

Fall 2026
ENGLISH 4612/5612: J.R.R. TOLKIEN
MWF 12:00 PM-12:50 PM
Olin Engineering 160

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Drop-In Office Hours: MWF 11:00 AM-11:45 AM or by appointment

The last decade has seen the hundredth anniversary of J.R.R. Tolkien's earliest writings on Middle-Earth (*The Book of Lost Tales*, begun in 1917) alongside the completion of Peter Jackson's career-defining twenty-year project to *adapt The Lord of the Rings* for film (1995-2015, with spiritual successor *The Hunt for Gollum* coming next year). This course asks the question: Who is J.R.R. Tolkien, looking backward from the perspective of the twenty-first century? Why have his works, and the genre of heroic fantasy which he remade so completely in his image, remained so intensely popular, even as the world has transformed around them? Our study will primarily trace the history, development, and reception of Tolkien's incredible magnum opus, *The Lord of the Rings* (written 1937-1949, published 1954-1955)— but we will also take up Tolkien's contested place in the literary canon of the twentieth century, the uses and abuses of Tolkien in Jackson's blockbuster films, the special appeal of Tolkien in politically troubled times, and the ongoing critical interests and investments of Tolkien fandom today. As Tolkien scholars we will also have the privilege of drawing upon the remarkable J.R.R. Tolkien Collection at Raynor Library, which contains the original manuscripts for *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Farmer Giles of Ham*.

Note: *No prior knowledge of Tolkien is required. The course is designed for a mix of first-time readers, frequent re-readers, and people who are returning to the books for the first time as adults after many years away.*

LEARNING GOALS

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of the cultural, historical, political, and philosophical contexts in which Tolkien wrote;
- Identify and understand various formal characteristics both of the Tolkien legendarium and of contemporary fantasy literature more generally;
- Apply techniques of critical analysis as appropriate to diverse literary forms, genres, and media;
- Participate and intervene in contemporary debates over Tolkien's works and his literary/cultural legacy;
- Use literary and cultural study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing;
- Read and discuss a variety of literary and nonliterary texts on the levels of both form and content.

DISCOVERY TIER: INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

The nature of the relationship between the individual and the community remains a perennial question, at the heart of technological, political, religious and ecological thought. One cannot understand prominent human trends — like the tendency, both in history and in the present day, to cluster populations in urban environments — without attending to the longings of the individual for community and the reliance of the community on the individual. Yet the relationship between these two is fraught with ambiguity and tension. On the one hand, communities have amplified humanity's potential to overcome injustice, suffering and human limitations. Communities have enabled individuals to mobilize, innovate and act collectively for the common good. On the other hand, communities have also identified, stigmatized and exterminated outsiders. By utilizing tools of oppression, such as prejudice and discrimination, communities have also stifled progress and catered to fears, bigotry and hatred.

This course explores these concepts through its sustained discussion of the imaginary communities in Tolkien's legendarium, and their relationships to real-world conflicts regarding race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ability and disability, and more.

THIS COURSE AND LIFE AFTER MARQUETTE

Marquette identifies seven key career preparation skills that its courses teach across disciplines, which it calls the Professional Formation Competencies:

- **Problem Solve with Curiosity:** You solve problems with conscience and curiosity, using critical thinking.
- **Develop Career Management Skills:** You approach career management with attention to self-awareness, intentional effort to grow knowledge related to profession, quiet reflection, and action toward fulfilling your unique purpose.
- **Collaborate for Solidarity:** You collaborate for solidarity, prioritizing working for the good of the group and acting as a person for and with others.
- **Communicate Responsibly and Ethically:** You approach ethical communication with the intent of identifying reliable sources, taking responsibility for what and how you communicate, and reaching shared understanding.
- **Lead for the Common Good:** You demonstrate leadership through self-initiative and the empowerment of others to advance solutions for the greater good of all.
- **Commit to Justice, Equity, and Belonging:** You understand biases and advocate for an environment that fosters belonging of diverse people, appreciation of differing perspectives, and action toward justice, equity, and belonging.
- **Adapt in Discipline and Technology:** You adapt in your discipline and relevant technologies, knowing the tools available to you and participating in advancements in your profession.

