the Morte material, though he also knew the Alliterative Morte). What sorts of choices do you see Malory making in the form of one or both of these stories?
What does he emphasize, what does he neglect or present differently, and what do you conclude about his sense of what he is doing with these powerful stories?

To prepare for next week’s class, return to the readings and discussions of the semester to consider, from this point, how earlier writers like Geoffrey and Lawman now appear in relation to the later development of the tradition and its various cultural uses along the way.

Dec 8    Conclusions

Dec 15    FINAL EXAM

The following texts have been ordered for the class and can be purchased at the College Bookstore on Calhoun or at University Books on King St. between Calhoun and George Street.


POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Class meets once a week, so attendance is very important. Preparation is equally important – all reading should be done, reports written, papers typed, questions raised, ideas ready, by the beginning of class. At each class meeting we will read and talk for about 75 minutes, then take a 10-minute break, then regroup to read and talk some more.

Each week’s assignment includes a ‘key question’ which embraces both evidence and theory, problems and provocations; usually no definitive answer is meant to be found, but your response (a written reply of 500 words or more) should offer at least one possible position on the issues implicit in the question. You will be expected to turn in answers to eight of these over the course of the semester. Key question responses are due in class on the scheduled day, or they may be handed in via e-mail before class begins; they will not be accepted late.

Everyone is expected to do all of the primary and most of the secondary reading on the syllabus for each week. In addition, the primary readings will be divided up so that each of you will be responsible for presenting a text to the class and then writing your researched argument centered on this text. You will give a 10-minute presentation and submit an annotated bibliography that surveys, summarizes and evaluates representative interpretations (including at least eight articles or book chapters) of that text and/or issues surrounding it. In your individual annotations you should include a summary of the major points of each item you’re including, and an evaluation of the validity and use of the critical materials. As an introduction to the bibliography (and as part of your presentation) you should provide an overview of the different types of critical readings of the work that have developed. The bibliography is due at the end of your presentation. You will sign up for these presentations on the second class meeting.

You will then write a 15-page researched argument, due at the end of the semester, based upon this research. The researched argument is a focused, specific, careful and perceptive treatment of some issue or “problem” surrounding the primary text. Although your paper may draw on class discussion, it should go well beyond what has been covered in class or by the critics we have discussed. You should read as widely as possible in the secondary literature and incorporate all relevant sources into your paper. Failure to document properly someone else’s ideas is considered plagiarism regardless of the intent.

Your engagement with the course will be examined in a final exam.

Your final grade is based on an average of all written work and class participation:

- Key question responses: 25%
- Final exam: 25%
- Researched argument: 30%
- Presentation and bibliography: 20%