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## ENGL 190, Medieval Frame Tales, Fall 2013

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**English 190: Introductory Topics in Literature**  
**Topic: Medieval Frame Tales**  
**MWF 10:00-10:50, Palmer 207**  
**CRN: 14847**

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### Course Description

Welcome to the class! The frame tale—that is, a framing narrative depicting a series of oral storytelling performances by the frame’s characters—was widespread and popular throughout the Middle Ages and even as late as the early 16th Century. This enormously flexible genre offers modern audiences an entertaining and representative introduction to the medieval world, since a single frame could encompass a range of story types as diverse as romance, fabliaux, saints’ lives, and allegory. As stories about storytelling, frame tales demonstrate the compelling power of narrative in negotiating even the most dire or tedious of circumstances. Storytellers in the frame tales we will read include young noble men and women escaping the Black Plague, flood victims trapped in an abbey high in the mountains, pilgrims seeking entertainment and edification on their way to a martyr’s grave, a young bride deferring death at the hands of her own husband and king, and a gifted teacher who uses stories to awaken the intellect of hopelessly foolish princes. Our first unit will be devoted to the study of Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (14th-century Italian) and Marguerite de Navarre’s much later *Heptameron* (early 16th-Century French) that it inspired. Next, we will turn our attention to the stories told by pilgrims in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (14th-Century British). Our final unit will look backward, exploring the much earlier Eastern frame tales the *Arabian Nights* (Arabic) and the *Pančatantra* (Sanskrit), texts that circulated widely in Medieval Europe, inspiring and influencing the genre in its later forms. All works will be read in translation, and no prior knowledge will be expected. Limited to First Years and Sophomores only; however, ENG-151 is not required as a prerequisite for this course. This course is writing intensive and fulfills Foundations requirements F2i and F4.

### 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 translations. Others cannot substitute.]

- Haddawy, trans.; Heller-Roazen, ed. *The Arabian Nights*. Norton Critical Editions.
- Waldman, trans. *The Decameron*. By Giovanni Boccaccio. Oxford World Classics.
- Raffel, trans. *The Canterbury Tales*. By Geoffrey Chaucer. Random House.
- Rajan, trans. *The Pančatantra*. By Viṣṇu Śarma. Penguin.
- Chilton, trans. *The Heptameron*. By Marguerite de Navarre. Penguin.
- Rhodes College *Guide to Effective Writing* (all students should have this in hard copy; also available online at <http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/9076.asp>)

### Course Requirements

*Please note that English 190 fulfills an F2i requirement and that the course will thus involve a substantial amount of writing and attention to the writing process.*

- Formal Papers (45%)
  - Each of our three units will conclude with the submission of a 1,250-word paper (worth 15% each). Each of these papers should offer close textual analysis, engage relevant secondary sources,

and develop a clearly articulated and well-supported thesis. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided prior to each paper.

- All papers must be submitted in hard copy AND electronically through the turnitin.com (Class ID: 6756109; Password: chaucer). Please try not to send assignments as attachments through email unless you experience problems with turnitin.
  - *Late papers*: 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 may not be accepted. Any special arrangements must be made ahead of time and outside of class.
- Workshop Preparation and Participation (10%)
    - Prior to each paper submission, one class period will be devoted to writing workshops. Additionally, each unit will include electronic peer review, using turnitin.com. Other paper-related work such as topic proposals or progress reports will also fall under this portion of your grade.
  - Revision of the paper of your choice (10%)
    - While drafting and revision will be an integral component of every unit and paper, at the end of the semester, you will submit a revision of the paper of your choice along with a cover letter detailing your goals and changes. Further details will be provided in an assignment sheet later in the semester.
    - Please be aware that revision is a crucial skill that we will be developing this semester, and the submission of a carefully and thoughtfully revised paper is mandatory. The same late penalties and submission policies apply to the revisions as to the original three papers. Even strong writing can always benefit from revision, and the revision will constitute a separate grade. Be careful not to assume that the revised paper will automatically be higher than the original submission. Failure to revise (or the submission of a paper only very lightly and superficially revised) can result in a grade lower than that of the original paper.
  - Daily Writing and Assessment: 25%
    - In lieu of examinations, all students will complete daily assignments that assess your understanding of our readings. On the value of frequent assessments as opposed to longer examinations, see *Chronicle of Higher Education* article on this subject: <http://chronicle.com/article/You-Will-be-Tested-on-This/14732>
    - This daily work will vary in nature, taking such forms as short writings about our texts, online discussion forums, or conventional quizzes. Collectively, these assignments serve to stimulate in-class discussions, to provide starting points for formal papers (where appropriate), to facilitate comprehension and retention of readings, and to offer additional writing practice throughout the semester.
    - Please note that sometimes assessments will be administered at the beginning of class, and other times work will need to be completed ahead of time on Moodle. If you miss class, be sure to check the website or contact me 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 assignments will be made available 48 hours 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 these daily assessments (which typically relate to the readings of a given class period), 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.
  - Participation: 10%
    - Your participation grade will be determined on the basis of your attendance, the quality of your contributions to discussion, your preparation for and engagement in class activities, and your completion of any ungraded assignments.
    - Please note that the course's success will depend largely on class discussion, and there will be many ways to participate.