Our collective study of *The Lord of the Rings*, including our discussions of its meaning and messages and your self-guided development of a major semester-long research project of your choosing, will intersect with many of these professional formation competencies, and could even ultimately form one example of the sorts of skills and values you developed during your time in college at a future job interview.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND PERSONAL EMERGENCIES

Everyone at Marquette recognizes that this continues to be an extremely difficult time which may be filled with many different sorts of uncertainty as we move forward with the academic year. Your safety, health, and well-being are our primary concern and we want to be able to support you in any way that we can.

The university also understands that you may be facing personal obstacles that may make it difficult to meet your typical academic goals. Please know that faculty and staff are here for you.

If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by a situation outside of class, please don't hesitate to talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. You are not alone.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the BookMarq on 16th Street)

The Hobbit (1937)

The Lord of the Rings (1954-1955)

The Silmarillion (1977)

Note: Any published edition of these texts will do, including electronic copies.

Additional readings and course materials will be made available via D2L.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance, Participation, Possible Quizzes	20%
Discussion Inaugurator	10%
D2L Forum	20%
Final Paper (10-12 pages expected)	
• Prospectus	5%
• Abstract	5%
• Final Paper	40%

Additional details on these assignments can be found as an appendix at the end of this document, as well as under CONTENT on D2L.

Grad students will have different expectations; for learning outcomes and assignments please consult the ENGLISH 5612 supplement.

GRADING

Grades will follow the following rubric:

* To earn a **C**, you must clearly restate the meaning or project of a text in your own terms. A C essay may volunteer an original argument, but will likely lack evidence or analysis of its sources. C essays are clearly written, though they might display some grammatical weakness.

* To earn a **B**, you must begin to raise important questions about the text under consideration and to use those questions to drive your own interpretive agenda. A B essay

typically advances an original argument and provides solid analysis of the text(s) under consideration. B essays are clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors.

* To earn an **A**, you must construct an essay that does more than simply comment on the work of others; you must forward, counter, or transform what they have to say. An **A** essay advances an original argument that builds toward a climax and makes a persuasive case for its own significance. A essays are clearly written, and often eloquent.

* A **D** means that you have not written in clear prose or that you seem to have deeply misunderstood the text. An **F** means that you did not fully or seriously engage the assignment.

* **A-, B+, B-, C+ (and so on) grades** fall in the gaps between the above categories.

UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Your makeup posts and sandbox posts will be graded on an extra-credit / pass / low-pass / fail basis:

- Fulfilling all the requirements of the assignment will earn you full credit;
- Failing to do so will earn you half-credit (at best) or no credit (at worst);
- Going beyond the terms of the assignment in an especially ambitious or creative way can earn you extra credit.

QUIZZES

I do not like to give reading quizzes; I think they infantilize the college-level scholar. However, this is by necessity a very reading-intensive class; if it seems to me that people are not keeping up with the reading, pop quizzes may become necessary despite my philosophical objections. You have been warned.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

Your final paper should be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. Your filename should contain *your last name* in it, for example, baggins-finalpaper.docx.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work, even forum comments. Drafts that contain excessive typos or grammar mistakes may be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments. Please give your final paper an original title, and include your name, assignment, and due date in a header on the first page.

All sources relied upon for the writing of your paper, including the primary text, must be appropriately cited.

PAPER SUBMISSION

The final paper should be submitted via D2L's Dropbox by class time on the due date, Thursday, December 17, by 12:30 PM. Your other written work (which will primarily take the form of forum posts) will be posted on the D2L forums in the designated "sandbox" forums.

Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

EXTENSIONS

Although the work in this course have a sufficiently long timetable to allow you to plan and complete all assignments in a timely manner, I nonetheless recognize that each of you has a unique schedule and that some of the due dates I have selected could occasionally prove problematic for individual students in the course, especially in the context of the pandemic. **If you find that you will need an extension on a particular assignment due to this kind of conflict, please contact me to arrange an alternative due date.** There is no need to concoct an elaborate story to justify this, or to lie to me; simply tell me the truth about what's going on and we can work out an alternative that works for you.

