


THE RETURN OF THE COURSE

5 September, the 1219th Year of the Fourth Age


One course to rule them all



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

HSTR336T

Dr T.S. HASKETT
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
FALL 2019
Thursdays 2:30 to 5:20



Much that once was is lost, for none now live who remember it.
And some things that should not have been forgotten were lost.

History became Legend. Legend became Myth.

THE WORLD IS CHANGED

And then this course was built by the Eldar,
that legend and myth might once more become history.



The narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* covers less than two decades and marks the 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 the 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, presents ideals and realities in constant tension, and delivers thrilling, epic narrative stories of love and death, of war and achievement and betrayal and subversion.

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 that the War of the Ring is only the most recent act in a very, very old world.

From *Ainulindalë* to the War of the Ring: this is the history of Tolkien's world.



NO BACKGROUND IN HISTORY REQUIRED RE-WATCH PETER JACKSON'S *LORD OF THE RINGS*

The course is built for everyone who has an interest in Tolkien's world and is willing to do the work necessary to explore its sources as a real historical record. As an upper-level medieval history course, our focus is on primary source material, the record of this history of Arda and Middle-earth. You are expected to read the assigned material carefully and, while the lectures will cover much of what you have read, expanding, commenting and drawing conclusions from it, I will expect that you are already familiar with it.

In the unlikely event that you have not seen Peter Jackson's three *The Lord of the Rings* films you should do so as soon as possible. This will provide a basic grounding. If you have not read Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* books, this will not be a hindrance. Indeed, you will get so much more from them once you have done the course that I suggest you wait to read them until we are done. Jackson's *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, *The Desolation of Smaug* and *The Battle of the Five Armies* will these figure little in our undertakings, but the film has some important moments.