

GERM 820:

Adapting Arthur: German Medieval Romance in its European Context

A MEMS Seminar

Spring 2012

Fridays 9am-12pm

Instructor: Professor Kathryn Starkey

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar introduces graduate students to the German adaptations of familiar medieval Arthurian romances. We will examine the romances comparatively, exploring the literary and cultural significance of the different adaptations of familiar material. As a MEMS seminar this course will be interdisciplinary and seek to productively incorporate disciplinary differences in materials and methodologies. Students from different disciplinary backgrounds are encouraged to bring with them their knowledge of other versions of these texts, including but not limited to visual adaptations and/or the French, British, or Scandinavian traditions of Arthurian romance.

The goals for this seminar are as follows:

- to explore the idea of story-telling as a social and cultural practice in the Middle Ages by examining variation in the stories as they are transferred across languages and cultures
- to investigate literature as one of several media in which aristocratic identity is fashioned and affirmed
- to consider literature as part of a cross-cultural notion of courtliness that manifests itself in the literature but also the material culture of the Middle Ages
- to develop an understanding of a coherent corpus of medieval literary texts in their broader European context
- to explore several overarching themes that are articulated in particularly interesting ways in the Arthurian material, such as gender and courtly culture.

Field Trip to the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore:

Courtly culture is characterized by its emphasis on material objects. Seminar participants will participate in a one-day field trip to the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore where we will receive a guided tour of the artifacts depicting scenes from the romance material that we will discuss in class. The objects include: a 15th C archer's shield, several 14th and 15th century caskets with scenes from the romances and secular courtly life, 13th, 14th, and 15th century game boards and carved pieces depicting secular scenes, two 15th century combs carved with courtly scenes, several 14th century mirror cases with scenes from the romances, and many more.

Guest Lectures:

This seminar additionally features guest lectures by Professor E. Jane Burns (Women's Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill) and Wiley Visiting Professor Andrew James Johnston (English, Free University, Berlin).

TEXTS:

Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec*
Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*
Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*
Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*
Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*
Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet*
Excerpts of the Old French *Bel Connu*
Excerpts of the Old English *Lybeaus Desconus*
Wirnt von Gravenberg's *Wigalois*
Der Stricker, *Daniel von dem blühenden Tal*
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
The Alliterative Morte Arthure

Students are responsible for ordering the texts in the language of their choice. I will make recommendations for editions to seminar participants.