

English 325: Chaucer
MWF 9:00-9:50, Kennedy 104

Professor Lori Garner
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Welcome to the class! Geoffrey Chaucer's prolific body of work offers a fascinating and rewarding introduction to the range of genres and traditions in the medieval world. Through close and careful reading of Chaucer's many and varied writings—all in the original Middle English—we will work to develop proficiency in and appreciation of the language written and spoken in fourteenth-century London. Unit One will be devoted to study of selected *Canterbury Tales*; in Unit Two, we will read the long narrative romance, *Troilus and Criseyde* in its entirety; and Unit Three will treat representative works from Chaucer's dream visions and short poetry. Throughout each of these units, we will examine the creative ways in which Chaucer combined tradition and innovation within his poetic compositions and explore Chaucer's engagement with such issues as social class, philosophy, gender, and religion. To help fully contextualize Chaucer's poetry, supplemental readings will include relevant works by Chaucer's influences and contemporaries as well as recent scholarly interpretations of his writings. All assigned readings, including supplemental texts, are included in the Norton Critical Editions that are required for the class. Course requirements include active class participation, a series of papers culminating in a substantial research project, three examinations, oral recitations of Chaucer's poetry, and daily graded assessments. *Prerequisite: any 200-level literature course.*

Course Goals

The sequence of readings and assignments has been designed with the following objectives in mind:

- 1) Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (specifically in relation to medieval England);
- 2) Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) relating to the study of Middle English language and literature;
- 3) Learning to *analyze* and *critically evaluate* ideas, arguments, and points of view (specifically, when writing about Chaucerian literature).

Texts

To the best of my knowledge all of these texts are available at the Rhodes College bookstore. Please notify me as soon as possible if you encounter any problems obtaining these assigned texts. [Note: It will be very important for everyone to have these specific editions. Others cannot substitute.]

- V.A. Kolve and Glending Olson, eds. *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteen Tales and the General Prologue*. By Geoffrey Chaucer. Norton Critical Edition, 2nd edition. 2005.
- Stephen Barney, ed. *Troilus and Criseyde*. By Geoffrey Chaucer. Norton Critical Edition. 2006.
- Kathryn Lynch, ed. *Dream Visions and Other Poems*. By Geoffrey Chaucer. Norton Critical Edition. 2007

Course Requirements

- Papers: 40% (breakdown below)
 - Papers 1-3, 10% each
 - At the beginning of the semester, each student will choose a particular theme or approach that will guide his/her research agenda throughout the semester.
 - Each of our three units will conclude with the submission of a 1,250-word paper on your chosen theme or topic. Each of these papers should offer close textual analysis, demonstrate a solid understanding of current critical scholarship, and develop a clearly articulated and well-supported thesis. In addition, each paper

- should be submitted with a short cover letter explaining how this assignment will fit into your larger research agenda. (See below.)
- *Late papers:* For papers 1-3, papers submitted after the beginning of class on the due date but on the same day will be subject to a 5% penalty. Papers submitted more than one day late, but within one week of the original deadline, will be subject to a 10% penalty. Papers submitted more than one week late cannot be accepted unless arrangements have been made ahead of time.
 - Final Research Paper, 10%
 - The final research paper of 3000-3,750 words will build on and draw from these earlier papers, offering a carefully integrated and synthesized analysis of your chosen topic across at least three of Chaucer's works. Additional information and requirements regarding the paper will be provided later in the semester.
 - Papers submitted after the beginning of the Final Examination time but within 24 hours will be subject to a 10% penalty. To ensure that grades are submitted on time, late research papers cannot be submitted more than one day after the Final Examination time. Papers submitted more than 24 hours will receive 0 credit. Any special arrangements must be made ahead of time and outside of class.
 - General notes
 - All papers must be submitted in hard copy AND electronically through the Moodle website. Please try not send assignments as attachments through email unless you experience problems with Moodle.
 - *Extenuating circumstances:* Any special arrangements must be made ahead of time and outside of class.
 - Daily Assessments: 20%
 - To help facilitate class comprehension and retention of Chaucer's writings, most days (except for test dates and days on which papers are due) students will be asked to complete in-class or online assessments, addressing such skills as language competence in Middle English, reading comprehension of Chaucer's narratives, and brief analysis of selected passages. While the specific format and focus will vary from day to day, assessments will always address only the readings for that particular day and will generally require only approximately 5 minutes.
 - Sometimes these will be administered at the beginning of class and other times will need to be completed ahead of time on Moodle. If you miss class, be sure to check the website for any missed instructions. In-class questions will be given at the beginning of class. Students arriving late will not receive extra time unless special arrangements have been made ahead of time and outside of class. Online quizzes will be made available at least 24 ahead of time and will become unavailable 10 minutes before the start of class. Please plan your time accordingly.
 - Because of the logistical problems involved in making up quizzes and in-class activities, two scores will be dropped to allow for occasional illness or emergency. Any special arrangements for extenuating circumstances must be made ahead of time and outside of class.
 - On research showing the long-term effectiveness of daily quizzes on developing "much deeper fluency" in course material, see a 2007 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, linked through Moodle.
 - Examinations: 30% (combined)
 - We will have three equally-weighted examinations (10% each), one following each unit of the course. These examinations will include a combination of objective questions, short answer, and essays. Examinations will be designed to test skills in reading, retaining, and interpreting Chaucer's works in their cultural, historical, and literary contexts. Detailed review guides will be provided two class periods prior to each exam. Please note that there will not be a comprehensive final examination, though we will be meeting for an oral recitation during the final exam period. (See further below.)
 - Please note that any special arrangements for make-up examinations must be made ahead of time and outside of class. Except in the case of serious illness or other documented