TECHNOLOGY IS TERRIBLE: PLAN AHEAD!

The Internet goes down. Files become corrupted. Computers crash. These are predictable facts of twenty-first century life, not emergencies. For this course, for all your courses, for the rest of your career and your life in this world you need to develop work habits and strategies that take into account the basic, inescapable unreliability of computers. Start your assignments well in advance of the due date; save them often; save backup copies of essential documents, including copies off-site using a service like Carbonite, Dropbox, or Google Drive.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class discussion is an essential component of this seminar; class discussion, not lecture, will be the primary means by which we will investigate these texts together. It is crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

Consequently, attendance in this class is mandatory. You should plan on attending every class. Please talk to me (in advance if possible) if you ever find you will need to miss a class meeting.

The course adheres to Marquette University's attendance policy, which can be found on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance>.

You are allowed **three unexcused absences** over the course of the fall semester. **After that, your class participation will drop by half a letter grade for each additional unexcused absence.** Upon the seventh unexcused absence, you may receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

Merely being present in class is insufficient for an “A” in class participation. Each student is expected to *participate in* and *contribute to* our discussions. Just being in the room is not enough.

COVID PROTOCOLS

Everyone in this class will be expected to follow the current COVID-19 policies in effect on campus, including current guidance on quarantines and on masks.

DISCUSSION INAUGURATOR

Beginning with Week 3 of the course, each member of the class will have one day in which they are expected to inaugurate our discussion based on the readings for that day. The requirements for this are necessarily very loose, as each day of the course will have a very different type of text to be discussed; in general, however, the discussion inaugurator will be asked to (1) succinctly describe the project of this part of the text; (2) articulate a brief critical response to the material; and (3) direct our collective attention to one or two problems in, questions about, or particularly important moments in the text. I expect this introductory role to take approximately five minutes.

A signup sheet for this role will be distributed in class next week.

D2L DISCUSSION FORUMS AND SANDBOX POSTS

This course will make extensive use of the forums on D2L, where you can express your response to the material before class begins and where we can continue our discussions after class is over.

The forums are an excellent place for people who may feel inhibited by in-class discussion to share their opinions with the class. I will be reading it before every meeting of the course and I ask you do the same. You may choose either to begin a discussion thread on a new topic or to respond to a post composed by one of your classmates.

Before class on Friday, September 4, every student is required to:

- (1) upload a picture of their face or some other symbolic image to their profile;
- (2) post an “About the Author” about themselves in the designated forum;
- (3) respond to at least one of the texts we have discussed thus far.

After that, students must make **seven short sandbox posts (approximately 150-250 words that move beyond plot summary)** responding to any of the texts across the remainder of the course. This is approximately one post every other week. This does not have to be a formal written post, but can also take the form of a podcast, short video, a work of art or music, a short story or fan fiction, a comic, or more; any response of any sort is fine, provided it is thoughtful and substantial. These can even be done collaboratively. The idea is to respond collectively to the material we are studying together in a way that is not stifling, anxious, or overstructured by academic expectations that cannot really apply to this odd and altered educational context; my hope is to strip away grading strictures that can only be dysfunctional in the current moment and foster instead more multifaceted, more generous, and hopefully richer intellectual encounters, driven by your interests.

I encourage you to think of your sandbox posts as possible “seeds” for the final project; feel free to begin to develop your thoughts there. **You are also highly encouraged to kill two birds with one stone by posting a forum comment on the day you are scheduled to be the discussion inaugurator.**

The forums will also be used as a place for us to workshop your final paper prospectuses, as well as to post a paragraph-long abstract for your final paper once it is completed. These comments do not count as part of the eight total sandbox posts.

Additional posts and comments, and comments that substantively engage other students' arguments, will be looked upon very favorably when I calculate your final grade.