- In all cases, contributions to discussion (in class and online) should demonstrate careful reading of course materials and must be respectful of other students' ideas and points of view. For information on the attendance policy, see further below.

### 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/counselingcenter/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 190 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 2 percentage points 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 78%. 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>.

*Electronic Devices:* To facilitate a classroom environment most conducive to learning, courtesy and respect are required by students with regard to electronic devices. Tablets, laptop computers, and related devices may be used exclusively for note-taking, engaging assigned course readings, and other appropriate class-related purposes. Checking e-mail, web-surfing, reading Facebook, texting, and similar activities during class are strictly prohibited.

Students violating any part of this policy will be required to turn off and stow the device and may lose the privilege of using such devices in future class periods.

*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.

*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.

*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:* Occasionally, books that might be especially helpful for your research may be placed on reserve in Barret Library. 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, homesickness, study skills, and stress are available at <http://www.rhodes.edu/counselingcenter/12077.asp>.

## **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 8/21: Introduction to class

### UNIT ONE: THE FRAME TALE IN EUROPE

Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*

F 8/23: Author's Preface and Introduction (3-23); Irwin, "What's in a Frame: The Medieval Textualization of Traditional Storytelling" (Moodle); in addition to these readings, please read the syllabus and complete the online Moodle assessment.

M 8/26: *Decameron*, First Day (under rule of Pampinea): Novelle 1-4 (23-45); Conclusion (61-63)

W 8/28: *Decameron*, Second Day (under rule of Filomena): Introduction (64); Novelle 3-4 (75-87); Conclusion (165-67); Third Day (under rule of Neiphile): Introduction (168-70); Novelle 1 and 10 (171-77); Conclusion (245-48)

F 8/30: *Decameron*, Fourth Day (under Philostrato's rule): Introduction (249-55); Novelle 1, 2, and 5 (255-73; 283-86); Conclusion (313-16)

*M 9/2 Labor Day, no class*

W 9/4: *Decameron*, Fifth Day (under rule of Fiammetta): Introduction (317); Novelle 3, 4, and 9 (334-45; 367-73); Conclusion (381-82)

F 9/6: *Decameron*, Sixth Day (under rule of Elissa): Introduction and Conclusion; Seventh Day (under rule of Dioneo): Introduction, Novella 10, Conclusion; Eighth Day (under rule of Lauretta): Introduction and Conclusion; Ninth Day (under rule of Emilia): Introduction and Conclusion (383-85; 411-18; 468-74; 551-55; 595-97)

- M 9/9: *Decameron* Tenth Day (under rule of Pamphilo): Introduction (598), Novelle 3, 5, and 10 (606-612; 618-22, 668-78), Conclusion (678-81); Author's Afterword (682-86)
- W 9/11: *Heptameron*, Prologue (60-70); Stories 4-5 (90-97)
- F 9/13: *Heptameron*, Stories 2-3 (79-89), 11 (156-57), 19 (220-30); Day 1 conclusion and Day 2 Prologue (153 [last two paragraphs]-55); conclusion of Day 2 (234 [last paragraph]). *Note: For each Heptameron story assigned, please also read the last paragraph of the preceding story, which often sets the stage for the story to come and thus is very important to the overarching frame narrative.*
- M 9/16: *Heptameron*, Stories 25 (286-91) and 30 (317-23); Third Day Prologue (235) and Conclusion (323-25); Fourth Day Prologue (324-25) and Conclusion (374-75 [last paragraph]); Fifth Day Prologue (376) and Conclusion (427 [last two paragraphs]).
- W 9/18: *Heptameron*, Stories 62 (485-87), 71, 72 (537-42), Sixth Day Prologue (428) and Conclusion (474-75 [last two paragraphs]); Seventh Day Prologue (476-77) and Conclusion (534 [last two paragraphs]); Eighth Day Prologue (535-36)
- F 9/20: **Workshop**
- M 9/23: **Paper 1 Due**

