

Fantasy and fandom: writing back to the medieval in modern fantasy

English, School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies

College of Arts and Law

Details

Code 22837

Level of study Third/Final year

Credit value 20

Semester 2

Module description

From heroes and quests to magic and hidden identities, modern fantasy has looked to the literature of the medieval period for inspiration. Yet it has also consistently transformed and reshaped its source material, rewriting the significance of key motifs and ideas in order to address the issues of its own time and place of production. This module will examine the ways in which modern fantasy writing both adopts and adapts the culture, language, characters and narratives of medieval texts, and in so doing identifies its authors as an (albeit diverse) fandom. Although not fanfiction in the strictest terms, modern fantasy writing often shares with it the desire to extend and appropriate the plots and protagonists of earlier texts, and to challenge or re-examine them by writing in an avatar who explores the textual world in a metaphorical representation of the author's own discovery of the original work. This module will look at forerunners for this in the medieval period too, and will encourage students to analyse the communally-driven nature of textual production and circulation in the Middle Ages, as well as the communities of interest which have written fantasy in response, from the late nineteenth century to the present. The module will provide the opportunity to examine a range of fantasy writing, which may include texts from George MacDonald and William Morris through C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien to contemporary writers such as Neil Gaiman, Michael Moorcock, J. K. Rowling and Ursula LeGuin.

[Privacy](#) | [Legal](#) | [Cookies and cookie policy](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Site map](#) | [Website feedback](#) | [Charitable information](#)

© University of Birmingham 2015