LAPTOP POLICY

As Marquette moves towards a paperless learning environment, in-class use of laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. becomes ever more important for access to electronic versions of our texts and for notetaking. However, students *must* refrain from non-class-related computer use, including email, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. **Please do not abuse this privilege or distract your fellow students.** I reserve the right to ban individual technological devices if this becomes a problem. Except in unusual cases of personal emergency, cleared with me at the start of class, no use of cell phones will be permitted during class time; please turn off your ringers and put them out of sight.

EMAIL

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once a day, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions.

I endeavor to respond to all emails within 24 hours, usually much less—but please do not send me urgent emails regarding your assignments on the night before they are due and expect an immediate reply.

CONFERENCES

All students are asked to meet with me in a short one-on-one conference at my office at least once during the semester to discuss the course and your work within it.

Please know I am very happy to meet with you individually to discuss work-in-progress in excess of this requirement, as many times as you like. Simply come to my weekly drop-in office hours, or see or email me to set up an appointment.

FLEXIBILITY

If it will benefit the class, changes may be made to the above.

WRITING CENTER

Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the Writing Center, located in Raynor Library Room 240, at any stage of the writing process.

Please visit the Writing Center website to find out how to schedule an appointment and to access the studio's online resources.

ACCOMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met.

I am of course more than happy to work with you to make sure you are successful in this course and to make this course most accessible for you. However, without documentation, I am limited in what I am able to do. Therefore, in order for me to help you most effectively, I need you to be proactive in contacting Marquette University's Office of Disability Services (located on the fifth floor of the 707 Building).

ODS can be reached by phone at (414) 288-1645 or by email at ods@marquette.edu.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to abide by the academic honesty policy outlined in your undergraduate bulletin. I urge you all to examine this material and consult me with any questions you may have about plagiarism or academic integrity *before* it becomes an issue. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism.

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course. No exceptions or special dispensations will be made.

Marquette students now sign an Honor Pledge, which states:

- *I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.*
- *I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.*
- *I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.*
- *My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.*

Full details of Marquette's academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/academic-integrity.php>.

On a personal level, I (like everyone) hate being lied to. Please, do not feel you need to concoct elaborate stories. Simply be honest with me about whatever is going on and we will work it out.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS ("AI")

You are expected to produce your own text for all coursework for this class. Unmarked use of LLMs (like ChatGPT) for any assignment violates academic integrity.

Incorporating any part of an AI-generated response in your work for this course without permission falls under the definition of plagiarism and will be treated accordingly. The divine power of subcreation, Tolkien reminds us, is a defining quality of what it means to be human; don't just hand it over to a chatbot!

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

We all enter this classroom with preexisting political, ethical, philosophical, and intellectual commitments. You are all required to engage the material—but you are absolutely *not* required to agree either with any of the writers we will discuss, or with me, in whole or in part.

RESPECT

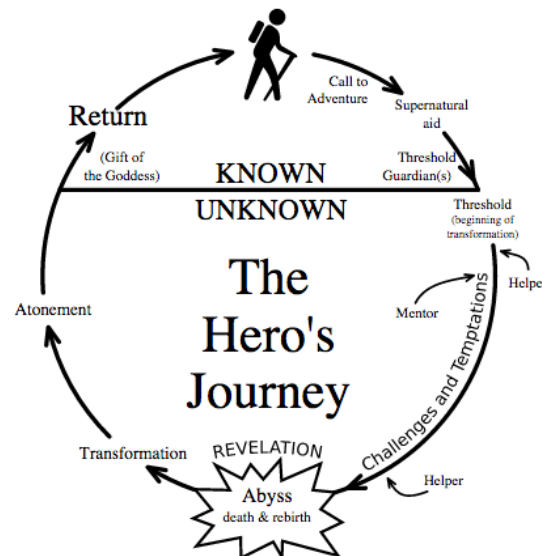
This classroom is a community. It is crucial that we treat each other with the appropriate level of courtesy and respect. No one should be made to feel unwelcome here.

Failure to treat other students with the respect they deserve will **severely** negatively impact your class participation grade.

