

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 3116E (001) - Middle English Literature
Tuesdays (12:30-2:20) and Thursdays (12:30-1:20)

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30 or by appointment

Course Description:

In this course, we will study the language spoken in England and the literature written in English from about 1200 to 1500, with a special focus on the work of Geoffrey Chaucer. We will explore a range of genres and themes, and attend to some of the political contexts surrounding the development of literary traditions in late medieval England. This was a period of staggering social crisis—famine, plague, rebellion, war—but also a period of flowering literary creativity in English culture: we will explore the crises and the creativity, aiming to understand this history so that we might better understand our own cultural moment and the language we use and inhabit every day.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) read Middle English for the purposes of examining the content, themes, rhetoric, and prosody of Middle English literature, and understand the principles of pronouncing Middle English;
- 2) describe and explain the literary and aesthetic expectations of a variety of medieval genres, including romance, satire, fabliau, hagiography, drama, and dream vision;
- 3) construct and present a complex argument about one or more Middle English texts, demonstrating mastery of the points above and engagement with relevant critical debates about the literature.

Course Texts:

Burrow, J.A. and Thorlac Turville-Petre, eds. *A Book of Middle English*, 3rd Ed. Malden, Oxford, and Victoria: Blackwell, 2005.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Troilus and Criseyde*. Second Edition. Edited by Stephen A. Barney. New York and London: Norton, 2006.*

*Note: You must buy **this** version of *Troilus and Criseyde*, as the background readings included in this edition will be part of your assigned reading for the year.

The Auchinleck Manuscript. The National Library of Scotland. <http://auchinleck.nls.uk>.

Fitzgerald, Christina M. and John T. Sebastian, eds. *The Broadview Anthology of Medieval Drama*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2012.

The Bible. If you don't own a copy, go to <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/> and bookmark this page. When looking up passages or stories, try checking different versions. Relevant versions for this course include: a) the Douay-Rheims (the "Catholic Bible" – a translation of the Latin Vulgate. The Vulgate was the version familiar to Chaucer and his contemporaries); b) Wycliffe's Bible (fourteenth-century translation made by followers of the English reformer John Wycliffe); the Geneva Bible (the Bible of the Calvinist Reformation, an interesting contrast to the Douay); The King James Bible.

Marks Distribution:

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|---------------------------------|------|
| Participation | 5% |
| Reading tests (best 5 out of 6) | 25% |
| Essay #1 (5-6 pages) | 15% |
| Research Essay (10-12 pages) | 20% |
| Final exam | 35% |
| | 100% |

Class participation:

To earn a **passing** participation grade, you must **attend** class regularly, listen attentively, and come **prepared** to discuss the assigned reading. Beyond this, participation credit will also be given for thoughtful questions and comments, and, in general, demonstration of active engagement with the course material in class. Attendance will be recorded on a sign-in sheet every class to help ensure that your participation grade is fair and objective. **Please note that students can be barred from writing final exams in cases of frequent absence from class.** Read actively, **take responsibility for your own learning**: take notes, formulate questions, try to make connections between texts and ideas on your own.

Reading Tests:

You will write six reading tests over the course of the year (three per term), worth 5% each of your total course grade; your lowest test grade will not be counted. These will be designed to test your progress in learning Middle English vocabulary and grammar, your basic comprehension of assigned texts (plot, structure, character), and to help you prepare for the final exam. Note well the dates of these tests on the class schedule and make sure you don't miss them as **I will not give make-up tests for students who miss them.**

Papers:

Detailed instructions and topics for the formal papers will be distributed in class. Remember that careful editing and proofreading for spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and structure are important in all your written work, and shortcomings in these areas will be reflected in your marks.

Essays must follow MLA style and are due **in electronic and hard copy at the beginning of class** in class on the date assigned (see class schedule). The electronic copy will be submitted to "Turnitin" to ensure academic integrity and the hard copy will be graded. Late essays will lose 3% per day (including weekends). A paper is considered late if it is handed in any time after the start of class on the date it is due. Extensions will be granted only in the case of serious, documented illness or emergency and must be accompanied by documentation processed through Academic Counseling. University policy states that I cannot grant extensions without such documentation.

Final Exam:

Exams are scheduled by the University.

DO NOT MAKE TRAVEL PLANS UNTIL YOU KNOW YOUR EXAM SCHEDULE.

Value of term work and exam:

STUDENTS MUST PASS BOTH TERM WORK AND THE FINAL EXAMINATION (IN COURSES WITH FINAL EXAMINATIONS) IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE. STUDENTS WHO FAIL THE FINAL EXAMINATION (REGARDLESS OF THEIR TERM MARK) AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE COURSE.

