

Legends of Arthur (English 311)

Paper One : Sources and Backgrounds

2 to 3 pages long, double-spaced. Due Thursday 21 September.

Aim: To describe briefly the relevant historical evidence for King Arthur, and to evaluate it.

Method: Read the sources listed in our schedule for the week of 21 September. If you think it may be helpful to your case, try to find others using the resources provided on the syllabus.

Presentation: Describe the sources as briefly and succinctly as possible. I suggest one sentence for a description of the source (answering as best as possible who, what, where, when), and one to two sentences for a *description of its contents*. Then, *describe its relevance* to Arthur in one to two sentences (for each source). Here is a fictional example:

The Darnley Memorandum was written in early 1904 in Somerset, England, possibly by Lord Hugh Darnley. *It directs the Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Foster LaChoux, to cease making noise at the royal shipyard of Highgate Wash, as the noise was upsetting to Darnely's hunting hounds. It mentions King Arthur in passing as one of Darnely's identities during several past lives. Unfortunately, the Memorandum cannot be used as evidence that Arthur existed.*

Once you have amassed and assessed the relevant evidence, come to your own conclusion about the historical existence of King Arthur. Try to determine not only whether he existed or not, but also the degree to which we can connect any historical figure to the famous king of song and story.

NB (nota bene, or note well): This assignment helps me to determine whether or not you've read the relevant texts, assessed them adequately, and come to any conclusions about the historical accuracy of the texts we are reading. My interest is in the soundness of your argument, not in the conclusion you reach.