J.R.R. Tolkien is now recognized as one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century for his masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings* (written during a period from the end of the thirties to the early fifties). As an Oxford Professor and eminent medievalist, he wrote out of what he knew about Old English, Old Norse, and Middle English literature. As a contemporary of T.S. Eliot, George Orwell, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, and other modernists, he wrote out of what he had lived through. The course will trace the tension between the exile--the *wraecca*--and the community, otherness and heroism, identity and marginalization, revenge and forgiveness.

To locate *The Lord of the Rings* within a broader historical and literary context, we will trace the development of Tolkien's art, beginning with *The Silmarillion* and *The Hobbit* and following up with *The Lord of the Rings* as a mythology for England. Along the way we will investigate his works on fantasy and mythmaking, such as “Mythopoeia,” “Leaf by Niggle,” and “On Fairy-Stories.” Clearly evident will be his interest in medievalness—especially the Old English *Beowulf* and the Finnish *Kalevala*. Cassettes and films of and about Tolkien and his writings will supplement readings and discussions.

**Requirements:** Class attendance is expected; your grade will be based on class participation/quizzes; 2 papers (5-7 pages each); a midterm and a final examination.

**Texts (in order of reading):**
Readings (both required and recommended texts) will also be placed on reserve (see below). Prices are those at amazon.com. Please note that ISBN numbers are important in order to have a text with page numbers cited in class.


Recommended:


Syllabus:

*Introduction: Tolkien’s Life and Times*

**Week 1**

**Jan. 12 Thurs.**  
Read Letters #43, 163, 199, 213
1892-1911 The early years: South Africa, Mabel Tolkien, King Edward’s School, Father Francis Morgan, Edith Bratt
1911-1920 Oxford University, Edith Bratt, WWI, the germ of “The Silmarillion”
1920-25 Leeds University
1925-1959 Oxford University: C.S. Lewis, the Inklings, and the Tolkien Family
1917ff The “Lost Tales”
1929-37 The Hobbit
1937-1954 The Lord of the Rings
1959-73 Retirement and the `Silmarillion’

Week 2

Jan. 17 Tues. Tolkien on Tolkien
Read Tolkien, “Leaf by Niggle” (1949?) (in the Reader)

I. A Mythology for England: The Silmarillion

Jan. 19 Thurs. Tolkien and Faërie: The Quest for Other Worlds

Week 3


Jan. 26 Thurs. The Myth of Creation and the Fall of Valar and Maiar
Read Tolkien, Letters #131, 165, 186, 297

Week 4

Jan. 31 Tues. Feänor and the Fall of the Noldor
Read Tolkien, Letters #178, 180, 181, 211, 247

Feb. 2 Thurs. The Tale of Beren and Lúthien; The Tale of Turambar
Read Silmarillion, pp. 162-87; 198-224

Week 5

Feb. 7 Tues. The Finnish Tale of Kullervo; The Voyage of Eärendel
Read Kalevala: Tale of Kullervo, in The Tolkien Fan’s Medieval Reader, pp.337-390
Read *Silmarillion*, “Of the Voyage of Eärendel and the War of Wrath,” pp. 246-55

**II. Tolkien as Exile: “I Am in Fact a Hobbit”**

**Feb. 9 Thurs. The Hero Beowulf as Tolkien**
Read Beowulf in *The Tolkien Fan’s Medieval Reader*, pp. 16-61
Recommended: Tolkien, “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics” in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, pp. 5-48

**Feb. 10 9 a.m. Paper #1 Due**

**Week 6**

**Feb. 14 Tues. The Anglo-Saxon Origin of the Name “Hobbit” and the Structure of the Children’s Story**
Read Tolkien, Letter #257
Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, Chapters 1-7

**Feb. 16 Thurs. The Heroism of Bilbo Baggins**
Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, Chapters 8-14

**Week 7**

**Feb. 21 Tues. “There and Back Again”**
Read Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, Chapters 15-19

**Feb. 23 Thurs. Exile and Heroism: Tolkien’s Recording of the Drama “Homecoming of Beorthnoth Beorthelm’s Son”**
Read *The Battle of Maldon* in *The Tolkien Fan’s Medieval Reader*, pp.69-76
Read Tolkien, “Homecoming of Beorthnoth Beorthelm’s Son” and “Ofermod” (in the *Tolkien Reader*, pp. 3-27)

**Week 8**

**Feb. 26 Sun. Showing of Vincent Ward’s *The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey***
Media Center, 3 p.m.

