

The Lord of the Rings

Fall, 2017
IDH 2930-1G02
Mon. Period 5 (11:45-12:35)
Little Hall, 117
1 Credit

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OBJECTIVES: John Ronald Reuel Tolkien is one of the most influential and widely-read authors of the Twentieth Century. Tolkien's most significant work, *The Lord of the Rings*, undertaken as a sequel to his children's book, *The Hobbit* (1937), is estimated to have sold over 150 million copies since its initial publication in 1954. This course will explore the reasons for LOTR's astounding success, despite the work's tepid critical reception, through exploration of Tolkien's style, themes, and characters. Students will respond to weekly questions and participate in group discussion online (Canvas) which may involve opinions or observations about aspects of the readings, speculation about Tolkien's motivation, questions about the story, etc. Class discussion will center around students' written reactions and topics in the course schedule below.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Student must do all assigned readings on time in order to keep up with the class sessions.
- Students should plan to attend every class meeting. Much information must be covered in a limited number of class sessions.
- Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

TEXT and MATERIALS:

- Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Lord of the Rings*, 50th Anniversary One-Volume Edition (2004), or similar
- No other readings will be assigned, however regular reference will be made to the following works by Tolkien: *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion* (ed. Christopher Tolkien), *The Book of Lost Tales* (ed. Christopher Tolkien)

GRADING:

- 50% of the **final grade** will be based on participation in weekly class meetings.
- 50% of the **final grade** will be based on participation in the online forum.
- Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.
- UF's Grading Policy may be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Noteworthy Dates:

Monday, September 4—NO CLASS (Labor Day)
Wednesday, December 6—LAST DAY OF CLASSES
TBA—Final Exam time (if necessary)

Class Schedule:

Date Topics

Week 1 Who was Tolkien? What is Philology? What else did Tolkien write? Why Tolkien would still be discussed in academic circles even if he never wrote fiction. What is Tolkien's style and why did he write that way? What is a frame narrative?

- Week 2 LOTR book I, what's the deal with that first chapter (and why you shouldn't skip it)? Read the poems! Maybe a tiny bit of discussion about the films, Michael Drout's "world worth saving."
- Week 3 LOTR book I, who is Tom Bombadil, what's a "wight," the character of the ring, and a bit about that Glorfindel fellow.
- Week 4 LOTR book II, The Council of Elrond (and why you really, really shouldn't skip it, [including explanation of what they're talking about]).
- Week 5 LOTR book II, significance of the juxtaposition of Moria and Lothlorien, the Lay of Leithian (don't forget to read the poems!), the Argonath—a gateway to the real world.
- Week 6 LOTR book III, heroic couplets (well, not really) part 1: Boromir/Aragorn, Legolas/Gimli, Merry/Pippen, everybody loves the Ents.
- Week 7 LOTR book III, the Rohirrim are Anglo-Saxons, what is really going on with Théoden?, heroic couplets part 2: Gandalf/Saruman.
- Week 8 LOTR book IV, heroic couplets part 3: Frodo/Sméagol.
- Week 9 LOTR book IV, Faramir's speech, the metaphorical window on the West, metafiction, the redemption of Sméagol (almost—darn it, Sam!), Shelob.
- Week 10 LOTR book V, heroic couplets part 4: Théoden/Denethor, Gondor/Rohan, the paths of the dead.
- Week 11 LOTR book V, the charge of the Rohirrim (and the reason modernist literary critics didn't like LOTR), the dangers of nostalgia in a post-WWII society, eucatastrophe, the nature of heroism in Tolkien.
- Week 12 LOTR book VI, heroic couplets part 5: Samwise/Frodo, "oft evil will shall evil mar," more on the nature of heroism in Tolkien.
- Week 13 LOTR book VI, Eowyn, the tree, the king, the shire, and the havens.
- Week 14 LOTR appendices: Really? Appendices? In a fantasy novel (remember that frame narrative we talked about earlier)? Proof that Tolkien can write a love story.
- Week 15 Summary, major themes, style, character, additional writings to consider, a few words on Tolkien scholarship: Shippey, Flieger, Drout, Olsen, Nagy, Rateliff, Anderson, Croft, et al.

The schedule may change due to any number of factors. In an effort to treat all students fairly, IF there are any changes, they will be communicated clearly to the students. A certain amount of leniency may be granted regarding due dates or assignments in the event that changes are made to the schedule.

Academic integrity: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.