

ENG 454.001: SEMINAR IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

114 Bessey Hall | Tuesday and Thursdays 10:20-11:40 | Dr. Margot B Valles

Inside this Syllabus:

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 - ♦ don't cheat; don't miss too much class; be respectful; and more
- ♦ **Course Calendar (p. 5)**
 - ♦ a list of class meetings with focus topic and whatever graded assignment is due

Instructor Info:

Office Hours:

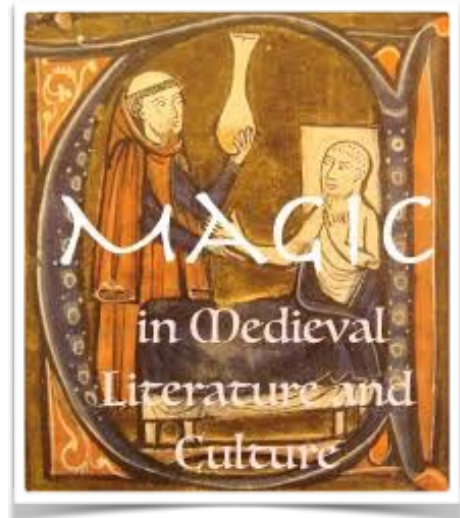
Tuesdays & Thursdays
12:30 pm - 2:30 pm
Wells Hall C-623

Email: vallesm@msu.edu

D2L Site: <https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/home/392892>

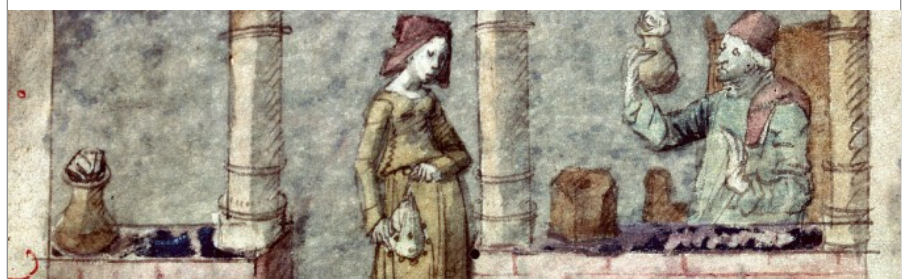
Focus:

In prominent fictional representations of the medieval period, especially the pseudo-medieval worlds of fantasy literature (for example, in *Game of Thrones* and *Lord of the Rings*), magic plays a central role. Historical representations of the real Middle Ages also tend to present a Europe obsessed with magic within and without religion.



This course will look at the medieval origins of this association between the medieval millennium (500—1500) and magic. The central question of this seminar will be, “What can medieval literature teach us about the Western European attitude/s toward magic across the Middle Ages?” This course will explore works of literature from a range of medieval periods and genres in order to better understand how people during those times conceived of magic.

The function and status of magic vis-à-vis religion and science (natural philosophy) will be of especial interest. Students will be encouraged to draw parallels with contemporary examples and to do independent research on a subtopic of interest.





Learning Goals and Outcomes

- Students will encounter, identify and analyze the role of magic in the medieval world.
- Students will formulate and express their analysis of this role within the format of academic essays, discussions and personal response.
- Students will reassess, sharpen or modify their interpretations in conversation with their peers (online and in class), with contemporary scholarship, and with medieval works.
- Students will draw parallels between medieval and contemporary issues; develop strategies to implement what they learn about the medieval period in assessing their values with regard to contemporary concerns; and appraise current policies and beliefs based on those parallels and strategies.
- Students will communicate their newly acquired knowledge and analysis in critical and academic language, communicating successfully across several media.

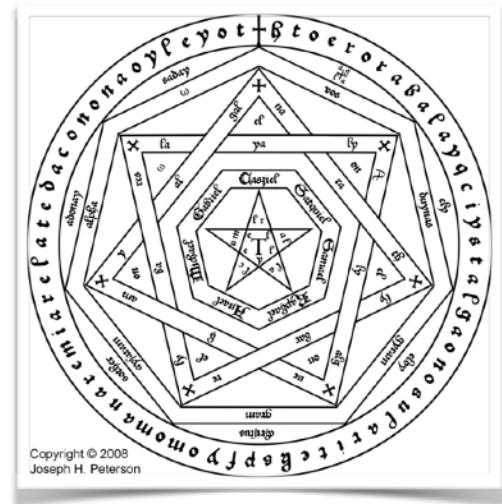
Texts and Technology

Almost all the texts you will be required to read are available for free online through the MSU library website (lib.msu.edu). You will be asked to submit all assignments online, so it helps to have access to a good internet connection.

I will be available in my office during office hours but also via video conference, so a webcam is recommended if you plan to contact me that way.

I do most of my class-wide communication using the registrar's email service, which means my emails will go to your MSU mail.

Make sure you have access to that account.



