**ENG 5145: Tolkien’s Middle Earth and Beyond**

**The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities**

**Spring 2024, Tuesday 3:00-5:50, Burris 119**

Dr. Sean A. Scott [seanscott@bsu.edu](mailto:seanscott@bsu.edu)

Wagoner 149, hours: MWF 11:00-12:50, T 1:00-2:50, or by appt.

**Course Description:** Take a deep dive into the life and works of one of the best-selling authors of all time. Students will study J.R.R. Tolkien's life and letters to understand how his professional career as a philologist and medievalist influenced and shaped the sub-creation of Middle Earth. In addition to reading his most famous works--The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, and the Silmarillion--students will study significant essays and short stories such as Farmer Giles of Ham, Leaf by Niggle, and "On Fairy Stories." These works allow students to reflect on universal themes of good and evil, death and immortality, and myth and memory.

**Attendance, Unexcused Absence Policy, and Classroom Etiquette**: The Indiana Academy regards any absence from class as unexcused, except for illness, death in the family, college or school-related activities, or extenuating circumstances. When a student is absent from class, the instructor reports the absence to the Faculty Attendance Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs. Unless the absence is excused by a school official, it is considered unexcused. The instructor does not have discretion in this matter. Four or more unexcused absences will lead to academic and residential consequences beyond the scope of this class determined by the Office of Academic Affairs (i.e., residential groundings, parent-principal conferences, or detentions).

Any homework assignment missed because of an unexcused absence will not be made up for credit and will be given a zero. Any unexcused absence on the day of an exam or project will result in a 30% deduction for that assignment.

Come to class engaged and prepared to learn. I record attendance in powerschool a few minutes before class. If you are late, please see me afterwards to remind me to change your absence to tardy. Any student arriving fifteen minutes after the start of class will be counted absent for that period. There’s no reason to have your phone out during class or be wearing earbuds.

**Academic Integrity**: Academic integrity is foundational to achievement at the Academy and throughout your college life. Cheating on tests, plagiarism on papers, and all forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please understand that severe penalties will arise for violating academic integrity and review the relevant policies outlined in the Academy Handbook.

The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However, AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. This holds true whether the material is copied from a source in print, taken from internet content, or generated by AI. For my courses, AI should not be used for writing papers. Period. Because the discipline of history emphasizes the importance of careful reading, independent research, and original writing, AI is an inappropriate shortcut. If you have any questions about this policy, please speak to me during office hours.

**Disability**: Students with documented disabilities should notify me by the end of the first week of class, and I will make reasonable accommodation for you.

**Excused Absences**: In the event of a serious illness or family tragedy, please notify me as soon as possible. Appropriate documentation will be necessary to get an extension for a major assignment.

**Make-up Policy**: Missed quizzes with an excused absence must be made up **within one week** in order to keep from falling too far behind.

**Student Success**: I want you to succeed in this course. Please see me during office hours to discuss any concerns or questions you have about the course or assignments. I am always happy to talk about specific readings, the study of history, or life in general. If I become concerned about your performance in this course, engagement in class, or overall well-being, I will speak with you first and then may refer you to the appropriate counselor within the Academy.

**BSU Statement on Diversity**: “Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources found at <http://cms.bsu.edu/campuslife/multiculturalcenter>.”

**Texts:** *The Hobbit, Lord of the Rings, and Silmarillion*. Other readings posted on Canvas.

**Assignments**

1. There will be a quiz at the **beginning** of each class period over the assigned reading. These will be fairly in-depth, (20-25 minutes each class), so make sure that you take notes when reading and review them before class.
2. Each student will write a 3-4 page review of an article from an academic journal in the field of Tolkien studies. Students will also give a 5-minute oral summary of their article in class on **March 19**. Specific instructions will be provided later.
3. Each student will complete two creative projects. The first will be to make either a map of some location in Middle Earth or design an architectural rendering of a structure (**due February 27**). The second will involve painting a portrait, landscape, or scene from the books or constructing a diorama of a significant place or event (**due April 23**). These assignments pay homage to Tolkien’s emphasis on sub-creation, allowing students to tap into their imaginative and creative energies to produce artistic renderings of Middle Earth that proved inspiring.
4. Participation—each student must submit two questions (broad in scope rather than merely factual) based on the assigned reading for the day that can be discussed in class. I will collect these at the **beginning** of each class. In addition, each student should be actively engaged in class by discussing and answering questions.

**Grading**

Reading quizzes 33%

Review article 10%

Oral summary of article 5%

Map/drawing project 16%

Painting/diorama project 16%

Participation 20%

Students must complete all major projects to pass the class. Grades will be figured according to the plus-minus scale copied below:

94-100% = A “A” grades reflect the “wow” factor. This shows exceptional, extra-

90-93% = A- ordinary effort and rewards work of the highest excellence.

88-89% = B+

83-87% = B “B” grades reflect the “very good” factor. This shows effort exceeding

80-82% = B- average and work that is high quality, but short of excellence.

78-79% = C+

73-77% = C “C” grades reflect average work and satisfactory results.

70-72% = C-

0-69% = D\* “D\*” reflects unsatisfactory work.

**Course Schedule:**

January 9—Biography of Tolkien, “Mythopoeia,” and “On Fairy Stories”

January 16—*Beowulf*

January 23—*The Hobbit*

January 30—*Farmer Giles of Ham*, work on map/drawing project

February 6—*The Fellowship of the Ring*

February 13—*The Fellowship of the Ring*

February 20—*The Two Towers*

February 27—*The Two Towers*; map/drawing **project due**

March 5—Spring Break

March 12—No class, work on article reviews

March 19—**Article reviews due**, **oral presentation** of article; work on painting/diorama project

March 26—*The Return of the King*

April 2—*The Return of the King*

April 9—*The Silmarillion*

April 16—*The Silmarillion*

April 23—*The Silmarillion*; painting/diorama **project due**

April 30—“Smith of Wootton Major,” “Leaf by Niggle”