emergency, make-up examinations will receive a 20% deduction. No make-up examinations will be administered more than one week after the original exam except in the most dire (and thoroughly documented) situations.

- Oral Readings: 10%
 - Because medieval texts in their original contexts were often experienced aurally rather than through silent and private readings, a great deal of attention will be given to Chaucer issues of pronunciation and oral performance. In addition to informal readings during class, there will be three graded readings:
 - For the first unit, you will each prepare and memorize the opening lines of the *Canterbury Tales*, reciting it for me in my office sometime before the first examination.
 - For the second unit, you will each be assigned a day to read (but not memorize) lines from *Troilus and Criseyde* in class.
 - At the time scheduled for our final examination, the class will meet for a group reading of *Parliament of Fowls*, to which other members of the department will be invited. Please note that final research papers will also be due by this time and plan accordingly.

Additional Notes

Class preparation: Please read all materials carefully before you come to class. Bring questions about what is difficult or confusing to you. Also come prepared to share your thoughtful insights and responses. It is your responsibility to notify me *before* classtime of any problems completing readings or assignments. While time spent completing readings and assignments will no doubt vary from student to student and from day to day, you should expect to spend several hours preparing for each hour that you are in class. See helpful tips on time management at <http://www.rhodes.edu/12089.asp>.

Honor code: All work must adhere to the honor code: "As a member of the Rhodes community, I pledge I will not lie, cheat, or steal, and that I will report any such violation that I may witness."

Plagiarism and academic integrity: The Rhodes College Honor Council Constitution defines plagiarism as follows: "Cheating includes plagiarism; specifically, it is the act of using another person's words or ideas and representing them as one's original work. This includes, without limitation, using information from any source without proper reference, getting ideas or words from a classmate's paper, failure to properly punctuate direct quotes, and obtaining a paper from someone else. Ignorance is not an excuse for these violations. It is the student's responsibility to consult the professor, an Honor Council member, or writing handbooks for procedure for properly acknowledging sources." Barret Library offers the following advice for avoiding possible plagiarism (<http://www.rhodes.edu/barret/15554.asp>):

- Acknowledge and cite all sources properly.
- Use quotation marks around words that are not your own.
- Properly introduce and indent longer quotations that are not your own.
- Use footnotes or endnotes to acknowledge another's words or ideas.
- Do not paraphrase too closely.

Please note also that all writing in English 325 must be original work produced specifically for this course. No paper or portion of a paper—even if revised—may receive credit if it has already received or will receive credit in another class. Please ask me or a Writing Center staff member if you have any doubt about even a small portion of a paper that you have produced.

Attendance: As the official Student Handbook explains, Rhodes College "considers interactive engagement with other students and the professor, in a structured setting, to be one of the essential and central components of the academic program. . . . Absenteeism is not to be taken lightly" (<http://www.rhodes.edu/studenthandbook/2176.asp>). Regular attendance is thus expected and counts as a part of your participation grade. Three tardies will be treated as one absence. In addition to the effect of absences on your participation grade, after three unexcused absences, your overall grade may automatically

be reduced by 1 percentage point each day, down to 60%. (In other words, a student will not fail on the basis of attendance alone, but poor attendance could theoretically reduce a grade as low as D-.) For example, if your course average at the end of the semester is an 80% and you have 4 unexcused absences, your course grade will be lowered to 79%. I will take roll or distribute a roll sheet at the beginning of each class. I will have a sign-in sheet for late arrivals at the front of the room. Please note that it is *your* responsibility to sign the sheet if you arrive late in order to avoid recorded absences. Absences and tardies may be excused only if I have been notified ahead of time and outside of class. If you miss class, be sure to check the course website for missed material or assignments. Students whose reasons for absence raise privacy concerns should seek assistance from the Office of Student Affairs:
<http://www.rhodes.edu/campuslife/1186.asp>.

