

# GAME OF THRONES

Spring 2015



This course examines the myths, texts and events that inspired HBO's award-winning television series. While we certainly will be paying homage to *Game of Thrones* throughout the semester, the book and television series aren't our discursive and interpretative end points but rather our points of departure. Our literary journey through the Seven Kingdoms weaves us through Viking sagas, Inquisition trials, penitential tracts, saints' lives, medieval travel narratives, how-to guides and ancient law codes. Topics of conversation surely will include (but are not limited to): eunuchs, mad kings, incest, magic, siege warfare, child brides, religion and ritual, guts and gore and more guts and gore.

**Disclaimer:** This course takes the idea of experiential learning very seriously. If the thought of eating dragon hearts, committing treason, marrying off family members, fighting in a battle that may leave you mortally wounded or doing other things that may make your stomach turn or eyes roll, this course probably is not for you. If you already engage in these activities or have harbored a secret desire to do so, then this course definitely is for you!

**Ruler of the 7 Kingdoms:** Dr. Jana Mathews

**Preferred Contact Method:** parchment scroll or e-mail: [jmathews@rollins.edu](mailto:jmathews@rollins.edu)

**My Castle:** Carnegie 115

**When/Where to find the party:** T/TH 9:30-10:45am Carnegie 115

**Confessions/Pleas for Mercy are taken (Office Hours):** Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30-2pm. I'm happy to meet you at other times as well. Email for an appointment!

## Required Course Materials

- Shakespeare, *Othello* (Not available at the Rollins bookstore. Purchase any edition (free online editions ok!))
- Access to Blackboard
- Rollins email account

**In lieu of book fees, please expect to spend approximately \$20 in supplies (for house challenges) over the course of the semester.**

## **Student Learning Objectives**

1. Hone extended close reading skills of texts, graphic novels, film and cultural phenomena
2. Learn how to read and engage with critical sources and basic literary theory
3. Develop and hone one's academic voice
4. Learn how to situate texts within larger literary, historical and cultural contexts
5. Conduct critical examinations of the relationships between authors and their textual sources and inspirations.

## **Course Assignments**

**1. Quizzes (10%):** All of your work for this course is designed to fulfill one or more of the course objectives. Daily reading assignments and class discussions and activities will prepare you for the quizzes and quizzes model the formats of exams. Early quizzes take the form of passage explications; quizzes assigned later in the semester will take the form of thesis statements and essay outlines. Due to the developmental nature and pacing of this course, I cannot accept late quizzes.

**2. Exams 1 & 2 (20%) and 2 (20%):** After honing your close reading skills with a few low stakes quizzes, you will have the opportunity to show off your analytical prowess on a larger stage. In these exams, you will construct 2-3 short original argumentative essays on course topics. These essays' structure will take the form of several linked close readings, yoked together by a bold thesis and sexy answer to the "so what" question.

**4. Essay (6 pages) (30%):** The argumentative research paper constitutes the highest form of academic writing. An argumentative research paper makes a unique, specific, and debatable argument about a larger thematic idea or topic and uses close readings of textual passages and selected secondary sources to bolster and support this claim. This is your chance to think boldly and flex your mental muscles. I value intellectual risk taking more than a perfectly polished paper, so push yourself outside your comfort zone and write the kind of paper that you have always been nervous or afraid to write.

**5. House Challenges (20%):** Teamwork isn't just a buzzword in *Game of Thrones*; it is the key to survival. Individuals who didn't belong to some sort of house, order, clan or tribe typically didn't last very long. In order to ensure your survival in this course, you will need to divide yourselves into houses comprised of 4 people. Choose your teammates strategically because throughout the term, the houses will compete against one another in a number of challenges that require brute strength, but also artistic mastery, intellectual creativity, and a lot of enthusiasm. In other words, picking teammates who share all of your same talents may leave you vulnerable in some of the challenges.



### 1. Westeros Fashion Show

*Game of Thrones* (television series) has been credited with inspiring some of this season’s hottest runway fashions. Now it’s time for you to get in on the action by designing and modeling your own *Game of Thrones*’s inspired creation.

### 2. Game of Thrones Valentines

If you lived in Westeros, what kind of valentines would you give your beloved? This challenge invites your house to make and deliver kingdom-inspired valentines...with a small catch.

### 3. Alchemy Magic Show

Oh, the things you could do with a vial of wildfire. While we won’t be mixing up anything quite as potent as the original, this challenge gives you the opportunity to work your magic...literally.

