



Course Syllabus



Course Code: EDL050

The Lord of the Rings: An Exploration of the Films & Its Literary Influences

Course Description

Hobbits, Orcs, wizards, dashing knights, and powerful elves are all part of the magic created in J.R.R. Tolkien's famously epic tale, *The Lord of the Rings*. For years, the vivid characters within this beloved story could exist only in the readers' minds—until it was adapted into a movie that allowed fans to finally see, through the eyes of Hollywood magic and brilliant technology, the manifestation of these characters onscreen. What does it take to transport these well-known images like Gollum and the Shire from dusty pages to the giant screen? In *The Lord of the Rings: An Exploration of the Films and Its Literary Influences*, you will see first-hand how classic literature can become modern film and bring the fantasy alive for a whole new generation of believers.

Required Materials

You will be required to have access to the standard (non-extended) editions of the three *Lord of the Rings* films:

- *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*
- *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*
- *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*

If you do not already have access to these movies, you may consider other sources such as your local library.

Note: Timestamps referenced throughout the course apply to standard editions of the applicable film and may not align with any extended/modified versions.

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Unit 1: The Man Behind the Movie

Unit Summary

The Lord of the Rings is one of the most well-known books of the past century and has been translated into many languages. Now that it has been made into a trilogy of major motion pictures, the story has gained an even greater following. In this unit, you'll learn more about the author of the novel and how the book came into being. You'll explore The Hobbit, which acts as a prequel to The Lord of the Rings. In addition, you'll explore the background of some of the major races and characters in Middle Earth and how they impacted the story, especially in The Fellowship of the Ring.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the cultural impact of The Lord of the Rings.
- Report on J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of the book.
- Discuss the writing of The Hobbit, the prequel to The Lord of the Rings.
- Give an overview of the basic story of The Hobbit and understand its connection with The Lord of the Rings.
- Outline the first part of The Fellowship of the Ring.
- Recount details about the characters in The Fellowship of the Ring.

Assignments

Unit 1 Text Questions	Homework	10 points
Unit 1 Writing Assignment	Homework	15 points
Unit 1 Discussion Assignment 1	Discussion	5 points
Unit 1 Discussion Assignment 2	Discussion	5 points
Unit 1 Quiz	Quiz	15 points



Unit 2: The Languages of The Lord of the Rings

Unit Summary

One of the elements that makes The Lord of the Rings so unique is the lengths to which the author went to create a world that seems real. One of the most interesting elements is the creation of the various languages used in Middle Earth. However, the creation of these languages is far more than an afterthought; it's truly the foundation of Middle Earth. In this unit, you will learn more about these languages and about Tolkien's role as a philologist at Oxford University. As we discuss the second part of the The Fellowship of the Ring, you will explore the role that language plays, not only in Middle Earth but also in your world.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss Tolkien's career as a philologist.
- Develop new vocabulary related to the study of language.
- Explore the evolution of the English language.
- Analyze how the creation of the Elvish language impacted the creation of Middle Earth.
- Outline the background of The Lord of the Rings as it appears in the second part of The Fellowship of the Rings.

Assignments

Unit 2 Text Questions	Homework	10 points
Unit 2 Writing Assignment	Homework	15 points
Unit 2 Discussion Assignment 1	Discussion	5 points
Unit 2 Discussion Assignment 2	Discussion	5 points
Unit 2 Quiz	Quiz	15 points



Unit 3: The Influence of the Arthurian Tales

Unit Summary

The ideas behind The Lord of the Rings come from many literary sources, all of which were familiar to a classically educated English man living during the first part of the twentieth century. One of those sources was the tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Even today, these stories play an important role in modern entertainment, as the number of related movies, television shows, and books demonstrates. A basic understanding of the legends of King Arthur helps to properly understand some of the concepts in The Lord of the Rings. In this unit, you will examine the basic Arthurian story and explore in depth the tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a Middle English poem translated by J.R.R. Tolkien.

Learning Objectives

- Retell the basic story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.
- Develop a new vocabulary related to the study of King Arthur and the period in which the stories were set.
- Discuss Tolkien's scholarship as it relates to the stories of King Arthur and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.
- Explore the story of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.
- Describe how the concepts in the stories of King Arthur impacted the creation of The Lord of the Rings.

Assignments

Unit 3 Text Questions	Homework	10 points
Unit 3 Writing Assignment	Homework	15 points
Unit 3 Discussion Assignment 1	Discussion	5 points
Unit 3 Discussion Assignment 2	Discussion	5 points
Unit 3 Quiz	Quiz	15 points



Unit 4: Converting a Classic to a Film

Unit Summary

Many great works of literature have been converted into movies over the past century. Great classic stories have an enduring appeal that translates well into multiple media. Converting a story to a movie offers a lot of advantages and often reaches a wider audience. But this transition also has disadvantages. In this unit, you'll learn more about the way that The Lord of the Rings was converted into a film and how this change has affected the story.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the process of converting a book to a film.
- Explore the advantages of presenting a classic book as a film.
- Outline the advantages of reading the story in book form.
- Explain how the movie changed some elements of this portion of The Two Towers.

Assignments

Unit 4 Text Questions	Homework	10 points
Unit 4 Writing Assignment	Homework	15 points
Unit 4 Discussion Assignment 1	Discussion	5 points
Unit 4 Discussion Assignment 2	Discussion	5 points
Unit 4 Quiz	Quiz	15 points



Midterm Exam

Learning Objectives

- Review information acquired and mastered from this course up to this point.
- Take a course exam based on material from the first four units in this course (Note: You will be able to open this exam only one time.)