Computer problems: Please be aware that computer and printing problems will not serve as an excuse for late assignments. Back up your hard-drive files frequently, and always keep a second hard copy of your assignments.

Special Accommodations: If you require any disability-related accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. I am more than happy to help make any necessary arrangements. If you have not already done so, please contact the Office of Disability Services: 901-843-3885. For further information, go to <http://www.rhodes.edu/disabilityservices/default.asp>.

Library Reserve: Books that might be especially helpful for your research will be placed on reserve in Barret Library, including the following: *Cambridge Companion to Chaucer* (ed. Boitani and Mann), *The Yale Companion to Chaucer* (ed. Lerer), and *A Companion to Chaucer* (ed. Brown). All of these include helpful essays by established scholars across a wide range of topics. For information on using Library Reserves, go to <http://www.rhodes.edu/barret/4446.asp>.

Additional Resources: Success in this course and others is likely to be enhanced with careful time management, good study habits, and a general sense of well-being. The Counseling Center offers free and confidential counseling to Rhodes students: <http://www.rhodes.edu/counselingcenter.asp>. In addition, helpful links and information on such issues as test anxiety, procrastination, study skills, and stress are available at <http://www.rhodes.edu/12077.asp>.

Extenuating Circumstances: If you need to discuss extenuating circumstances, please arrange a time to meet with me or contact me by email. Please avoid using the time immediately before and after class to ask for special arrangements. Information on late penalties can be found under course requirements.

Tentative Schedule

[Note: All readings and assignments should be completed by classtime on the dates provided below. If you miss class for any reason, please check the Moodle site for any changes or additions. Please be sure to notify me as soon as possible and before the start of class if you encounter any problems.]

W 1/11: Introduction to class; opening of "General Prologue"

UNIT ONE: CANTERBURY TALES *readings from Kolve and Olson's edition*

F 1/13: Preface (xi-xiv); "Chaucer's Language" (xv-xix); "General Prologue" lines 1-410 (pp. 3-12);

M 1/16: *no class, MLK*

W 1/18: From Boccaccio's *Decameron*, First Day, Introduction and Tenth Day, Conclusion (pp. 312-326); "General Prologue" 411-end (pp. 12-23); *Drop/Add period ends*

F 1/20: "Knight's Tale" lines 859-1880 (pp.23-45)

M 1/23 "Knight's Tale" lines 1881-3108 (pp. 45-71)

W 1/25 "Reeve's Prologue and Tale" (pp. 88-99); "The Miller and the Two Clerics" (pp. 344-47);
F 1/27 "Wife of Bath's Tale" lines 857-1264 (pp. 121-130); John Gower, "Tale of Florent" (pp. 386-96);
"Gentilesse," lines 1-21 (*Dream Visions and Other Poems* pp. 220-21);

M 1/30 "Wife of Bath's Prologue" lines 1-856 (pp. 102-121); excerpts from Jean de Meun's *Romance of the Rose* (pp. 348-57)

W 2/1 "Franklin's, Introduction, Prologue, and Tale" lines 673-1624 (pp. 212-233); Boccaccio's *Decameron*, 10th Day, Fifth Tale (pp. 424-28); *pass/fail period ends*

F 2/3: "Prioress,' Introduction, Prologue and Tale" (248-55); "The Story of the *Alma Redemptoris Mater*" (pp. 439-444); Pope Gregory X, "On Christian Mistreatment of Jews" (pp. 449-450)

M 2/6 "Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale" lines 313-968 (233-48); "Wycliffite Estates Criticism" (pp. 339-40)

W 2/8 "Prologue and Tale of Sir Topas," lines 691-918 and selections from "Prologue and Tale of Melibee" (pp. 255-268); from *Guy of Warwick* lines 1-120 (pp. 451-54)

F 2/10 "Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale," lines 2767-3460 (pp. 269-85); Caxton's text from *Aesop's Fables* (455-56); Marie de France, "The Cock and the Fox" (pp. 456).