A NOTE ON SUSPENSE

As noted at the top of the syllabus, absolutely no prior knowledge of or familiarity with Tolkien's work is required for this class.

That said, in this class we will be discussing a set of texts that, taken together, constitute the single most famous prose narrative of the twentieth century, a narrative nearly everyone in this room knows (many of you quite intimately). Indeed, as we'll see from Tolkien himself in his essay "On Fairy-Stories" on Wednesday, part of the power of this narrative comes precisely in the fact that you know at least its broad strokes already.



So it would be somewhat silly of us to attempt to enforce any sort of ironclad “no spoilers!” policy within our discussions.

At the same time, the bulk of the legendarium is constructed *as a narrative*—which necessarily includes, among other things, story pacing, character development, and the generation of suspense—and needs to be considered in those terms.

My vision therefore is that **we will endeavor to stick to the material assigned to a given day** with an understanding that, as scholars and critics, **it will occasionally**

behoove us to jump ahead in the story and *briefly* consider how our understanding of what we are reading might be challenged or transformed by later events we haven't seen yet.

If you are someone who is encountering this material for the first time or for the first time in a long while and this idea makes you nervous or uncomfortable—or if you ever begin to feel lost in our discussions—please feel free to let me know, up to and including interrupting me during class.

I MEAN THAT

I want this class to be a meaningful and valuable experience for you. If you have any concerns about the way things are going, my door is always open.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class as they become necessary.

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the listed texts or chapters.

GENERAL COURSE PLAN

WEEK 1: TOLKIEN'S CREATIVE PROJECT

WEEKS 2-3: *THE HOBBIT*

WEEKS 4-7: *THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING*

WEEKS 8-9: *THE TWO TOWERS*

WEEKS 10-12: *THE RETURN OF THE KING*

WEEKS 13-15: *THE SILMARILLION*

DAY-BY-DAY SCHEDULE

M	Aug. 31	FIRST DAY OF CLASS
W	Sep. 2	J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" [D2L] Tolkien biography
F	Sep. 4	J.R.R. Tolkien, "Leaf by Niggle" [D2L]
M	Sep. 7	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY—NO CLASS
W	Sep. 9	<i>The Hobbit</i> , chapters 1-4 Monomyth and the Hero's Journey (D2L)
F	Sep. 11	<i>The Hobbit</i> , chapters 5-6 original "Riddles in the Dark" chapter (D2L)
M	Sep. 14	<i>The Hobbit</i> , chapters 7-9
W	Sep. 16	<i>The Hobbit</i> , chapters 10-14 J.R.R. Tolkien, "Letter 52" [D2L]
F	Sep. 18	<i>The Hobbit</i> , chapters 15-19
M	Sep. 21	<i>The Hobbit</i> (whole book, plus film adaptations) J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Quest for Erebor" [D2L] John D. Rateliff, "The 1960 Hobbit" [D2L]

