

ENG 10A: MAPPING MONSTERS IN BRITISH LITERATURE, 600-1600

Professor Elaine Treharne

Monday and Wednesday, 1.30-2.50pm

Description and Course Aims

Werewolves, dragons, cannibals, witches, sea monsters, faeries, moral monstrosity, madness, the uncanny and the grotesque—the monstrous is frightening, fury-filled, unknowable, and seductive. Monsters inhabit the literary imagination and the historic landscape. Monsters live on the margins of society; they are culturally and ideologically fraught; they exhibit sexual, racial, religious, and physical difference. In this course, we shall examine the depiction and meaning of the monster in literature, manuscript images, and maps from England and Wales from about 650CE to 1650CE.

Major questions we'll be seeking to address include:

- What is it that monsters reveal about the societies that create and fear them?
- From where do monsters emerge? What spaces do they occupy? In what forms do they live among us?
- What functions do monsters serve? In what ways do they permit their communities to exercise control, reform society, and reframe history?

Through this course, students will learn to summarize, research, and discuss complex literary and illustrative texts through close reading, critical analysis, and clear exposition. Lectures will include space for discussion and workshop-style analysis, and will always seek to place the literary works in their social and historical contexts. Sections will focus in detail on textual explication.

SCHEDULE

Week 1 Where the Wild Things Are

Introduction: St Augustine, *Liber Monstrorum*

Marvels of the East

Mappae Mundi

Week 2 Describing the Indescribable

Beowulf

Week 3 Persecution and Punishment

Judith and *St Margaret*

Wife's Lament, *Wulf and Eadwacer*

Week 4 Dread and Decay

The Grave and Medieval Lyrics

Orienting the Medieval: Reading Early Maps

Week 5 Celtic Magic and Marvels

Gerald of Wales, *Topography of Ireland*; Marie de France, *Bisclavret*

Sir Orfeo

Week 6 Fabulous Folk

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Chaucer's *General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*

Week 7 Monstrous Women

Extracts from the *Book of Margery Kempe*

Extracts from Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*

Week 8 The Aberrant

Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*

Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*

Week 9 Deals with the Devil

William Shakespeare *Macbeth*

William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Week 10 Centers and Margins

Mapping the Monstrous

Class Projects

By the end of the module, students will be able to:

- interpret, contextualize and comment on early literatures with sensitivity and nuance
- locate and evaluate source materials in relation to relevant social, historical and cultural frameworks
- critically evaluate the role and significance of the monstrous within early texts and images.

Course Textbooks

You'll be supplied with a course textbook for the earlier materials, which will be supplemented with additional texts as online PDFs as the quarter unfolds.

You will need to buy:

Stephen Orgel, ed., *Macbeth* (London, Penguin, 2016)

Stephen Orgel, ed., *The Tempest* (Oxford: World's Classics, 2008)

J. S. Cunningham, ed., *Tamburlaine the Great* (Manchester University Press, 1999)

Assessment: The weekly workload includes prescribed reading of texts and supplementary background materials in the textbooks and on Canvas. All reading must be completed with care for report, reflection and discussion in lecture and in section.

Grades: Final grades are determined by the following formula: Participation Portfolio comprised of weekly short comprehension exercises and commentaries, and in-class discussions 40%; midterm essay, 30%; final project, 30%.