

Engl 320 (19494)  
Fall 2008  
MWF 11-11:50  
PAL 207

Dr. Kristin Lynn Cole  
PAL 304  
Office Hours: MW 9:30-11  
and by appointment  
colek@rhodes.edu

### Chaucer in His Time

I schal telle hit as-tit, as I in toun herde,  
with tonge,  
As hit is stad and stoken  
In stori stif and stronge,  
With lel letteres loken,  
In londe so hatz ben longe.  
--*Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght*, ll. 31-36

England in the fourteenth century was an exciting and dangerous place, one of great social upheaval and unrest brought on by plague and war. Out of this crucible came the foundational works of English literature, most especially Chaucer's verse. This course aims to integrate Chaucer in his time period and thus create a better understanding of England and English literature at the end of the Middle Ages. We will study a range of poems, prose, and plays from this time period, including selections from *The Canterbury Tales*, some travel literature, excerpts from *Piers Plowman*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *The Second Shepherd's Play*. These texts will enable a lively discussion of how literature interacts with politics and society and how writers engage and foment social change.

### TEXTBOOKS

- Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteen Tales and the General Prologue* (ISBN 978-393-92587-6)
- *A Middle English Anthology*, Ed. Ann S. Haskell (ISBN 0-8143-1798-7)
- Handouts.

**N.B.** Different editions of medieval texts vary widely. It is therefore important that you use the texts listed here. If you have another edition you would like to use, you must clear it with me first.

### GRADES AND GRADING POLICY

Quizzes	5%	Paper 1 (3-5 pages)	15%
Memorization	10%	Paper 2 (5-7 pages)	20%
Presentation	10%	Paper 3 (12-15 pages)	25%
Midterm Exam	15%		

**Quizzes** I will give 5-10 quizzes to check your comprehension of the language and the literature. There will be no make-up of quizzes you miss due to absence or tardiness.

**Memorization** You will memorize 60 lines of text, including the first 18 lines of the *General Prologue*, to be recited in my office. You can choose from any of the texts on the syllabus, and you can complete the memorization in chunks; however, you must respect the text and not cut it short. I will deduct a letter grade if you do fewer than 60 lines and/or cut a sentence or stanza in slavish adherence to the assignment requirement.

**Presentation** Either individually or as a group, you will give a presentation during the semester. The topic *may* be related to your research paper topic, but it needs to be a different iteration. For example, your research paper may be on staging medieval cycle plays while your presentation could be about performing a part of *The Second Shepherd's Play*. You will hand out an annotated bibliography to the class before your presentation.

**Midterm** You will be given a take-home midterm over Chaucer.

**Paper 1** For Papers 1 and 2, you will need to pick a pilgrim from the syllabus. Paper 1 will require you to do a translation and versification of 25 lines of poetry from your pilgrim's Prologue or Tale.

**Paper 2** For this paper you will examine your pilgrim in the context of the *Canterbury Tales*. I will expect you to integrate some secondary reading to buttress your argument, but the focus will be on close-reading.

**Paper 3** This paper will be more research-oriented. You will be required to examine one or more of the readings from the syllabus in their context: political, religious, social, or otherwise. You will turn in a topic proposal as part of this assignment.

**Absences and Tardies** You are allowed **THREE** absences free-of-charge; use them wisely. I will expect you to let me know in advance if you need to miss class for any reason, and it is at *my* discretion whether I choose to excuse an absence. Because tardies are disruptive, I will count each tardy as an absence starting with the third tardy. *Your final course average will drop .2 for each unexcused absence or tardy once you've used up the freebies.*

**Papers** All writing should be typed and proofread. You should use Times New Roman as your font, size 12 as your font size, and 1" margins. MLA is the default style unless otherwise indicated. You will need to turn in all essays in a folder.

**Late Paper Policy** Your letter grade will drop *1/3 grade* for each 24-hour period it is late. Failure to complete any major assignment, including memorization, will result in failure of the course.

**Academic Honesty** All work must adhere to the honor code and be original. If you wish to work on a topic in both this and another class or re-engage a topic from a previous class, you must get permission from me to do so.

### **GRADING STANDARDS**

A: Exceptional. Excellent in every way, in thought and execution. Not just acceptable, not just good. Excellent.

B: Good; better than average in both substance and style. Clearly expressed and supported thesis, accurate and effective use of evidence, clear and inevitable structure, few errors in syntax or punctuation.

C: Average. Clear argumentative thesis, reasonable support, some logical flaws, weak evidence, shaky structure, poor unity, loose coherence. Numerous errors of syntax and punctuation.

D: Below average. Thesis stated but weakly supported. Poorly organized, unclear, with many grammatical errors. More than one sentence-level error.

F: Extremely poor. No thesis stated or no support for a stated thesis. Many errors.

### **INTERNET RESOURCES**

There are a number of web-based sites that will be enormously useful for your understanding and pronunciation of Middle English. Foremost is the University of Michigan's Middle English Dictionary, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>, into which you can plug any word from our readings for an instant definition. I will offer other sites of interest in class and on Moodle.

## SCHEDULE

You are responsible for reading all assigned texts by the start of the next class. **I will expect you to bring a question to class each day, whether it addresses language, literature, history, or culture.** The syllabus is subject to change.