W	Sep. 23	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book One, foreword and prologue
F	Sep. 25	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book One, chapters 1-2
M	Sep. 28	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book One, chapters 3-5
W	Sep. 30	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book One, chapters 6-7 <u>Tom Bombadil</u> The Encyclopedia of Arda: “Tom Bombadil” [Web] Lord of the Rings Wiki: “Theories about Tom Bombadil” and linked pages [Web] J.R.R. Tolkien, Letters [excerpts] [D2L]
F	Oct. 2	ARCHIVES DAY #1—MEET AT RAYNOR LIBRARY
M	Oct. 5	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book One, chapters 8-12
W	Oct. 7	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book Two, chapters 1-2
F	Oct. 9	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book Two, chapters 3-5
M	Oct. 12	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book Two, chapters 6-8 <u>Galadriel</u> <i>Unfinished Tales</i> : “History of Galadriel and Celeborn” [D2L] Robert Tally, “Galadriel, Witch-Queen of Lórien” [Web]
W	Oct. 14	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> , Book Two, chapters 9-10 <i>The Two Towers</i> , Book Three, chapter 1
F	Oct. 16	MIDTERM BREAK
M	Oct. 19	<i>The Two Towers</i> , Book Three, chapters 2-4
W	Oct. 21	<i>The Two Towers</i> , Book Three, chapters 5-7
F	Oct. 23	<i>The Two Towers</i> , Book Three, chapters 8-11 <u>Saruman</u> J.R.R. Tolkien, <i>Unfinished Tales</i> : “Saruman” [D2L] Robert Tally, “Song of Saruman” [Web]
M	Oct. 26	<i>The Two Towers</i> , Book Four, chapters 1-4
W	Oct. 28	<i>The Two Towers</i> , Book Four, chapters 5-8 J.R.R. Tolkien, “Letter 246” [D2L]
F	Oct. 30	<i>The Two Towers</i> , Book Four, chapters 9-10 <u>Orcs</u> Robert Tally, “Let Us Now Praise Famous Orcs” [D2L] Richard K. Morgan, “The Real Fantastic Stuff” [Web] N.K. Jemisin, “The Unbearable Baggage of Orcing” [Web] Charles W. Mills, “The Wretched of Middle-Earth: An Orkish Manifesto” [D2L] <i>Lord of the Rings</i> video games

M	Nov. 2	<i>The Return of the King</i> , Book Five, chapters 1-3
W	Nov. 4	<i>The Return of the King</i> , Book Five, chapters 4-6
F	Nov. 6	<i>The Return of the King</i> , Book Five, chapters 7-10 Robin Reid, “Light (noun, 1) or Light (adjective, 14b)? Female Bodies and Femininities in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> ”
M	Nov. 9	<i>The Return of the King</i> , Book Six, chapters 1-3 Sean Crist, “Could the Eagles Have Flown Frodo into Mordor?” and responses [Web]
W	Nov. 11	<i>The Return of the King</i> , Book Six, chapters 4-7 optional: <i>The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim</i> (film)
F	Nov. 13	ARCHIVES DAY #2—MEET AT RAYNOR LIBRARY
M	Nov. 16	<i>The Return of the King</i> , Book Six, chapter 8 J.R.R. Tolkien, <i>Sauron Defeated</i> [excerpt] [D2L] Peter Jackson, <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> film trilogy
W	Nov. 18	<i>The Return of the King</i> , Book Six, chapter 9 David M. Craig, “‘Queer Lodgings’: Gender and Sexuality in <i>Lord of the Rings</i> ” Anna Smol, “‘Oh. . . oh. . . Frodo!’: Readings of Male Intimacy in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> ” J.R.R. Tolkien, “The Epilogue” [D2L]
F	Nov. 20	<i>The Return of the King</i> , appendices Gerry Canavan, “Tolkien, Against the Grain” [D2L]
M	Nov. 23	<i>The Silmarillion</i> : “Ainulindalë,” “Valaquenta,” and <i>Quenta Silmarillion</i> , chapters 1-5 J.R.R. Tolkien, “Letter 131” [D2L] PROSPECTUS WORKSHOP THIS WEEK
W	Nov. 25	THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASS
F	Nov. 27	THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASS
M	Nov. 30	<i>The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion</i> , chapters 6-12 J.R.R. Tolkien, <i>Morgoth’s Ring</i> [excerpts] [D2L]
W	Dec. 2	<i>The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion</i> , chapters 13-18
F	Dec. 4	<i>The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion</i> , chapter 19
M	Dec. 7	<i>The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion</i> , chapters 20-24 J.R.R. Tolkien, “Notes on Motives in <i>The Silmarillion</i> ” [Web]
W	Dec. 9	<i>The Silmarillion</i> : “Akallabêth”
F	Dec. 11	<i>The Silmarillion</i> : “On the Rings of Power and the Third Age” J.R.R. Tolkien, “The New Shadow” [D2L] LAST DAY OF CLASS
Th	Dec. 17	FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 12:30 PM ON D2L

FOLLOW FAME: FRIENDS AND ALUMNI/AE OF MARQUETTE ENGLISH

On Facebook (page): www.facebook.com/marquetteENGL

On Facebook (group): www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194
(search for “Undergraduate English at Marquette”)

On Twitter: @MarquetteENGL

On Instagram: @marquette_english

On LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/marquetteengl/

I will also be inviting you to English community events periodically during the fall and spring semesters. I hope you can attend! I will also be sure to keep you informed about Tolkien-related events on campus.

