

September 29, 2022

Deborah M. Alvarez

Proposal for OSHER course for Spring 2023

Title of the Course:

The Real and the Fictional King Arthur— the English Messiah

General Description for the Course:

In the first portion of this course, we will investigate the existing evidence for a man named Arthur, who became a literary archetype of kingship and chivalry. We will read the evidence historical findings and archeology behind an 8th century man named Owein, who may be the actual historic person behind the literary Arthur. Then, we will look at the English literature that records the deeds surrounding King Arthur, his deeds and his chivalric knights of the Round Table. This will include also the romantic stories surrounding Lancelot du Lac and Guinevere. We will be reading additional factual and fictional articles, pieces of literary evidence, such as Goeffrey of Monmouth's story in *History of the King's of Britain*.

In the second portion of the class, we will read the best literary rendition of the Arthurian Legend that I have read: Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon*. This will involve tracing the factual evidence inside the fictional stories.

The course will examine the readings from the perspective of searching how a historical fact becomes the inspiration for a cultural literary story carried through centuries and still be relevant to the present day. This involves the Medieval chivalric code, the search for the Holy Grail, and the way this germ of myth has provided inspiration for noted story tellers and film makers: Mark Twain, T.S, White and musical of Camelot, and the various film renditions of the tale.

The 14 weeks will be divided into three sections:

Part I –the historical and archeological evidence identifying the actual person presumed to be the real Arthur;

Part II will be readings from the literary historical pieces which tell the King Arthur story before the 20th Century;

Part III will be the reading of *The Mists of Avalon*. In the readings, we will be looking for the factual and fictional renderings of the King Arthur story.

Finally, on the last day of class, we will try to explain why this story has persisted throughout 13 centuries. What does it contain that still inspires?

Preferences for teaching:

Tuesdays. 10:45

Tuesdays. 12:45

Wednesdays 10:45