Week	Date	Class Topic and Agenda	Homework
Week 1	Wednesday August 27	Introductions and Chaucer Chronology	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chaucer's Language, pp. xv-xix</li><li>• St. Augustine, p. 326</li><li>• "The Historical Chaucer," pp. 473-92</li><li>• General Prologue, ll. 1-42</li></ul>
	Friday August 29	WORKSHOP: Chaucer's Middle English	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General Prologue, ll. 1-541</li><li>• "Chaucer the Pilgrim," pp. 503-11</li><li>• [On Pilgrimage], pp. 327-32</li><li>• [On the Estates], pp. 333-5</li></ul>
Week 2	Monday September 1	Labor Day Holiday	
	Wednesday September 3  <b>Drop/Add ends</b>	Pilgrimage and Prologue <u>First Paper assigned</u>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General Prologue, ll. 541-858</li></ul>
	Friday September 5	WORKSHOP: General Prologue	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Miller's Prologue and Tale, ll. 3109-3396</li></ul>
Week 3	Monday September 8	Frame Narratives, Fabliaux, and the Miller's Tale	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MT, ll. 3397-3656</li></ul>
	Wednesday September 10	More Fun with the Miller	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MT, ll. 3657-3854</li></ul>
	Friday September 12	WORKSHOP: Miller's Prologue and Tale <u>First Paper Due</u>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wife of Bath's Prologue, ll. 1-502</li><li>• [The Marriage Group], pp. 539-46</li></ul>
Week 4	Monday September 15	Marriage, Women, and Authority: The Wife of Bath's Argument <u>Second Paper Assigned</u>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, ll. 503-982</li></ul>
	Wednesday September 17	From Prologue to Tale with the Wife	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wife of Bath's Tale, ll. 983-1264</li></ul>

	Friday September 19	WORKSHOP: The Wife of Bath	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clerk's Prologue and Tale, ll. 1-784</li> </ul>
Week 5	Monday September 22	Marriage, Women, and Patience: The Clerk's Rebuttal	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clerk's Tale, ll. 785-1212g</li> </ul>
	Wednesday September 24	More Patience with the Clerk	
	Friday September 26	WORKSHOP: The Clerk	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Franklin's Prologue and Tale, ll. 673-1365</li> </ul>
Week 6	Monday September 29	Marriage, Women, and Generosity: The Franklin's Take	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Franklin's Tale, ll. 1366-1624</li> </ul>
	Wednesday October 1	More Generosity with the Franklin	
	Friday October 3	WORKSHOP: The Franklin	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pardoner's Prologue and Tale</li> </ul>
Week 7	Monday October 6	The Pardoner on Sin	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Prioress's Prologue and Tale</li> </ul>
	Wednesday October 8	The Prioress and Anti-Semitism in Medieval England	
	Friday October 10	WORKSHOP: The Pardoner and Prioress	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale, ll. 2767-3185</li> </ul>
Week 8	Monday October 13	Princely Beasts and Beastly Men: The Nun's Priest and His Tale <u>Second Paper Due.</u>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale, ll. 3186-3460</li> </ul>
	Wednesday October 15	More Nun's Priest <b>Take-Home Midterm</b>	Write: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Midterm.</li> <li>• Turn in electronically by the beginning of class on Friday</li> </ul>

	Friday October 17 <b>Fall Recess Begins 5 pm</b>	NO CLASS.	
Week 9	Monday October 20	NO CLASS	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part I of <i>Sir Gawayn</i>, pp. 2-28</li> <li>• “The Rules of Courtly Love,” pp. 513-14</li> </ul>
	Wednesday October 22 Fall Recess Ends 8 am	Romance and Courtly Love: Gawain’s Chastity	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Significance of Numbers,” pp. 515-17</li> </ul>
	Friday October 24	WORKSHOP: The Gawain-Poet’s English	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part II of <i>Sir Gawayn</i>, pp. 30-62</li> </ul>
Week 10	Monday October 27	Gawain Goes A-Riding	
	Wednesday October 29	Bercilak and the Two Ladies	
	Friday October 31	WORKSHOP: More <i>Gawain</i> -Poet <u>Topic Proposals Due</u>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part III of <i>Sir Gawayn</i>, pp. 64-108</li> </ul>
Week 11	Monday November 3	The Temptation Scenes	
	Wednesday November 5	More Temptation	
	Friday November 7	WORKSHOP: More <i>Gawain</i> -Poet	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part IV of <i>Sir Gawayn</i>, pp. 110-38</li> </ul>
Week 12	Monday November 10	Gawain’s Test	
	Wednesday November 12	Gawain’s Chastity, Revisited	

	Friday November 14	WORKSHOP: More <i>Gawain</i> -Poet	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Piers Plowman</i>, pp. 140-57</li> </ul>
Week 13	Monday November 17	Peasants, Religion, and Feudalism: <i>Langland's Plowman</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandeville's <i>Travel's</i>, 158-164 (Ch. 18)</li> </ul>
	Wednesday November 19	Travel Literature and Exoticism: Mandeville's World	
	Friday November 21		Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandeville's <i>Travel's</i>, 164-8 (Ch. 30 &amp; 31))</li> </ul>
Week 14	Monday November 24	WORKSHOP: Langland and Mandeville	
	Wednesday November 26 Thanksgiving Recess	NO CLASS	
	Friday November 28	NO CLASS	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Second Shepherds' Play</i>, pp. 169-196</li> </ul>
Week 15	Monday December 1	At Play with the Wakefield Master: <i>Second Shepherds' Play</i>	
	Wednesday December 3	Rustling the Lamb of God: <i>Second Shepherds' Play</i>	
	Friday December 5	WORKSHOP: <i>Second Shepherd's Play</i>	
Week 16	Monday December 8	Presentations	
	Wednesday December 10	Presentations <u>Paper 3 due.</u>	