

Fall 2023, TR 11-12:15, PR 101

**Instructor:** Christopher Chinn ([christopher.chinn@pomona.edu](mailto:christopher.chinn@pomona.edu); 7-2926; chinn#8694)

**Office:** PR 7 (in person) or Zoom: <https://pomonacollege.zoom.us/j/6938077933>

**Office Hours:** By appointment. Schedule in-person or Zoom meeting: <https://calendly.com/chinnc/15min>.

**Course Objective:** The goal of this course is threefold: (1) the student will gain a deep understanding of Tolkien's major works; (2) the student will learn to apply various forms of literary analysis to the text; (3) the student will practice college-level analytical and creative writing. The main question with which we will be concerned is: In what ways do Tolkien's works influence recent literature, film, and culture?

**Course Plan:** We will read *The Lord of the Rings* and parts of *The Silmarillion*. We will consider these works from various perspectives, including style, intertextuality, gender, class, colonialism, and ecology. In-class activities and projects will provide the basis for understanding and discussing the text. Informal and draft writing will be integrated into class activities. There will also be four formal writing assignments over the course of the term. Tuesdays will generally be devoted to discussion and in-class writing. Thursdays will generally be devoted to viewing and discussion of the early 2000s films.

**Texts:** Please obtain an authorized and revised edition of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. I have ordered an edition that follows the pagination of the Second Edition; but pretty much any edition will do, so long as it is complete and reflects the latest state of the text.

NB: I may provide additional texts in the course of the semester.

**Academic responsibility:** I take the issues of cheating and plagiarism seriously. Please familiarize yourself with Pomona's policies and procedures regarding appropriate and inappropriate academic behavior by reading the following page: <http://catalog.pomona.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=80#AcademicStandards>

It is your responsibility to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct, plagiarism, and other violations of academic honesty.

**Academic accommodations:** Pomona College is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations may be made by contacting the Dean of Students Office. It is up to the student to contact the professor to fulfill the accommodations. Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

**Grading:** Here is the breakdown of assignments. For my views on grading, participation, and classroom etiquette, please read this: <https://research.pomona.edu/christopher-chinn/grading-policies/>.

Formal written work (4 assignments): 60%

Assignments 1 and 2: 10% each

Assignment 3: 25%

Assignment 4: 15%

In-class assignments (~5): 20%

In-class participation and attendance: 20%\*

\*The participation component is based on my impression of your preparedness. If I feel you are not prepared on more than one occasion, you will lose 2 percentage points for each subsequent instance of unpreparedness. Attendance is mandatory. Your overall grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade for each unexcused absence. For an absence to be excused you must provide me with appropriate documentation within one day.

**Course expectations:** Students will engage in critical reading of the texts, participate actively in class, and produce good writing. Below I have detailed my expectations of you.

**I. Reading:** Expect to engage in critical reading of about 100 pages per class week. Tolkien's works can be easy to understand at times, and very difficult at others. When you encounter difficulties, do the following:

- Write down any questions or observations you have while reading (feel free to mark up your book!). Analyze these questions and observations for patterns before coming to class and make sure to bring them up.
- Try to read both "for the plot" (what is the story? who are the characters?) and interpretively (e.g., what is the structure of the work? how do cause/effect work? conflict(s)? figures of speech? back story?). Write down any thoughts, confusions, difficulties, pleasures and bring them to class.
- Try to find solutions to problems or confusions you may have by briefly reviewing a difficult section after your first attempt. Often you will be able to answer your questions yourself this way.

**II. Writing:** For all papers I expect good writing and complete documentation where applicable (see my "Writing guidelines" sheet: <https://research.pomona.edu/christopher-chinn/writing-guidelines/>). Paper assignments will be graduated to reflect your increased experience with the texts.

- Your research papers should engage with an existing scholarly conversation, should offer an original contribution to that conversation, and should be based upon evidence from the text.
- All the other writing assignments (apart from the creative assignment) in this class are part of a "scaffolded" sequence culminating in your research paper. Therefore, all the assignments have value to you and should be taken seriously!
- State your case as simply and forcefully as you can. You may want to read your paper to a peer in order to get a sense for how you can do this. Revise multiple times.
- Provide citation of all evidence used. NB that modern scholarship does not in most cases constitute evidence (though if you follow a modern scholar's argument you should cite it). I don't care what system you use; just be consistent.
- Do not rely on non-peer reviewed internet sources. This rule seems necessary in order to cut down on plagiarism, both intentional and unintentional.
- The Writing Center offers students free, one-on-one consultations at any stage of the writing process. Consultations are available by appointment, which you can make online: <http://www.pomona.edu/administration/writing-center>.

**III. Participation:** Active participation in class is an extremely important part of this course. I will provide a variety of ways in which you can contribute to discussion. I hope you will take some risks and try to engage in as many ways as possible.