M 2/13 *The Canterbury Tales* in modern scholarship: readings TBA; "Chaucer's Words to Adam, His Own Scribe" lines 1-7 (pp. 216-17)

W 2/15 **Paper 1 Due** (Please submit on Moodle and in hard copy by the beginning of class time.)

F 2/17 **Exam 1**

UNIT TWO: TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

readings from Barney's edition

M 2/20 *Filostrato* Proem (pp. 3-7); *Troilus and Criseyde* Book One, lines 1-546 (pp.8-39) and corresponding portions of *Filostrato*; "Chaucer's Language" and "The Versification of *Troilus and Criseyde*" (xx-xxv)

W 2/22 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book One, lines 546-1092 (pp. 39-67)

F 2/24 *Troilus and Criseyde* Book Two, lines 1-976 (pp. 68-111)

M 2/27 *Troilus and Criseyde* Book Two, lines 977-1755 (pp. 111-149)

W 2/29 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book Three, lines 1-1054 (pp. 149-183)

F 3/2 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book Three, lines 1055-1820 (pp. 184-223)

M 3/5 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book Four, lines 1-798 (pp. 223-65)

W 3/7 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book Four, lines 799-1701 (pp. 265-311)

F 3/9 *Troilus and Criseyde* Book Five, lines 1-945 (pp. 311-363)

March 12-16 Spring Break

M 3/19 *Troilus and Criseyde* Book Five, lines 946-1869 (pp. 363-428); Talbot Donaldson; Introduction (pp. ix-xx)

W 3/21 *Troilus and Criseyde* in modern scholarship: readings TBA; *withdraw period ends*

F 3/23 **Paper 2 Due** (Please submit on Moodle and in hard copy before the beginning of class time.)

M 3/26 **Exam 2**

UNIT THREE: DREAM VISIONS AND OTHER POEMS

readings from Lynch, except where otherwise noted

W 3/28 Preface and "A Quick Course in Chaucer's Language" (ix-xx); *House of Fame*, Book One, lines 1-508 (pp. 39-55); Ruth Evans, "Chaucer in Cyberspace: Medieval Technologies of Memory and the *House of Fame*" (229-231); Ovid's "House of Fame" or "Rumor" (pp. 257-58); from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Romance of the Rose* (pp. 275-81).

F 3/30 *House of Fame*, Book Two, lines 509-1090 (pp. 55-68); from Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* (pp. 282-284)

M 4/2 *House of Fame*, Book Three, lines 1110-2158 (pp. 69-92); Introduction (39-43)
W 4/4 *Parliament of Fowls*, introduction and lines 1-699 (pp. 93-116); A.C. Spearing, "The Parliament of Fowls as Dream Poetry" (pp. 325-35); Cicero, from "Scipio's Dream" (pp. 258-64); from Macrobius "The Commentary on Scipio's Dream" (pp. 265-68)
F 4/6 *Legend of Good Women* Prologue, "Cleopatra," "Thisbe," lines 1-923 (pp. 122-145)

M 4/9 *Legend of Good Women* "Dido," "Hypsipile and Medea," "Lucrece," lines 924-1885 (pp. 146-169); from Virgil's *Aeneid* (pp. 231-244); from the *Heroides* "Dido to Aeneas" (pp. 245-51)
W 4/11 *Legend of Good Women* "Ariadne," "Philomela," "Phyllis," and "Hypermnestra" lines 1886-2723 (pp. 169-189); Introduction (pp. 117-22)
F 4/13 Chaucer's dream visions in modern scholarship: readings TBA.

M 4/16 **Paper 3 Due** (Please submit on Moodle and in hard copy by the beginning of class time.)

W 4/18 **Exam 3**

Friday, April 20: Easter Recess

M 4/23 Introduction to "Short Poems" (pp. 207-211); "An ABC" lines 1-184 (pp.211-217; "Merciless Beauty," lines 1-39 (pp. 217-18); "To Rosemounde" lines 1-24 (pp. 218-19); "Truth," lines 1-21 (pp. 219-20); "Envoy to Bukton," lines 1-32 (pp. 224-25); "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse," lines 1-26 (pp. 225-26); Submit final plan for research paper on Moodle.
W 4/25 Research Paper Workshop; Concluding Thoughts; Course Evaluations
F 4/27 *URCAS, no class meeting*

May 1 Exam Time: Tuesday 5:30pm; Oral Recitations; Submit Research Papers.