Class Conduct:

All students are expected to conduct themselves according to high standards of respect and civility in the classroom. To that end, students are asked to respect the following guidelines:

1. Frame questions and differences of opinion in a constructive and professional manner.
2. Respect the rights of each student and of the instructor to speak without having to talk over other voices.
3. Turn off cell-phones and headsets before the start of class, and for the duration of the class. Note: this means no texting during class.
4. Refrain from reading newspapers/magazines/books and from doing work for other classes.
5. **Laptops and other electronic devices are not permitted in class.**

Email Conduct:

Please address and sign all email correspondence appropriately. Typically, emails will be answered within 48 hours, although I do not always answer emails in the evening or on weekends. If you have not heard from me after 48 hours, please re-send your message: do not assume that I have received your email if you do not receive a reply.

Academic Accommodation:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a major academic offense: see the Scholastic Offense Policy in the Academic Calendar. In sum, plagiarism includes the possession and use of unauthorized materials in examinations, giving to or obtaining from other students in an examination information, representing another student or having oneself represented by another student at an examination, submitting in one course a paper in whole or part already submitted for credit in another course, submitting a paper containing a statement of fact known by the student to be false, submitting a paper in which a reference or source has been fabricated, submitting a paper in which a quotation from another source or a borrowed idea is presented as one's own.

Borrowed ideas, not just quotations, must be appropriately acknowledged, and this includes borrowings from Internet sources just as it does Library sources. The documentation of your sources is an essential part of writing for university. Borrowing ideas is fine in an academic essay provided that the source of the ideas is identified; but borrowing ideas without identifying the source is academic dishonesty and theft, and the consequences of such dishonesty can be severe. Plagiarism charges are easy to avoid: put quotations in quotation marks and document the sources of all quotations and borrowed ideas. If you have any doubt about a particular case, I encourage you to ask me for help.

Prerequisites:

Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, the University reserves the right to remove the student from the course and to delete it from the student's record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to his or her fees in the event that he or she is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Information for Students:

Departmental and university policies related to course work, grades, plagiarism, appeals, etc. are available on the English Department website. Please see: <http://uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Class Schedule (subject to change):

- Sept 10 Course Introduction
15 BME 1-18; Caxton's Prologue to the *Eneydos* (handed out in class)
17 BME 19-37; *The Owl and the Nightingale*, lines 1-54
22 BME 38-55; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 417-447
24 Trevisa, *Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk* (BME 235-242)
29 **Test 1** on BME, 1-55 (Chs 1-5), Trevisa, vocabulary
- Oct 1 BME 62-64. Introduction to the Auchinleck Manuscript; "The Legend of Pope Gregory"
6 "On the Seven Deadly Sins"
8 "Lai le Fresne"
13 "Kyng Alisaunder" (excerpt)
15 "Kyng Alisaunder" (excerpt)
20 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book X, "Orpheus and Eurydice"; Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* 3, metre 12; *Sir Orfeo*, 1-194
22 *Orfeo*, 195-434
27 *Orfeo*, 435-604; **Test 2** on the Auchinleck Manuscript and *Sir Orfeo*
29 Fall study break (no classes)
- Nov 3 *St Erkenwald*, 1-38
5 *Erkenwald*, 39-104
10 *Erkenwald*, 105-176
12 *Erkenwald*, 176-256
17 *Erkenwald*, 257-352
19 **Test 3** on *St. Erkenwald*
24 Introduction to Chaucer: "Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, His Owen Scriveyn"; "Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse"
26 Introduction to Chaucer: "Fortune"; "Lak of Stedfastnesse"
- Dec 1 *The Miller's Tale*
3 *The Miller's Tale* cont'd
8 Term wrap-up; **Essay #1 DUE in class**

Mid-term period: Dec 11-Dec 22 (There is no mid-term test in this course)

- Jan 5 Introduction to *Troilus and Criseyde*
7 T&C Book I, lines 1-56; *Il Filostrato*, Proem
12 Book 1
14 Book 2
19 Book 2 cont'd
21 Book 2 cont'd
26 **Test 4** on Books 1-2; Book 3, lines 1-512
28 Book 3
- Feb 2 Book 3 cont'd
4 Book 4
9 Book 4 cont'd
11 Book 4 cont'd; **Test 5** on Books 3-4
16 Reading week
18 Reading week
23 Book 5
25 Book 5 cont'd
- Mar 1 Book 5 cont'd
3 Reading criticism: Donaldson, Robertson, Dinshaw readings
8 **Test 6** on Book 5; T&C wrap-up
10 Introduction to Drama; Croxton Play of the Sacrament
15 York Plays
17 York Plays cont'd
22 Chester Plays
24 Towneley Plays
29 Towneley Plays cont'd
31 Final exam review; Research Essay **DUE in class**
- Apr 5 Final exam review

Final exam period: April 9-30