This course studies the significant works of J. R. R. Tolkien – scholar, linguist, and fantasy writer. We will explore our course readings in the context of Tolkien’s life, of his society, culture, and history, and of scholarly perspectives of the past 50 years.

Integral to the course are student explorations of contextual materials such as historical, personal, and cultural background, as well as other materials by/from the author such as essays, letters, and interviews. In addition, students will research Tolkien’s influence in academic and popular environs to develop their views of the influence and significance of his body of work.

**Course objectives:** Students who successfully complete this course will be able

- to analyze the selected prose works of J.R.R. Tolkien.
- to formulate synthetic interpretations of those works.
- to understand style, characterization, and themes that are emblematic of Tolkien’s writing.
- to evaluate the influence of Tolkien’s worldview (resulting from religious beliefs, personal experiences, etc) on his fiction.
- to hone research skills in print and electronic venues.
- to research, evaluate, and discuss secondary sources (e.g., become familiar with the scholarly “conversation”).
• to explore how ancillary materials by the author (poetry, essays, interviews) influence their interpretation of the novels.

On a meta-cognitive level, students will be able
• to evaluate what the complex act of authoring involves for J.R.R. Tolkien.
• to understand what the complex act of editing involves for C. Tolkien.

**Required texts**
*The Silmarillion*
*The Lord of the Rings*
*Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*
“On Fairy Stories” (online)

**Evaluation and Grading:** Students will be graded on their performance in the following areas:
- In-class writing, discussions, and group work: 30% of final grade
- Literary studies (4): 10% or 40% of final grade
- Presentations (biography, film, project): 10% of final grade
- Final Study: 20% of final grade

**Daily work:** (30% of your final grade). As a course designed around discussions, your attendance and preparation will play a crucial role in the quality of our class work and in the success of the course. Be prepared to participate in a variety of ways: frequent Blackboard postings, occasional in-class writing, small group work, taking charge of a portion of discussion, etc. You will be awarded points for your work that, at the end of the semester, will be totaled and then curved into a letter grade. The point scale:
- 0 points - you weren't here and we missed you.
- 1 point - you were in class but unprepared.
- 2 points - you wrote or spoke in a way that demonstrated you had read the material.
- 3 points - you wrote or spoke in a way that demonstrated you had read and thought about the material.
- 4 points - you wrote or spoke in a profound way about the material.

**The Literary Studies (4):** (40% of final grade). These papers will analyze each of our four majors works (LOR, Silmarillion) in terms of your final project topic. You might think of these short studies as drafts of your final project – focused on your choice of research topic gradually unfolding in each of the four novels. This is a graded product, however, and should be 6-8 pages long. Here is what I expect in terms of subject matter:
- the historical and cultural background necessary to understand the novel.
- the writer’s aesthetic theory that underpins the style, technique or structure (especially in Tolkien’s essay “On Fairy Stories”).
- the connection of form to theme.
- inclusion of scholarly research (this element will build as you read increasing numbers of sources on your subject through the course of the semester).

In terms of your own writing:
- a thesis or position that informs the essay and helps shape other features like organization, kinds of support/evidence, etc.
• critical and reflective capabilities in analysis and commentary.
• a logical flow to ideas, unified paragraphs, and effective transitions between paragraphs.
• effective incorporation of secondary / research materials.
• demonstrated mastery of revision and editing skills (few if any surface errors).
• correct MLA documentation and adequate citation.

An "A" paper will incorporate a thesis that goes well beyond description, even beyond argument, and succeeds in articulating an explicit, insightful, and sophisticated interpretation. Such an interpretation requires a deeper than average understanding, integrative skills (bringing various pieces together like structure and theme), and personal engagement with the text.

Presentations (10% of your final grade).
You will be responsible in groups for one of the biography presentations and one of the presentations on film; as an individual a presentations on your project. You will “teach” your findings to the class, being careful to include select quotations / visuals / handouts that provide
  ▪ key terms and their definitions
  ▪ chronology, dates, etc.

