This course provides an introduction to the writing of Geoffrey Chaucer through two of his major works, *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*. Dubbed the "father" of English poetry by the writers who followed him, Chaucer is notable both for his self-conscious construction of himself as an author as well as for his role in establishing English as an emerging literary language, capable of competing with the Italian of Chaucer's literary models and rivals—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. Throughout our reading of Chaucer's poetry, we will be attentive to questions of language, genre, authorship, and literary tradition. In addition, we will consider some aspects of Chaucer's historical and cultural context. All works will be read in the original Middle English. We will devote a portion of the course to learning to read and recite Chaucer's dialect of Middle English.

**Required Texts (available at the Rhodes College Bookstore)**

- Make sure that you purchase these specific editions. You will not be able to participate fully in class if you have a different edition.

**Selected On-line Resources for Chaucer and the Middle Ages**

- Harvard Chaucer Page Glossary: [http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/glossar.htm](http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/glossar.htm)
- Middle English Dictionary (MED): [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/)
- The Internet Medieval Sourcebook: [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html)
- The Labyrinth: [http://labyrinth.georgetown.edu/](http://labyrinth.georgetown.edu/)
- Corpus of Middle English: [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/browse.html](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/browse.html)

**Graded Work**

- Recitation 05%
- In-class passage preparation 05%
- Paper one (4-6 pages) due 2/7 15%
- Paper two (4-6 pages) due 3/21 15%
- Paper 3 (10-12 pages) due 5/2 25%
- Exam 1 (50 minutes) 10%
- Exam 2 (50 minutes) 10%
- Paper proposal/annotated bibliography 05%
- Participation 10%

The formal writing for this course will consist of 2 short papers and one longer essay that incorporates secondary sources. Here are the basics; more detailed guidelines will follow.

- The first paper will be a literary analysis, focused on close reading, of one of the *Canterbury Tales*
- The second paper will bring two secondary sources to bear on one of the *Canterbury Tales* or on an aspect of *Troilus and Criseyde*.
- The final paper will incorporate at least 4 secondary sources to aid you in exploring an issue in either *The Canterbury Tales* or *Troilus and Criseyde*. In advance of the final paper, you will turn in a one-paragraph proposal with an annotated bibliography that includes at least 4 sources (due April 10).
- All writing for this class must make use of the MLA style of documentation and citation. If you do not yet own a copy of an *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, you should purchase one.
The midterm and final exams will include some vocabulary and translation, some historical and cultural context, and some identification and discussion of passages from Chaucer’s poetry.

Recitation:
Everyone will choose a passage of about 15 lines to recite by memory. You will sign up to meet with me during my office hours. In addition to reciting the passage in Middle English, with an understanding of the rhythm of the poetry, you should be prepared to say a few works about what is going on in those lines and why they are interesting. This meeting should take about 10 minutes. You will sign up to do your recitation either in the first half of the semester (by March 4) or in the second half of the semester (by April 15). You may choose a passage either from The Canterbury Tales or Troilus and Criseyde.

In order to facilitate this exercise, I will divide you up into 3-person recitation groups so you can help each other practice your lines. You will pledge to meet at least twice over the course of the semester to help coach each other through the process.

In-class passage preparation: In addition to regular engagement in class discussion, for most class days, I will assign one person to prepare in advance a short passage to read aloud and discuss for about 5-10 minutes. Depending upon timing and other factors, you may be asked to do this twice during the course of the semester. Be prepared to provide a translation for parts of the passage that are difficult in terms of syntax, grammar, or vocabulary. What thematic, poetic, interpretive, or linguistic issues does this passage raise?

Policies:
Graded work:
- **Late papers** will be deducted 1/3 of a grade per day. Papers later than a week will not be accepted. You must complete and hand in all assignments (in a timely manner) in order to pass the course. Under certain, rare, circumstances (i.e. you have lifesaving surgery scheduled), I may grant an extension on an assignment; however, the extension must be negotiated in advance of the due date of the paper and not the night before (or the day of).

Other policies:
- Always bring the day’s reading to class. If the reading is from Moodle, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to a printer to print it out. Failing to bring the reading to class will count as an absence.
- It is your responsibility to keep hard and electronic copies of all your written work. In the event that an assignment gets lost on its way to me, I will expect you to be able to produce a copy right away.
- **Unless you have a documented disability that requires it—and you get permission from me—laptops or ipads may not be used in class.**
- Make sure all electronic devices are turned off when you get to class.
- You are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entirety of the class. Arriving late or getting up in the middle of class to leave is distracting to me and to the rest of the class.
- Coffee and other caffeinated beverages are always welcome in class (decaf is okay, but what’s the point?). If you can’t survive without a snack, it’s okay to bring one, as long as it’s not distracting.
- **Email etiquette:** I am happy to answer quick questions over email as my time permits, but you need to make sure that you have used your own resources (like the syllabus or the college web page) first. If there is something you need to discuss or negotiate, you need to do it in person or. In order to prevent email from interrupting my own work, I generally set aside one part of the day to responding to it rather than monitoring it throughout the day. E-mail is rarely, if ever, an appropriate medium for negotiating any sort of dispensation.
- **Email etiquette continued:** You should compose and revise your emails with care and consideration for your audience. Is it a good idea to send an email message filled with misspellings and mechanical errors to your professor? No, it is not.
- I reserve the right to ignore emails that transgress these rules of etiquette.
• I do not accept work that has been previously (or simultaneously) handed in for another class. Such work will receive a failing grade.