- Come to class prepared to talk about the assigned texts. This means having questions, observations, and arguments *written down ahead of time*. It also means you have to bring up what you've written down during class discussion.
- Starting in Week 3, one student may be responsible for summarizing the readings for the week. In addition, one student may be responsible for moderating the comments thread for the week.
- If you're shy, come talk to me about strategies for you to participate. I will also try to get you involved at appropriate times during class.
- Make sure to take group work seriously. Collaboration with others is an important skill in the real world, so you might as well start practicing it now.
- Let me know ASAP if you will have difficulty attending the regularly scheduled sessions. We can work out alternatives!

**Schedule of readings:** This schedule is subject to change, depending upon the pace of our discussions. Please have the assignments read BEFORE the date indicated. Roman numerals indicate “books” in *Lord of the Rings*; Arabic numerals are chapters in *LOTR*; *A*=*Ainulindalë*; *VQ*=*Valaquenta*; *QS*=*Quenta Silmarillion*.

Date	Reading	Activity	In-class writing	Writing Work
Aug 29		NO CLASS		
Aug 31		Intro/Icebreakers		
Sept 5	Prologue; I.1-5	discussion		
Sept 7		<i>FR</i> scenes 1-11 (49')		assign article response
Sept 12	I.6-12	discussion	stylistic analysis	[article response]
Sept 14		<i>FR</i> scenes 12-21 (42')	[grp 1.1: plot choices]	
				Draft Due 9/15, 5pm
Sept 19	II.1-5	discussion		
Sept 21		<i>FR</i> scenes 22-30 (46')	[grp 1.2: characterization]	Final due 9/22, 5pm
Sept 26	II.6-III.2	discussion	etymology analysis	
Sept 28		<i>FR</i> scenes 31-39 (40')		assign bibliographical exercise
Oct 3	III.3-7	discussion		[bibliographical exercise]
Oct 5		<i>TT</i> scenes 1-12 (41')	[grp 1.3: fan service]	
				Draft due 10/6, 5pm
Oct 10	III.8-IV.3	discussion	race	
Oct 12		<i>TT</i> scenes 13-26 (51')	[grp 2.1: visual impact]	Final due 10/13, 5pm
Oct 17	IV.4-10	NO CLASS-Fall Break		
Oct 19		<i>TT</i> scenes 27-40 (45')		assign research paper
Oct 24	V.1-7	discussion	gender	[research paper]
Oct 26		<i>TT</i> scenes 41-52 (34')	[grp 2.2: consistency?]	
				Draft 1 due 10/27, 5pm
Oct 31	V.8-VI.4	discussion		
Nov 2		<i>RK</i> scenes 1-15 (51')	[grp 2.3: villains]	
				Draft 2 due 11/3, 5pm
Nov 7	VI.5-9	discussion		
Nov 9		<i>RK</i> scenes 16-28 (46')		Final due 11/10, 5pm
Nov 14	<i>A</i> ; <i>VQ</i> ; <i>QS</i> 1-10	discussion	myth comparison	
Nov 16		<i>RK</i> scenes 29-45 (47')		assign creative project
Nov 21	<i>QS</i> 11-19	discussion		[creative project]
Nov 23		NO CLASS-Thanksgiving		
Nov 28	<i>QS</i> 20-24	discussion		Draft due 11/29, 5pm
Nov 30		<i>RK</i> scenes 46-59 (48')	[peer review]	
Dec 5		Class party		
Dec 7		NO CLASS		Final due 12/6, 5pm

**Select Bibliography:** Below is a very brief selection of reference works on Tolkien's writings and fantasy writing generally.

- Carpenter, Humphrey (ed.). *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- Drout, Michael D.C. (ed.). *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarly and Critical Assessment*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Fonstad, Karen Wynn. *The Atlas of Middle-Earth*, revised edition. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1991.
- Foster, Robert. *The Complete Guide to Middle-Earth: From The Hobbit Through The Lord of the Rings and Beyond*. New York: Random House, 2001.
- Hammond, Wayne G. and Christina Scull. *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.
- James, Edward and Farah Mendlesohn (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Martin, Philip. *A Guide to Fantasy Literature*. Milwaukee, WI: Crickhollow Books, 2009.
- Shippey, Tom. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
- Shippey, Tom. *The Road to Middle-Earth*. Revised Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
- Sibley, Brian and John Howe. *The Maps of Tolkien's Middle-Earth*. Mythopoeic Press, 2005.
- Snyder, Christopher. *The Making of Middle-Earth: A New Look Inside the World of J.R.R. Tolkien*. New York: Sterling, 2013.
- Tolkien, Christopher et al. (eds.). *The History of Middle Earth*, 12 volumes. Various Editions, 1983-1996.
- Tyler, J.E.A. *The New Tolkien Companion*. New York: St. Martin's, 1979.
- Wolfe, Gary. *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.