### 4. Torture Implement Trade Show

It would be cruel to let you watch tons of torture scenes without letting you torture someone yourself. This challenge asks you to invent and demonstrate your very own torture device to a crowd of eager executioners.

### 5. Westeros Idol

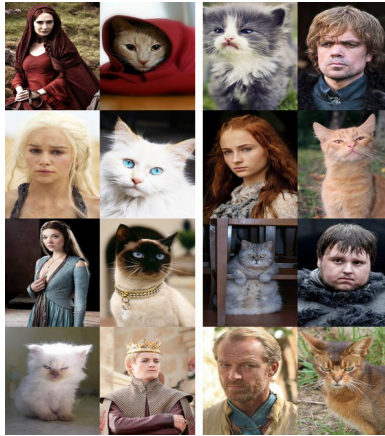
Remember Dontos Hollard, the knight-turned-fool that Joffrey almost killed by pouring wine down his throat? Don’t be that guy in this singing competition. Be prepared to bring it—medieval style.

### 6. Game of Thrones Dinner Party

It’s bad form not to bring food to a medieval feast, even if you are the guest. Your job: make a medieval or *Game of Thrones*-inspired dish to share for our tournament feast.

### 7. Tournament

We can’t study the *Game of Thrones* without having a tournament. Get your swords, battle-axes and water balloon launchers ready.



**Team Roles (team members will cycle through the roles)**

**King/Queen:** This person is the team leader and is responsible for organizing team meetings, leading group discussions, mediating team conflicts, making final decisions regarding strategy etc.

**Hand of the King:** This person serves as the king/queen’s right hand man/woman. As the team spokesperson, he/she is responsible for leading in-class presentations (if applicable), publicity (including props, costumes, uniforms), team marketing (boasting) and blaming (trash talking).

**Prince/Princess:** Your primary function is to make your house look good. You are the model (fashion show), singer (karaoke) etc.

**Bastard:** Due to his/her lowly status, performs a lot of the undesirable/embarrassing parts of the challenge. This person is the soldier, the hawk, the loudest and most aggressive bard etc..

Competition Grading

Your grade for each competition will be determined by the quality of work and level of effort that you put into each assignment. I will provide you with grading rubrics before each competition so you know exactly what is expected. Each person in your group has a different role to play, but the work load should be evenly distributed (each person should do 25% of the work). On the day of each challenge, each team member will fill in a pie graph showing each team member’s contribution to that challenge. I will use these graphs to facilitate grading. While it is my sincerest hope that every team member will earn the same grade for each assignment, this system also provides a measure of accountability for team members who may feel inclined to rely too heavily on the efforts of others.

In addition to individual grades, each house will compete for land on the Westeros map.

You will use this grid to build your kingdom. At the end of the semester, the house with the largest kingdom will earn 3 points extra credit on their essay. More importantly, they will also lay claim to the Iron Throne. The members of the second place team will earn 1 point extra credit.

Under this system, it is possible to come in last place in the Westeros Fashion Show but still receive an “A” for the competition. Similarly, it is possible to win first place in the trade show and earn a “B” or “C” on the assignment. In other words, personality alone can’t get you through this 😊

All course grades will be calculated using the following scale:

A (94-100) A- (90-93) B+ (87-89) B (84-86) B- (80-83) C+ (77-79); C (74-76); C- (70-73); D+ (66-69); D (64-66); D- (60-63) F (59 and below)

## Course Policies/Unsolicited Advice

### Attendance

Here's my take on attendance: you have made the commitment to enroll in my course (many thanks) and I take seriously the responsibility to make coming to class each day worth your while. Every classroom discussion and activity correlates to a mode of assessment, so missing class is equivalent to shooting yourself in the foot. Why would you do that? Because sometimes we need systems of accountability to keep us on the straight and narrow, this course abides by the following attendance policy: you are allowed 4 absences without penalty. Your 5th absence may result in your final course grade being lowered by 1 full letter grade. If you miss 6 classes, you will earn a failing grade for the course. No one has ever fallen into this category, so don't be the first! I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so choose your absences wisely. The only standing exception to this rule applies to students who are traveling on pre-approved college business (ie. varsity sports team). If you have a disability that may require additional exceptions to this rule, please make an appointment with the Disability Services Office.