THIS SPACE LEFT BLANK FOR NOTES, RUNES, ELF-SONGS, AND MAPS

ENGLISH 4612 ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

☐ **Discussion Leader** Date / Topic _____

☐ **D2L “Sandbox” Posts** (due at your chosen pace across the semester)

- ☐ Mandatory Post #1—due by start of class Friday, September 4
- ☐ Free Post 1
- ☐ Free Post 2
- ☐ Free Post 3
- ☐ Free Post 4
- ☐ Free Post 5
- ☐ Free Post 6
- ☐ Free Post 7
- ☐ Extra Credit Posts

These public discussion forum posts are intended to articulate some concrete, critical response to some element of the work under discussion on a given day of the course. They should be approximately 150-250 words long, and may overlap with your contributions to class discussion and/or your final project. Additional posts will count towards extra credit.

☐ **Final Project Prospectus** (due on D2L Forums the weekend of Thanksgiving)

The prospectus is a half-page anticipation of the major thrust of your final project as you anticipate it taking shape. Generally speaking, it should lay out the aspect of Tolkien’s work that you plan to discuss, and articulate a *central claim* which clearly and succinctly describes your planned intervention into Tolkien studies.

☐ **Final Project** (due to D2L Dropbox by Thursday, Dec. 17 by 12:30 PM)

OPTION #1 A traditional 10-to-12-page scholarly paper (roughly 3000 words) on some aspect of Tolkien’s *legendarium* or related works. Possible topics might include:

- close readings of some component of the legendarium;
- literary interpretations of the legendarium in its totality;
- explorations of Tolkien’s letters, essays, other fictions, or alternate drafts;
- comparisons between Tolkien and other writers, or between Tolkien and the larger fantasy genre as a whole;
- interventions against or extensions of existing works of Tolkien criticism by established scholars, either those studied in class or found on your own.

OPTION #2 A creative or curational project related in some way to J.R.R. Tolkien or *The Lord of the Rings*, in a form of your choosing.

☐ **Abstract** (due on D2L by Thursday, December 17 by 12:30 PM)

I cannot stress enough how open I am to your personal interests and approaches; I am genuinely open to any topic, any method, and any form that seems urgent and interesting to you (provided of course that it is the intellectual-labor equivalent of a 10-to-12-page scholarly paper, more or less). I sincerely want this paper to be something you are excited about and enjoy writing, *not* an unpleasant chore. I can’t wait to read them.

An archive of work produced in this course has itself become part of the Tolkien archive at Raynor. Exceptional papers may be selected for inclusion, with your permission.

THE TEXT ON THIS PAGE IS ONLY VISIBLE ON DURIN'S DAY

FINAL PAPER GUIDELINES

Just over 50% of your grade in this class derives from your final paper. In this respect this course is being organized much more like a graduate seminar than a conventional undergraduate class—which necessarily puts the impetus on you to manage your time effectively to produce a successful research paper. To help, I’ve attempted to break up the process into a set of discrete tasks that populate the second half of the semester:

Pitch: When You’re Ready!

Prospectus Due in D2L Forums: The Week Before Thanksgiving

Online Prospectus Workshop: The Week Before Thanksgiving

Final Paper Due to Me and Abstract on D2L: Thursday, December 17, by 12:30 PM

As detailed on the syllabus, you have two general options for your paper:

OPTION #1 A traditional 10-to-12 page scholarly paper (roughly 3000 words) on some aspect of Tolkien’s *legendarium* or related works.

OPTION #2 A creative or curatorial project related in some way to J.R.R. Tolkien or *The Lord of the Rings*, in a form of your choosing.

