The literature of John Ronald Tolkien is a phenomenon of the second half of the Twentieth Century in English letters. At first dismissed as a lighthearted venture into children's fiction, it is today ranked among the great works of modern literature. The question most frequently asked is, why? What is there in this trilogy and its prelude which caught the imaginations of millions of readers and finally attracted the attention of the academic world? The usual answer is that Tolkien took a literary form—the epic—long dead give it new life so that a whole generation of readers has come to know again the sweep and grandeur of heroic literature. In his books, Tolkien created the saga of Middle Earth and the great War of the Rings which combined elements of the classical epic pattern and the medieval romance.

That is all very well, but how does that explain the popularity and achievement of these books which have become the center of a modern day cult and which are said by some to be the contemporary equivalents of the Iliad and the Odyssey? In this course, we are going to try to understand Tolkien's achievement and thus, his popularity, by considering what he did and how. We are, therefore, going to treat this literature as great literature, that is seriously. As most medievalists, Tolkien believed in weaving his literary tapestry out of many threads—all of which had some special tone or color to add to his over-all design. That is to say, most of what appears in LOTR is not original to Tolkien: he borrowed almost all of it from earlier works. This is not surprising given his background and training for this is how all the great works of old and middle English were created. In the first part of this course, we will examine his courses and their archetypes to see what it was that Tolkien was doing in his structuring of the work. In the second part of the course, we will examine the final product and observe the magic of the man himself who took these traditional forms and wove them into a new and exciting work which is revered by scholars and treasured by readers of all ages.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
- Master of Middle-earth  Paul H. Kocher
- Beowulf  trans. David Wright
- King Arthur and his Knights ed. Roger Green
- The Hobbit  Tolkien
- The Fellowship of the Ring  Tolkien
- The Tow Towers  Tolkien
- The Return of the King  Tolkien
The work for the course will include the following. Although this schedule is tentative and therefore subject to change, we will try to follow it as closely as possible.

WEEK ONE:
- January 9 - Introduction - The book of the 20th Century
- January 11 - Master of Middle-earth, Chaps. I & II
- January 13 - M of M-e, Chapter III

WEEK TWO:
- January 16 - M of M-e, Chapter IV
- January 18 - M of M-e, Chapter V
- January 20 - M of M-e, Chapter VI - QUIZ on Background material.

WEEK THREE:
- January 23 - Beowulf - QUIZ
- January 25 - Sagas and Tolkien
- January 27 - Beowulf and The Hobbit

WEEK FOUR:
- January 30 - KING ARTHUR - QUIZ
- February 1 - Aragorn and Arthur
- February 3 - Tolkien and the Heroic Tradition - REFLECTION I DUE

WEEK FIVE:
- February 6 - The Ring of the Niebelug - QUIZ
- February 8 - Icelandic Literature and Tolkien
- February 10 - No Class - Winter Carnival

WEEK SIX:
- February 13 - ORAL REPORTS - Appendix A
- February 15 - Appendix A
- February 17 - Appendix A

WEEK SEVEN:
- February 20 - Appendix B
- February 22 - Appendices B & F
- February 24 - Appendices E

WEEK EIGHT:
- February 27 - THE HOBBIT QUIZ
- March 1 - Preface and Prelude
- March 3 - There and Back Again

WEEK NINE:
- March 13 - Dragons in Fantasy
- March 15 - THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING - QUIZ
- March 19 - The Adventure Continues

WEEK TEN:
- March 20 - A Tale of Two Heroes
- March 22 - The Breaking of the Fellowship REFLECTION II DUE
- March 24 - THE TWO TOWERS - QUIZ
WEEK ELEVEN: March 27 - Epic and Quest Formulae  
March 29 - Wizardry and Magic  
March 31 - Ents

WEEK TWELVE: April 3 - Errantry  
April 5 - Critters and Monsters  
April 7 - THE RETURN OF THE KING - QUIZ

WEEK THIRTEEN: April 10 - Epic Alliances  
April 12 - Epic Battles  
April 14 - NO CLASS

WEEK FOURTEEN: April 17 - The Hands of the King - PROJECTS DUE  
April 19 - Happily Ever After?  
April 21 - The Scouring of the Shire: Conclusion

FINAL WEEK: April 24 - TAKE HOME FINALS DUE

THERE WILL BE NO CLASS AND NO EXAM DURING FINALS WEEK

Summary of course requirements:

- Eight Quizzes .......................................................... 220 points
- Two short papers (2-3 pp) ......................................... 150 points
- One long paper (5-7 pp) ............................................. 125 points
- One discussion question .......................................... 25 points
- One Oral report ......................................................... 50 points
- One take-home final exam ......................................... 125 points
- Class Participation ................................................... 100 points

At the beginning of the term, there will be several lectures to give you background material as needed. During much of the course, however, there will be great emphasis on class discussion. Most of you have read the works more than once and I assume you are, by now, familiar with the story line. We are not going to proceed on an introductory level, but rather advance into central ideas and themes of the work. Before we get to the main part of the course, you will be given lists of questions to consider as you reexamine the material. These will form the basis for class discussion, but not the limits of it. I think you will be surprised at how many differing ideas of textual matters can arise from the same material read by a group of people. This is why I recommend A Guide to Middle Earth and The New Tolkien Companion which are exhaustive concordances and dictionaries.

There will also be several movie nights held as part of this course to demonstrate the various ways in which these themes and tales have been handled.