

EN 4990/6990
THE MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE

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Fall 2020
MW 12:30-1:45



Possible Romances

Sir Orfeo
Sir Launfal
Havelok the Dane
Ywain and Gawain
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
The Awntyrs off Arthure
The Weddyng of Syr Gawen to Dame Ragnell
The Sege off Melayne
Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*

The medieval Romance was an enormously popular genre in the late Middle Ages but one easier to recognize than define. While the earliest romances were written in French in the twelfth century, the genre flourished in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and appealed to a variety of audiences. Often considered the precursor of the modern novel, the genre reveals much about the ideals and preoccupations of late-medieval English society.

We will cover a number of Middle English romances, including two adaptations of twelfth-century French romances: *Ywain and Gawain*, an adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Ywain*, and *Sir Launfal*, an adaptation of Marie de France's *Lanval*. We will also read a group of romances focused more exclusively on the Arthurian knight, Sir Gawain, including the masterpiece *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. We will conclude with Sir Thomas Malory's late fifteenth-century *Le Morte Darthur*, a work that shares many features with the romance genre, but which in many ways may not be a romance at all.

We will read all works in Middle English, but no prior experience reading Middle English is required. Course requirements include reading quizzes, a translation project, a research paper, a midterm, and a final exam.