King Arthur: From Medieval to Modern  
English 5XXX

Instructor:
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Course Description:
We all know (or think we know) the story of Arthur and his knights: the sword in the stone, Camelot, the Round Table, might for right, Guinevere and Lancelot, Mordred, the day of doom, the promise of a “once and future king.” In most cases, we are not sure how we know it. We just do. But take a look around you. Excalibur Hotel, Round Table Pizza, A Connecticut Rabbit in King Arthur’s Court, Camelot 3000, King Arthur (the video game), Spamalot—from Las Vegas to Broadway, television to PlayStation, restaurants to bookstores—the Arthurian legend permeates modern culture. It sells us pizzas (Guinevere’s Garden Delight) and adventures (King Arthur invites you to “Build Camelot…Lead hundreds of brave warriors on the magnificent battlefields of Britannia!”), shapes the narrative framework for hundreds of fantasy and science-fiction books and films, and provides the inspiration for countless takes on the tale: both epic (The Mists of Avalon) and parodic (Monty Python and the Holy Grail). This course will examine both the persistent popularity of the Arthurian legend as it has crossed oceans and genres—from early medieval Welsh folk tales, through twelfth-century French romances and Victorian verse, to theme parks, modern American films and video games—and the critical and theoretical discussions that inform the study of that legend.

Texts and Materials:
Reading Packet: Literary materials  
Reading Packet: Critical and theoretical materials  
T.H. White, The Once and Future King  
Marion Zimmer-Bradley, The Mists of Avalon

Notebook and writing instrument  
Cell phone or camera for taking photos

Course Content:
This course will consist of a combination of lectures (by Dr. Aronstein and local experts), class discussions, film-viewings, and visits to Arthurian sites and landscapes (such as Winchester, Stonehenge, Avebury and Glastonbury) and to the British Library and Museum to view medieval and Arthurian artifacts.

Course Requirements and Assignments
• Daily Work: class attendance and participation, group work and discussion.  
• Reading Questions: for every work we read, you will be asked to come to class with three thoughtful, developed questions about the work and its place in the Arthurian tradition  
• Site-visit Journals: Based on your own reflection and your responses to specific questions posed by the class/instructor.  
• Notes on critical and theoretical readings  
• Conference paper: I will work with you to develop a paper on the Arthurian legend suitable for presentation at an academic conference—one that enters into the professional discussion of the topic. This will be written in several stages: an initial abstract, an annotated bibliography and conference proposal abstract, at least one preliminary draft, and a final version. We will also discuss how to select a conference and how to present a paper at one. Due one-month after we return from the UK.