### Extra Credit

Do you want to boost your grade in this course by doing a little extra outside work? Take your quizzes/exams to the Writing Center! While I don't offer formal extra credit, students who utilize the support and assistance of our fabulous writing consultants always do better on their assignments. There are several fantastic writing consultants on staff who have taken this course from me in the past and thus know "how I roll" including **Andrew Goring (agoring@rollins.edu)**, **Mandy McRae (amcrae@rollins.edu)**, and **Stephanie Sang (tsang@rollins.edu)**. You must make your appointments 24 hours in advance for most writing consultants using the Tutoring/Writing Appts link (found in the Campus Logins on the Rollins R-Net page). However, if you wish to utilize the services of any of the above tutors, you may contact them directly.

\*\*\*Please note that writing consultants have busy schedules and may not be able to accommodate you at the eleventh hour. Wise students will plan ahead and book their appointments well in advance of paper and exam due dates.

### Disability Services

Rollins College is committed to equal access and does not discriminate unlawfully against persons with disabilities in its policies, procedures, programs or employment processes. The College recognizes its obligations under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to provide an environment that does not discriminate against persons with disabilities.

If you are a person with a disability on this campus and anticipate needing any type of academic accommodations in order to participate in your classes, please make timely arrangements by disclosing this disability in writing to the Disability Services Office at (box 2613) - Thomas P. Johnson Student Resource Center, 1000 Holt Ave., Winter Park, FL, 32789. Appointments can be scheduled by calling 407-646-2354 or email: [gridgey@rollins.edu](mailto:gridgey@rollins.edu)

### Academic Honesty

This course places a heavy weight on independent thought and original work. For this reason, I take plagiarism very seriously. Forms of plagiarism include, but are not limited to purchasing a paper online, cutting and pasting material from the Internet or other electronic or print source (including Wikipedia), passing off someone else's work (or portions of that work) as your own, and failing to cite external sources. If I suspect that you have cheated on an assignment, I will encourage you to

self-report to the Dean of Student Affairs. Depending on the situation, you may fail the assignment, the course, or both. If you have a question or find yourself in muddy terrain, don't hesitate to ask me for help. With all submitted work, Rollins students affirm their commitment to the Academic Honor Code by including the following pledge followed by their signature:

*"On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work."*

### **Grading Rubric**

To promote fairness in grading, I adhere to the following standard evaluation rubric:

#### **A (90-100)**

The "A" essay contains a specific and arguable thesis statement that is sustained and supported throughout the entire essay. The essay displays a defined organizational structure with coherent introduction, body, and concluding paragraphs that are logically and seamlessly integrated by smooth transitional clauses and phrases. Textual citations are incorporated into complete sentences and are accurately cited and thoroughly explained and analyzed. The essay has been edited meticulously and is free of errors in spelling, grammar, usage, and mechanics.

#### **B (80-89)**

The "B" essay contains a thesis that is arguable but one that is underdeveloped or inconsistently argued. The paper follows a logical sequence, but individual paragraphs are disjointed, repetitive, confusing, digressive, or predictable. It offers more (or fewer) textual quotes than are necessary and/or fails to perform in-depth analyses of them. This level of essay contains sentences that are clear, but language that is imprecise or clumsy. Minor errors in grammar, spelling, and usage appear.

#### **C (70-79)**

The "C" essay lacks a specific thesis or presents one that "disappears" or "multiplies" after the first paragraph. It is overwhelmingly descriptive (plot summary) and contains transitions that are weak or confusing. This essay lacks depth in relation to the topic (penetrating only its surface) and contains numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

#### **D (60-69)**

The "D" essay lacks a central and unifying subject. It presents a confused and disjointed discussion of various, sometimes random ideas. Key elements of organization (introductory and concluding paragraphs) are missing or misplaced. Serious errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure and content are present.

#### **F (59 and below)**

The "F" essay is submitted late, does not follow the assignment, is plagiarized, or is incomprehensible.

## Course Schedule

\*\*\*=High Reading Load Day. We will approach the study of literary texts in the same way that we approach the study of film. Just as it would be awkward and disjointed to watch a 2-hour film in 15-minute increments spaced out over several weeks, it's equally disrupting to discuss a 200-page novel in 50-page linear segments...especially when the bulk of our class discussions and course assignments will be concerned with exploring a text's recurring themes, motifs, obsessions, and concerns. To promote invigorating class discussions that open up new lines inquiry and debate (rather than diffuse or suspend them), **I ask that you read the entire text before the first class period that it is assigned.** While this will require you to plan ahead and exercise good time management skills, it also will mean that there will be several days where you won't have any assigned reading. How cool is that?!