**Feb. 28 Tues. (Cont.) Tolkien as Exile**
Film: *Tolkien Remembered*

**Mar. 2 Thurs Tolkien’s Artwork (Slide Lecture)**
Recommended: Hammond and Scull, ed. *Tolkien as Artist and Illustrator*, pp. 91-151

**Mar. 3 Fri. @ 9 am Midterm Examination** (Take Home Closed Book/Notes: Due by 9 AM Fri.)
III. The Lord of the Rings

Week 9

Mar. 5 Sun. See Peter Jackson’s “Fellowship of the Ring”

Mar. 7 Tues. The Composition of LOTR and the Issue of Allegory
   Read Tolkien’s “Foreword” and Fellowship, Chap. 1
   Letters #142, 215, 328; 129, 181, 203

Mar. 9 Thurs. The Hobbit and the Fellowship
   Read Tolkien, Fellowship of the Ring, Book 1

Mar. 13-17 Midterm Break

Week 10

Mar. 21 Tues. The Hobbit in the LOTR: The Development of Frodo as Hero
   Read Tolkien, Fellowship of the Ring, Books 1-2
   Read Tolkien, Letters #191, 192, 246

Mar. 23 Thurs. (Cont.) Frodo’s Descent into Moria: Dwarf Past History

Week 11

Mar. 26(Sun.) See Peter Jackson’s Two Towers

Mar. 28 Tues. Religiosity and the Valar: The Elves, Galadriel
   Elven Songs Sung by Tolkien (from The Road Goes Ever On) (Hand-out)
   Read Tolkien, Fellowship of the Ring, Book 2 (cont.)
   Read “The History of Galadriel and Celeborn” in Unfinished Tales, pp. 239-80

Mar. 30 Thurs. Saruman and his Adversaries: The Ents, the Lost Entwives, and the Entmoot
   Tolkien's Reading of the Coming of the Ents (cassette)
   Read The Two Towers, Book 3

Week 12

April 4 Tues. Saruman and Gandalf: Two Wizards
   Read “Palantir” and “The Istari” in Unfinished Tales, pp. 405-33
   Tolkien, Letter #246

April 6 Thurs. Spring Holiday

Week 13

April 11 Tues. Gollum/Smeagol: Hobbit Service to the Master
   Read The Two Towers, Book 4
April 13 Thurs. Heroic Servant Samwise
End of Book 4 and Beginning of Return of the King, Book 5

April 14 Fri @ 9am Paper #2 Due

Week 14
April 16 (Sun.): See Peter Jackson’s Return of the King
April 18 Tues. Male Society and Women: Éowyn and Arwen
April 20 Thurs. Aragorn: The King as Healer
Read Return of the King, Book 6

Week 15
April 25 Tues. The Return, “Home Again”: Samwise Gamgee
April 27 Thurs. Wrap-Up
April 28 Fri @ 9 a.m. Second Exam Due

At Fondren Library (in addition to works listed above):
____, The Old English Exodus PR1609.A3T6 1981
____, Pictures N6797.T64 A4 1992
____, The History of Middle-earth (other vols.):
    Lays of Beleriand PR6039.O32 L3 1985
    Lost Road and Other Writings PR6039.O32 L64 198
    Morgoth’s Ring: The Later Silmarillion, Part 1 PR6039.O32 M67 1933b
    Peoples of Middle-earth PR6039.O32 P41996
    Return of the Shadow PR6039.O32 L6374 1
    Sauron Defeated: The End of the Third Age PR6039.)32 L63743 1992b
    The Shaping of Middle-earth PR6039.O32 S461986b
    Treason of Isengard PR6039.O32 L6375 1
    War of the Ring PR6039.O32L6377 1990b

Carpenter, Humphrey, Tolkien: A Biography  PR6039.O32 Z621977
________, ed. Tolkien the Medievalist (Routledge, 2003)
________, ed. Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader (University of Kentucky Press, 2004).
Paper Topics:

Paper #1: On *The Silmarillion* or *The Hobbit* (let me know your topic).

Paper #2: On *The Lord of the Rings* or on Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* and Tolkien’s epic. Choose your own topic (but let me know).

Conferences: Office Hours 4-5 TTH and by appointment

Office: 235 Herring Hall
Office Phone: 713-348-2625
Department Phone (for messages): 713-348-4840
Disability Notice:

1. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will need to contact Disability Support Services in the Ley Student Center.

2. Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class or during office hours. Additionally, students will need to contact Disability Support Services in the Ley Student Center.

3. If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs. Additionally, you will need to register with the Disability Support Services Office in the Ley Student Center.