Presentations should be 15 minutes long. Time is firm. You must submit as part of your presentation a summary of what you contributed to your group (for the collaborative presentations) and a bibliography. Note: scholarly web sources and print sources are mandatory. Wikipedia is not sufficient.

For the film presentation, this is like the “Pick a Scene” assignments in the Film and Literature course. Your group will select brief scenes from the assigned LOR film and compare it to the related literary text. In this presentation you should analyze content, style, and technique, reflecting not only on the resulting effect of the scene in each medium but also on the directorial/authorial decisions that resulted in that effect. Your overall objective is to show how film and literature are both complimentary and unique art forms. What could Tolkien do (or what did he intend to do) that Peter Jackson did / could not? Visa versa? Consult the commentary feature on the DVDs to get explanations for some of Jackson’s decisions in cases where he changed the original text. At least one week before your presentation you will need to let me know which scene you will analyze. Note: the portion of the film we see should be no more than five minutes long.

For your individual subject presentation, you will have 5 minutes to instruct us on your major findings related to your semester focus. Again, prepare carefully; this isn’t very long to provide quite a bit of information. Handouts may be helpful.

Final Study (20% of final grade)

The purpose of this research and writing assignment is to construct a synthetic analysis of a theme or technique in Tolkien’s major works of fantasy, using evidence from all of our primary readings and scholarly secondary sources to support your interpretation (“scholarly” means peer reviewed). Most importantly, I will expect extensive use of Tolkien’s letters and the essay “On Fairy Stories,” which will provide evidence of Tolkien’s intent and message. Major topics to research:
  Mythic roots of the legendarium: (Kalevala, Beowulf, etc).
Creation of languages (cultural roots; the relationship of peoples to language)
Art – authored or inspired by Tolkien (including maps of Middle Earth)
Fantasy tradition and Tolkien
Gender in Tolkien’s fantasy
The heroic in Tolkien’s fantasy
Good and evil (or sin and redemption) in Tolkien’s fantasy
War and warriors in Tolkien’s fantasy
Nature and place in Tolkien’s fantasy (pastoralism)
Names in Tolkien’s fantasy
Providence, fate, and free will in Tolkien’s fantasy
Beauty and art in Tolkien’s fantasy
Monsters in Tolkien’s fantasy
History / time / mortality in Tolkien’s fantasy
Jewels / trees / rings in Tolkien’s fantasy
Nature and machines in Tolkien’s fantasy
Songs, poems, and stories in Tolkien’s fantasy
or a topic of your choice, with prior permission.

Your four literary studies will help your build this seminar paper of 25-30 pages. The same expectations apply here as with the shorter papers, with the additional incorporation of the letters materials.

Policies:
Absences
You are allowed three unexcused absences, free and clear. After that, you will be asked to conference in my office about your status and goals in the course. I will not accept late assignments unless you have made previous arrangements. (Note: being absent on the day a paper is due doesn't get you off the hook!) No work done in class can be made up. If you post on Blackboard but don’t make it to class, your earned points will be cut in half.

Late Assignments
I will not accept late writing assignments unless you have made previous arrangements because of serious, non-preventable reasons (“previous” means before the due date).

Academic Advising
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisors will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic
misconduct on an assignment will result in the minimum consequence will be an “F” on the assignment with a letter sent to the Dean of Students to be recorded in your student file. In particularly serious cases, students can face expulsion from the class, particularly if he/she has been caught plagiarizing in another course. Note that plagiarism is only one form of academic dishonesty, which also includes falsification (the intentional alteration of information), fabrication (the intentional invention of information), multiple submission (using the same material for two separate assignments or courses without permission from the instructors), and abuse of academic materials (the intentional destruction of resource materials). Inadequately or incorrectly documented material is an example of plagiarism.

**Dropping a Class**
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Friday, November 4th is the last day to drop a class.