### Week 1

1/13 & 1/15 No Class ☺ I'm out of town speaking at a conference. The timing is awful, I know. Many apologies. If you haven't already done so, watch *Game of Thrones* Seasons 1-4. Please email me at [jmathews@rollins.edu](mailto:jmathews@rollins.edu) if you have any questions.

### Week 2 The Seven Kingdoms

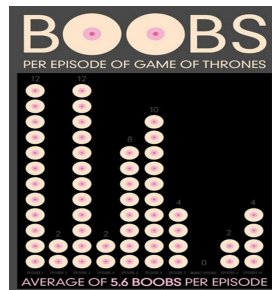
1/20 No Assigned Reading  
1/22 \*\*\**Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (BB)\*\*\*  
Due in Class: HOUSE BANNER

### Week 3 King's Landing (AKA The Court)

T 1/27 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Fitts 1 & 2  
TH 1/29 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Fitts 3 & 4

### Week 4 Dead Kings and Warrior Queens

2/3 from *The Death of King Arthur* (BB)  
2/5 "The Mission of Joan of Arc" (BB)  
Due in Class: WESTEROS FASHION SHOW



### Week 5 Medieval Tinder: Dating, Sex and Marriage

2/10 \*\*\* Chaucer, *The Man of Law's Tale* (BB) We will be studying the MoL's Tale in Middle English. If you are having trouble, see the BB link to Harvard's interlinear translation. Use for plot summary purposes only.

Loofbourow, "Game of Thrones Fails the Female Gaze" (BB)

Poniewozik, "Breast Practices: Too Many Boobs in Game of Thrones" (BB)

Iverson, "Where Are All the Penises?" (BB)\*\*\*

2/12 Marie of France, *Lanval* (BB)

Due in Class: GAME OF THRONES VALENTINES

### **Week 6 Incest, Rape and Castration**

2/17 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* Book IX (BB)

Itzkoff, "Rising Unease About Rape in *Game of Thrones*" (BB)

Lyons, "Yes Of Course It Was Rape on Last Night's *Game of Thrones*" (BB)

2/19 Abelard, *Historia calamitatum* (BB)

**EXAM 1 DUE**

### **Week 7 Predators of the Mind**

T 2/24 Shakespeare, *Othello* Acts 1-3

TH 2/26 Shakespeare, *Othello* Acts 4-5

### **Week 8 Spring Break**



### **Week 9 Wildfire and Magic**

T 3/10 from *Secretum philosophorum* (BB)

TH 3/12 \*\*\*Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (BB)\*\*\*

### **Week 10 The Old Gods and the New Gods**

T 3/17 Sturluson, from *The Prose Edda* (BB); *The Wanderer* (BB)

TH 3/19 de Voragine, from *The Golden Legend* (BB); á Kempis, from *The Imitation of Christ* (BB)

Due In Class: ALCHEMY MAGIC SHOW

### **Week 11**

T 3/24 No Assigned Reading!

TH 3/26 No Class: work on exam

### **Week 12 White Walkers, Wildlings, Monsters and Medieval Zombies**

T 3/31 *The Wonders of the East* (BB); "Prologue" (BB); from Prologue of *GoT* Graphic Novel (BB)

Due in Class: **EXAM 2**

TH 4/2 \*\*\**St. Erkenwald* (BB)\*\*\*





### **Week 13 The Fascination with Heads on Sticks**

4/7 \*\*\**Erec and Enide* (BB)\*\*\*

4/9 *Erec and Enide* continued (BB)

Boccaccio, *Decameron* Book IV, Story 5 (BB)

“Arya” from *Game of Thrones* (BB)

Due in Class: TORTURE IMPLEMENT TRADE SHOW

### **Week 14 Cannibals and Other Deviants**

4/14 Judith (BB)

4/16 Boccaccio, *Decameron* IV, Story 9 (BB)

Dante, *Vita Nuova* Sections I-IV (BB)

Due in class: TOURNAMENT



### **Week 15 Game of Thrones Dinner Party**

T 4/21 “Tan tai mo cor ple de joya” (BB)

TH 4/23 Dinner Party + Entertainment (students draw scripts that spell out fate. Each wearing color coded sticker that tells others what to do and to whom to do it to)

Due: DINNER PARTY and WESTEROS IDOL

### **Week 16 Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow ☹**

4/28 No Assigned Reading; In-class essay workshop

**ESSAY DUE: Please put a hard copy of your essay in the box outside my door by Monday, May 4, 2015 at 10am**