Assignments

Midterm Exam	Exam	50 points
Midterm Discussion Assignment	Discussion	5 points



Unit 5: The Heroic Culture of The Lord of the Rings

Unit Summary

Though Middle Earth is an imaginary world, its social and political structures are drawn from the ancient roots of Western civilization. In this unit, you will learn about some of these conceptual roots, particularly those that affect the changing views of war and heroism, such as the concept of the ancient epic hero and the medieval system of comitatus. You'll also appreciate how these ideas are presented in The Lord of the Rings. In addition, you'll learn about the more modern ideas that are expressed in The Lord of the Rings, such as conservation and ecology. Finally, you will explore some of the complex character relationships that are revealed in this portion of The Two Towers movie.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the heroic feudal culture of comitatus.
- Explore how this heroic concept is developed in The Lord of the Rings.
- Define the concept of the epic hero.
- Discuss the concept of the epic hero as portrayed in The Lord of the Rings.
- Analyze how Tolkien used The Lord of the Rings to express his own views on conservation and ecology.
- Discuss character development in The Two Towers.

Assignments

Unit 5 Text Questions	Homework	10 points
Unit 5 Writing Assignment	Homework	15 points
Unit 5 Discussion Assignment 1	Discussion	5 points
Unit 5 Discussion Assignment 2	Discussion	5 points
Unit 5 Quiz	Quiz	15 points



Unit 6: Beowulf, the Monsters, and The Lord of the Rings

Unit Summary

Before Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings*, he had already established a reputation as one of the foremost Beowulf scholars of his day. At that time, Beowulf was regarded mainly as a historical document that baffled historians by its fantastic references to monsters and impossible feats of heroism. Tolkien's scholarship and landmark essay "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" changed the way that the world viewed Beowulf. As a result, the story of Beowulf has gained significance in our age, even hitting movie screens in several recent adaptations. Tolkien also drew important lessons from his study of Beowulf, which greatly impacted his fantasy writings. In this unit, you'll learn more about Beowulf and its influence on *The Lord of the Rings*.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the background of the epic poem Beowulf.
- Describe features of Old English poetry.
- Outline the story of Beowulf and its view of heroism.
- Explain Tolkien's view of the value of monsters in fantasy literature.
- Analyze how Tolkien's scholarship concerning Beowulf affected the writing of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Assignments

Unit 6 Text Questions	Homework	10 points
Unit 6 Writing Assignment	Homework	15 points
Unit 6 Discussion Assignment 1	Discussion	5 points
Unit 6 Discussion Assignment 2	Discussion	5 points
Unit 6 Quiz	Quiz	15 points



Unit 7: Mythopoeia: The Making of Fantasy Worlds

Unit Summary

J.R.R. Tolkien and a few others of his generation became actively involved in creating fantasy worlds, complete with their own mythology and sets of rules. Now, fantasy worlds spring up on bookshelves on a regular basis. In this unit, you'll learn more about the genre of fantasy literature and why Tolkien defended its use for a teen and adult audience in his famous essay "On Fairy Stories." You'll also explore the differences and similarities between fantasy and science fiction and discuss the advantages of fantasy literature as seen through the mind of J.R.R. Tolkien. In addition, you'll learn more about the background material of the first half of *The Return of the King*.

Learning Objectives

- Describe some of the genres of literature.
- Discuss fantasy literature and its relation to science fiction.
- Define mythopoeia.
- Discuss Tolkien's famous essay "On Fairy Stories" and the advantages of fantasy that Tolkien described in that essay.
- Outline the background material of the first half of *The Return of the King*.

Assignments

Unit 7 Text Questions	Homework	10 points
Unit 7 Writing Assignment	Homework	15 points
Unit 7 Discussion Assignment 1	Discussion	5 points
Unit 7 Discussion Assignment 2	Discussion	5 points
Unit 7 Quiz	Quiz	15 points



Unit 8: Journey's End: The Final Analysis

Unit Summary

In this unit, we will end our discussion of The Lord of the Rings. But first, you'll learn how the ending of the book varies in many ways from the movie. You will trace the major themes of the movie and how they played out in the end. You'll also discuss characterization in depth and discuss the elements of plot. And you'll examine how the quest has affected many of the characters in the story since the beginning of the journey and where this journey took them in the end.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the themes and motifs in the movie.
- Discuss conflict in a story and how this adds interest to the tale.
- Define the differences between dynamic and static characters.
- Compare the differences between the book and movie versions of The Return of the King.
- Discuss more about the basic elements of plot development.
- Outline the development of all the major characters in the story and where the story took these characters even after the film was finished.

Assignments

Unit 8 Text Questions	Homework	10 points
Unit 8 Writing Assignment	Homework	15 points
Unit 8 Discussion Assignment 1	Discussion	5 points
Unit 8 Discussion Assignment 2	Discussion	5 points
Unit 8 Quiz	Quiz	15 points



Final Exam

Learning Objectives

- Review information acquired and mastered from this course up to this point.
- Take a course exam based on material from units five to eight in this course – the last four units. (Note: You will be able to open this exam only one time.)

Assignments

Final Exam	Exam	50 points
Class Reflection Discussion Assignment	Discussion	10 points