**Classroom/professional behavior**
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Grade Appeals**
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.
Disabilities Accommodations
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Driftwood 101.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Class Schedule:
Week #1 (August 24-26)
   Wednesday: Introduction to the course
   Friday: Reading due - “On Faerie Stories”

Week #2 (August 29-Sept 2)
   Monday: The Fellowship of the Ring, Bk I Ch 1-2
      Presentation: Biography (1892-1911, the death of Mabel Tolkien)
   Wednesday: The Fellowship of the Ring, Bk I Ch 3-7
      Presentation: Biography (1912-1918, World War I experiences)
   Friday: The Fellowship of the Ring, Bk I Ch 8-11

Week #3: (Sept 5-9)
   Monday: The Fellowship of the Ring, Bk I Ch 12 through Bk II Ch 2
   Wednesday: The Fellowship of the Ring, Bk II Ch 3-5
      Presentation: Biography (courtship, marriage, and relationship with wife Edith; influence of Fr. Francis Morgan)
   Friday: The Fellowship of the Ring, Bk II Ch 6-end

Week #4: (Sept 12-16)
   Monday: Peer review, Paper #1
   Wednesday: Paper #1 due (Fellowship)
      Presentation: Comparing film and novel
   Friday: The Two Towers, Bk III Ch 1-3
      Presentation: Biography (academic career at Oxford & Leeds)

Week #5: (Sept 19-23)
   Monday: The Two Towers, Bk III Ch 4-6
   Wednesday: The Two Towers, Bk III Ch 7-11
      Presentation: Biography (Inklings)
   Friday: The Two Towers, Bk IV Ch 1-4

Week #6 (Sept 26-30)
   Monday: The Two Towers, Bk IV Ch 5-end
Wednesday: Peer review, Paper #2
Thursday: Paper #2 due (Towers)
Presentation: Comparing film and novel

Week #7: (Oct 3-7)
Monday: The Return of the King, Bk V Ch 1-3
Wednesday: The Return of the King, Bk V Ch 4-7
Presentation: Biography (scholarly works)
Friday: The Return of the King, Bk V Ch 8-Bk VI Ch 1

Week #8: (Oct 10-14)
Monday: The Return of the King, Bk VI Ch 2-5
Wednesday: The Return of the King, Bk VI Ch 6 - end
Friday: The Return of the King - Appendixes
Presentation: Biography (influence of Catholicism)

Week #9: (Oct 17-21)
Monday: Peer Review, Paper #3
Wednesday: Paper #3 due (King)
Presentation: Comparing film and novel
Friday: The Silmarillion: Ainulindale and Valaquenta
Presentations on individual projects

Week #10: (Oct 24-28)
Monday: The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion Ch 1-9
Presentations on individual projects
Wednesday: The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion Ch 10-15
Presentations on individual projects
Friday: The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion Ch 16-18
Presentations on individual projects

Week #11 (Oct 31-Nov 4)
Monday: The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion Ch 19-20
Presentations on individual projects
Wednesday: The Silmarillion: Quenta Silmarillion Ch 21—24
Presentations on individual projects
Friday: The Silmarillion: Akallabeth
Presentations on individual projects

Week #12 (Nov 7-11)
Monday: The Silmarillion: Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age
Presentations on individual projects
Wednesday: Peer Review, Paper #4
Friday: Paper #3 due (Silmarillion)
Presentations due on individual projects
Week #13: (Nov 16-18)
   Monday: Letters # 1-47
       Presentations on individual projects
   Wednesday: Letters # 48-96
       Presentations on individual projects
   Friday: Letters # 97-136
       Presentations on individual projects

Week #14: (Nov 21-23)
   Monday: Letters # 137-167
       Presentations on individual projects
   Wednesday: Elective conferences

Week #15: (Nov 28-Dec 2)
   Monday: Letters # 168-217
       Presentations on individual projects
   Wednesday: Letters # 218-271
       Presentations on individual projects
   Friday: Letters # 272-end
       Presentations on individual projects

Week #16 (Dec 5-6)
   Monday: Peer Review, Collated paper

Final project due, date and time of final examination.