KING ARTHUR: MYTH AND THE MATTER OF BRITAIN

This course looks at the meteoric rise of Arthur beginning in the twelfth century, and the chivalric fiction that dominates courtly narrative until the thirteenth century. In the late twelfth century, Jean Bodel identifies three major subjects for fiction: the matièr̂e de France (chansons de geste), the matièr̂e de Rome (romans d’antiquité) and the matièr̂e de Bretagne, encompassing texts treating Arthur, Tristan, and other works like the lais of Marie de France that use Brittany as a backdrop. This third matièr̂e has been the most enduring, with works appearing up to, and in the twentieth- and twenty-first- centuries. This course looks at the roots of Arthur in history, politics, and historiography, charts his rise and in the works of Chrétien and in the Vulgate Cycle, and considers the literary posterity of Arthur in the late Middle Ages and after.

Texts:

Marie de France, Lanval
Chrétien de Troyes:
Yvain, le Chevalier au lion
Lancelot, Le Chevalier de la Charrette
Perceval, Le Conte du Graal

Anon. La Queste del Saint Graal
Anon. La Mort du roi Artu