

PARSIFAL

Spring 2018

GER 659/CMPL 650/ENGL 665

T/R 12:00-1:15

Prof. Turco

Myth and Medieval Culture



"I cannot think of it without feeling violently shaken" (Friedrich Nietzsche on Wagner's *Parsifal*): This seminar deals with the literary, historical, and cultural transformations of the medieval legend of Parsifal, from 12th-century French Arthurian romance to the American graphic novel. Our focus will be on the German tradition (Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*, and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's 1983 filmic rendition of Wagner), with cross-illuminations from the tale's French, Celtic, Old Norse, and modern literary and cinematic transfigurations. Texts include Chretien de Troyes' *Perceval*, the Old French *Perlesvaus* and *Quest of the Holy Grail*, Robert de Boron's *Perceval*; the Middle Welsh *Peredur*, the Old Norse *Saga of Parceval*; Eric Rohmer's *Perceval le Gallois* (1978), Bernard Malamud's *The Natural*, and Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1974). All readings will be in English translation and made available to interested students in the original (medieval and modern German, Old French, Old Norse, and Middle Welsh). In addition to a somewhat complete versing in the permutations of Parsifal, this seminar introduces key aspects of medieval cosmology, theology, and science, as well as Arthurian romance, Celtic mythology, the legend of The Holy Grail, and the modern afterlife of medieval culture.