Grades

Point to Grade Conversion	Assignments	Points
90 - 100 pts = 4.0	IIST Journal	
85 - 89 pts = 3.5	(to be collected at midterm and at the end of the semester)	$(7 + 7) \times 3 = 42$
80 - 84 pts = 3.0	Discussion Questions	
75 - 79 pts = 2.5	(collected weekly)	$2 \times 14 = 28$
70 - 74 pts = 2.0	Participation	
65 - 69 pts = 1.5	(considering attendance; evaluated weekly)	$2 \times 7 = 14$
70 - 74 pts = 2.0	Essay 1	
65 - 69 pts = 1.5	(Proposal = 1 pt)	$(1 \times 1) + (1 \times 5) = 6$
60 - 64 pts = 1.0	Essay 2	
< 60 pts = 0.0	(Proposal = 1.5 pts)	$(1 \times 1.5) + (1 \times 8.5) = 10$



Policies

Attendance

is very important in a seminar, especially one of this size. You will be expected to attend every class. When circumstances arise which make it impossible for you to attend, it is your responsibility to communicate with me about your situation. I will accommodate absences due to illness, family emergency, weather, holidays and academic emergencies until they adversely affect either your performance in the class or the class as a whole. At this point, you will be informed that your attendance is a problem and together we will come up with an appropriate consequence.

✦ Grief Absence Policy

In accordance with the university's policy on absences due to the loss of a family member or similar tragedy, I will "be sensitive to and accommodate the bereavement process." Additionally, "it is the responsibility of the student to complete all missed work as determined in consultation with the instructor." For more information on this policy, please see <https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/GriefAbsence.aspx>

Assignments

IIST Journal

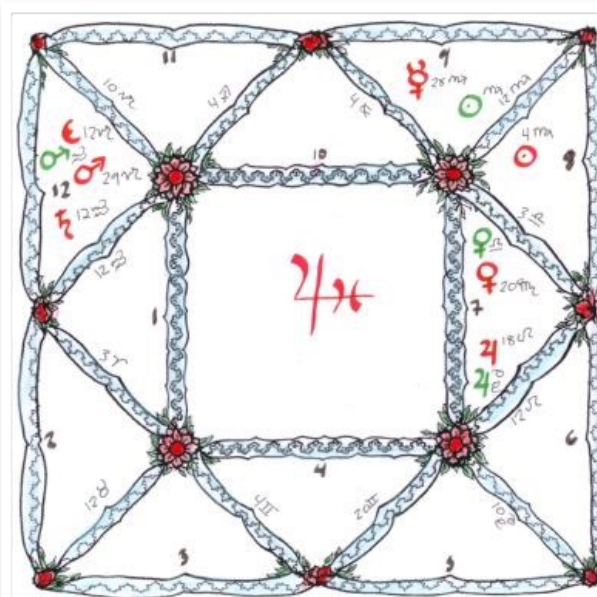
Every week you will be asked to write a response to our readings, class discussions and course topic based on what you found (I)nteresting, (I)mportant, (S)trange, and/or (T)roubling from that week. For full credit you must demonstrate that you have done the readings and given them thought in connection with our course themes. Journal entries should be at least 2 paragraphs long and no more than a couple of pages each. They will be collected via a D2L dropbox at Midterm and again at the end of the semester. At each time of collection you should have written 7 entries. Each entry is worth 3 points for a total of 42 points.

Discussion Questions

Every Wednesday night you will also be responsible for coming up with and posting to D2L two discussion questions in response to our texts and topics, which you would like to discuss in class that week. You will also be asked to look at the questions of your peers before class begins. Each set of discussion questions will be worth 2 points, for a total of 28 points.

Participation

At midterm and at the end of the semester you will receive a grade for your participation. Included in this grade will be your



attendance, participation in class discussions, participation in class activities. If you have been doing these things, you should receive full credit for your participation.



Policies (cont'd)

♦ Academic Integrity

is also an obvious requirement. Do not turn in work that is not your own and do cite your sources. To explore issues of academic integrity, what the MSU policies are and how to stay honest, please refer to the webpage of the ombudsperson: <https://msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/> Be aware that I use turnitin. For information about that technology, please see <https://tech.msu.edu/teaching/tools/turnitin/>

♦ Disability and Inclusion

I care deeply about making my classroom as inclusive as possible, not only in terms of recognizing and accommodating cultural diversity but also with regard to accommodating a range of learning needs based on physical and mental conditions. Please, let me and the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities know, as soon as possible, if you have a disability that requires accommodation.

♦ Etiquette and Netiquette

Be respectful online and in class. Give everyone the benefit of the doubt but don't be afraid to challenge perspectives with which you may not agree.

Assignments (cont'd)

Essays 1 and 2

For your two essays you will be asked to write a moderately sized paper using both our course texts and independent research on a topic of your choosing related to our course themes and issues. You will be asked to propose your paper ideas to me first. Proposals are worth 1 pts and 1.5 pts respectively for each paper. Simply turning in a complete proposal will get you full credit. Your essays will be evaluated on 4 things:

Did you make a specific, supportable and non-obvious argument?

Did you support that argument using evidence from our course texts?

Did you support your claim using independent research? Was it done responsibly?

Did you explain why your argument matters? or provide a "So what?"

