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# Charlemagne And The Matter Of France

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**OSHER 675-002**

**Dates:** Thursdays: October 15 – November 19

**Time:** 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm

**Location:** Online via Zoom

**Instructor:** Gordon Jones

**Course Description:**

The Matter of France is the second of the three great “matters” of medieval European literature. The first, the Matter of Britain, deals with King Arthur and legends and myths associated with him; the third, the Matter of Rome, deals with material from classical history and mythology.

The Matter of France is sometimes called the Carolingian Cycle as it springs from the historical figure of Charlemagne, to whose existence has been attached to a body of literature and legendary material associated with the history (and pseudo-history) of France, the Crusades, and the Holy Land.

This course will begin with the historical Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire, and then examine the more romantic Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers (or Paladins), as they were dealt with in the Old French chansons de geste, providing inspiration and subject matter for medieval and Renaissance epics, art, and, later, novels and operas.

**Course Overview:** *(Tentatively)*

- Week1:** The historical Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire
- Week2:** The Song of Roland and the introduction of the Twelve Peers
- Week3:** The Twelve Peers in Italy and Jerusalem

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**Week4:** The Northern connections: Ogier the Dane; Valentine and Orson, Willehalm (Charlemagne's cousin), and others

**Week5:** The Southern French connection. Charlemagne in Occitania

**Week6:** Everything else, including modern adaptations

(I say "tentatively," because much will depend on the level of familiarity with the subject matter on the part of the class, and where our collective interests may lead us. I have a collection of more than 30 volumes on the Matter of France, so there is plenty of material.)