- The “pitch” stage of the paper can start as small as a one-sentence email; it simply means running your idea by me in whatever form seems most helpful to you (a conference, an email, an after-class discussion, etc.) I ask you to do so when you feel ready; my hope is that everyone have begun to think about what they want to write about by early November.
- The **prospectus** is a half-page to full-page anticipation of the major thrust of your argument as you anticipate it taking shape. It has three parts:
 - a paragraph or two laying out the aspect of the *legendarium* you plan to discuss;
 - a paragraph articulating a *central claim* which clearly and succinctly describes your planned intervention into Tolkien studies;
 - a short prose description and/or short bibliography that lays out the archive of evidence on which you will rely to prove your central claim.

For the creative option, the prospectus will be more like a blueprint of what you hope to create.

You should think of your paper as a pointed answer to a controversial question about Tolkien’s *legendarium*, taking a position on some aspect of the text or the larger Middle-Earth franchise (a) that you think is interesting and important (b) with which it would be possible to disagree.

For more information on developing a successful central claim, I would recommend consulting this document from the Duke University Writing Studio:

http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/central-claim.original.pdf

I am also of course very happy to discuss your papers-in-progress with you at any stage of the writing process, from pitch to finished product.

- We will **workshop** the prospectuses online the week before Thanksgiving. You will share your own prospectus and provide substantive comments on two other students' prospectuses, suggesting places where you think they might refine, expand, or reconsider their argument. (Of course it's also okay to praise them!)
- I am open to any topic that seems urgent and interesting to you as a reader of Tolkien, including:
 - close readings of some aspect of Tolkien's legendarium;
 - literary interpretations of the entire legendarium in its totality;
 - explorations of Tolkien's letters, essays, other fictions, or alternative drafts;
 - comparisons between Tolkien and other writers (C.S. Lewis, George R.R. Martin, etc.);
 - interventions against or extensions of existing works of Tolkien criticism by established scholars;
 - comparisons between the books and its adaptations;
 - discussions of other creative works related to Middle-Earth (including video games, board games, roleplaying games, fan scholarship and fan fictions, etc.).

I cannot stress enough how open I am to your personal interests and approaches. I want this paper to be something you are excited about and enjoy writing, not a chore.

- Your final **10-to-12-page** paper is due to me on **Thursday, December 17, by 12:30 PM**. Alongside this you should also prepare a short, paragraph-length abstract describing your research conclusions and post this in the dedicated thread on the course blog.

The Duke University Writing Studio also has a helpful page on how to write an abstract, which you can find here:

http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/abstract.original.pdf

Again, please don't hesitate to contact me for whatever guidance I can provide at any stage of the writing process. I'm really looking forward to reading these.

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.
—Kenneth Burke, "The Philosophy of Literary Form"

ENTRANCE SURVEY**NAME****YEAR****MAJOR****HOMETOWN****MY FAVORITE TEXT THAT ISN'T BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN:****MY FAVORITE GENRE THAT ISN'T HIGH FANTASY:****I HAVE READ *THE HOBBIT*:**

YES NO

I HAVE READ *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*:

YES NO ATTEMPTED

I HAVE READ *THE SILMARILLION*:

YES NO ATTEMPTED

I HAVE READ ANY OR ALL OF THESE MORE THAN ONCE:

YES NO

I HAVE READ ANY OR ALL OF THESE SINCE I WAS A KID:

YES NO

I'VE SEEN AT LEAST SOME OF THE PETER JACKSON MOVIES:

YES NO

I'VE SEEN ALL THE PETER JACKSON MOVIES:

YES NO

I'VE SEEN ALL THE PETER JACKSON MOVIES MULTIPLE TIMES:

YES NO

I'VE BEEN WATCHING *THE RINGS OF POWER* ON AMAZON:

YES NO

I'VE WATCHED THE ANIME ADAPTATION, *THE WAR OF THE ROHIRRIM*:

YES NO

I'M HYPED FOR THE UPCOMING LIVE ACTION PREQUEL, *THE HUNT FOR GOLLUM*:

YES NO