

THE CREATED MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE EARTH

One course to rule them all
HIST 380C

The world is changed

I feel it in the water. I feel it in the earth. I smell it in the air
Much that once was is lost, for none now live who remember it

Three of the Great Rings were given to the
Elves, immortal, wisest and fairest of all beings



Seven to the **Dwarves**, great
craftsmen of the mountain halls



Nine to the race of
Men, who above all else desire power

The Dark Lord **Sauron**

forged in secret a master ring, to control all others.



A last alliance of Men and
Elves marched against the
armies of Mordor and
Sauron was defeated. The
Ring passed to Isildur. But the
hearts of men are easily
corrupted. And the ring of
power has a will of its own.

And some things that should not have been forgotten were lost
History became Legend. Legend became Myth
And for two and a half thousand years,
the Ring passed out of all knowledge

The narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* covers less than two decades and marks end of the Third Age of Middle Earth. The three tales and the films based on them, along with *The Hobbit*, have a unique quality of richness, depth, culture and chronology because J.R.R. Tolkien over his lifetime built a comprehensive history from which they grew. The 3,000 years of the Third Age, 3,300 of the Second and 600 years of the First, the 14,300 Years of the Trees, the 34,000 Years of the Valar and the creation of the universe by Ilúvatar represent a complex, sometimes contradictory, usually fragmentary, often difficult, multi-fold, 55,000-year account of the history of this world. It is a history of Aman, the Sea and Middle-earth, written in form of annals, stories, epic tales, songs and poetry. The history he created was built largely on what he knew as a medieval scholar: in its forms, preoccupations, suppositions and visualizations, Tolkien constructed a history that incorporates an encompassing and unified world view, articulates hierarchies, jurisdictions and obligations, and presents ideals and realities in constant tension.

The world is changed, and a changing world is the province of the historian. Peter Jackson's Galadriel tells us that things have been forgotten and are thus lost. Tolkien's history has become legend: watchers, even readers, have only some sense it is there. And as legend diffuses, what remains is a vague, mythic sense of the War of the Ring as only the most recent act in a very old world.



January - April 2014
Mondays 6:30 - 9:30
Dr. T.S. Haskett