Further Elaborations:

Attendance/Absence Policy: You can miss up to two classes for any reason without risking your grade. It is up to you to choose the best use of these “free” absences, and, of course, you may choose not to miss any classes at all. Except for cases of real emergency or truly extraordinary events (i.e. you are being hospitalized for the rest of the semester), I do not wish to know the reason for your absence. If you choose to make use of one or all three of these absences, I will assume that you are using them wisely. Further absences will affect your grade in the following way (based on a 4.0 grading scale):
- 3 absences will result in a deduction of .2 from your final grade;
- 4 absences will result in a .3 deduction from your final grade;
- 5 absences will result in a .6 deduction from your final grade;
- 6 absences will result in a full point (1 full letter grade) deduction from your final grade;
- 7 absences will result in an “F” for the course, no matter what your starting grade was.

Except for extraordinary circumstances that are clearly beyond your control (e.g. hospitalization, death in the family, natural disasters) I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. I assume that if you choose to make use of your three “free” absences, you are doing so for a good reason. Therefore, I do not wish to be informed about the particular reasons you are absent. Of course, if you do need to use these free absences, you are still responsible for what you missed, and you should expect that any time you miss a class, there will be a detrimental effect on your learning and on your grade.

The syllabus is not set in stone. The schedule of readings will undoubtedly be subject to fine-tuning as we proceed. I will announce any upcoming alterations to the schedule in class. If you miss a class, make sure you check with a classmate to get notes and confirm the next assignment.

Plagiarism is the borrowing of language or ideas from another writer without proper citation. It may be intended or unintended, but in either case, it is a violation of intellectual honesty and constitutes a breach of the Honor Code. If in doubt, see me, see the Writing Center, and/or consult the Honor Council website. It goes without saying that all work for this class must be done in compliance with the Rhodes Honor Code.

Schedule of Assignments (Subject to Revision as Needed)

Th 1/9  Introductions

Tu 1/14  “Chaucer’s Language,” (Kolve and Olson, pp xv-xix)
Seth Lerer, “Chaucer’s English” M
F.R.H. Du Boulay, “The Historical Chaucer” (Kolve and Olson, pp 473-492)
The Canterbury Tales, General Prologue, lines 1-79
Listen to the lines here: http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/gp.htm

Th 1/16  General Prologue lines 80-858;
Jill Mann, Introduction to Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire M
Thomas Wimborne, “On the Estates” (Kolve and Olson pp 333-335)

Tu 1/21  The Knight’s Tale (Books 1&2)
Courtly love backgrounds (Capellanus) M
[Hand out guidelines for paper 1]

Th 1/23  The Knight’s Tale (Books 3 & 4)
Recommended: Paul Strohm, “Chaucer and the Structure of Social Relations” M
Tu 1/28  The Miller's Tale
"The Three Guests of Heile of Bersele" (Kolve and Olson, pp 341-343)

Th 1/30  The Reeve's Prologue and Tale; The Cook's Prologue and Tale
Recommended: "The Miller and the Two Clerics" (Kolve and Olson pp344-347)
Vocab/translation quiz

Tu 2/4  The Man of Law's Tale and Prologue M
(NB: this tale is not in your Norton edition)

Th 2/6  Wife of Bath's Prologue
Selections from WB contexts in Norton: Theophrastus (357-359); Walter Map (373-378); Gospel According to John (379-380); St. Paul to the Corinthians 1 (380-382)

*Fri 2/7  Paper #1 due, outside my office, by 4pm

Tu 2/11  Wife of Bath's Tale
Barron, "The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London" M

Th 2/13  The Friar's Prologue and Tale
The Summoner's Prologue and Tale

Tu 2/18  The Merchant's Prologue and Tale
Th 2/20  The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

Tu 2/25  The Prioress's Prologue and Tale

Th 2/27  Exam 1

Tu 3/4  Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas
Prologue and Tale of Melibee

Th 3/6  The Parson's Prologue; The Parson's Tale (lines 72-165)
Chaucer's Retraction

Tu 3/11 and Th 3/13  Spring Break

Tu 3/18  Introduction to Norton edition of Troilus and Criseyde (Barney, pp ix-xxvii)
Troilus and Criseyde Bk I

Th3/20  TC Bk II, 1-812
[Intertexts: Boccaccio's Il Filostrato; Virgil's Aeneid, Dante's Divine Comedy . . .]

Fri 3/21  Paper #2 due

Tu 3/25  TC  Bk II, 813-1757

Th 3/27  TC Bk III, 1-952
"Aubade" M; Ovid selections M

**Recommended lecture: Prof. Marjorie Garber (Harvard Univ), "Occupy Shakespeare: Shakespeare and/in the Humanities," 7pm Hardie Auditorium
Tu 4/1  
Th 4/3  

Tu 4/8  
Th 4/10  

Tu 4/15  
Th 4/17  

Tu 4/22  
Th 4/24  


Final paper due: Friday May 2, by 4pm