## UNIT TWO: THE FRAME TALE IN ENGLAND

### *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*

- W 9/25: Introduction by John Miles Foley (xv-xxv); General Prologue (1-25)
- F 9/27: Knight's Tale, Parts 1 and 2 (26-52)
- M 9/30: Knight's Tale, Parts 3 and 4 (53-84)
- W 10/2: Steward's (aka "Reeve's") Prologue and Tale; Cook's Prologue (105-119); *Decameron*, Ninth Day, Novella 6 (578-82)
- F 10/4: Shipman's Tale and Host's Merry Words (365-77); *Decameron*, Eighth Day, Novella 1 (474-77)
- M 10/7: Wife of Bath's Tale (182-92); Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell (Moodle)
- W 10/9: Cleric's Tale and Chaucer's Happy Song; Merchant's Prologue (225-61)
- F 10/11: Introduction to Squire's Tale; Squire's Tale (293-312)
- Monday 10/14: Fall break, no class*
- W 10/16: Landowner's Prologue (aka Franklin's Prologue), Landowner's Tale (313-336); Review *Decameron*, Tenth Day, Novella (618-22) and bring to class.
- F 10/18: Pardon Peddler's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale (345-64)
- M 10/21: Prologue to Sir Thopas, Sir Thopas, The Host Stops Chaucer's Narration, beginning of Tale of Melibee and Prologue of Monk's Tale (387-401; 431-33);
- W 10/23: Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue (457-75);
- F 10/25: Parson's Prologue (530-32); Parson's Tale, Part 1 on Penitence (533-45 [feel free to skim if your eyes start glazing]); on Lechery (579-88); Here the Maker of This Book Takes His Leave (597-98)
- M 10/28: **Workshop**
- W 10/30: **Paper 2 Due**

## UNIT THREE: EASTERN PREDECESSORS

### *Arabian Nights and Pančatantra*

- F 11/1: *Arabian Nights* Foreword; "Prologue: the Story of King Shahrayar and Ahahrazad, His Vizier's Daughter"; Tale of the Ox and the Donkey," "The Tale of the Merchant and His Wife," "The Story of the Merchant and the Demon" (3-23)

M 11/4: *Arabian Nights* “The Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies”; “Second Dervish’s Tale,” “Tale of the Envious and the Envied” (66-85; 91-113)

W 11/6: *Arabian Nights* “Tale of the First Lady”; “Story of the Two Viziers” (133-40; 155-202)

F 11/8: *Arabian Nights* “The Story of the Hunchback,” “Christian Broker’s Tale” (203-224)

M 11/11: *Arabian Nights* “The Tailor’s Tale” (234-50); “The Barber’s Tale” and “The Tale of the Sixth Brother” (Moodle)

W 11/13: “Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves” (Moodle); Bring *Arabian Nights* to class.

F 11/15: *Pančatantra* Preamble; Book I “Estrangement of Friends,” Frame Story: Lively and Tawny, The Monkey and the Wedge (1-31)

M 11/18: *Pančatantra* Book I: The Grateful Beasts and the Ungrateful Man; Crawly, the bedbug, and Drone, the wasp; The Blue Jackal; The Lion and the Chariot-Maker; The Lapwing who defied the Ocean; The Sparrow and the Tusker; The Ancient Wild Goose and the Fowler; The Lion and the Lone Ram (98-114; 126-47)

W 11/20: *Pančatantra* Book I: The Jackal who Outwitted the Lion, Strong and the Naked Mendicant; The Maiden wedded to a Snake; Death and Little Blossom; conclusion of Book I (147-64; 185-89); Conclusion (435, last two paragraphs only)

F 11/22: \*No class meeting\* (I will be at a conference but available via phone and email.) Complete online portion of Workshop

M 11/25: \*No class meeting\*; Assignment on Moodle

*Wednesday 11/27 and Friday 11/29: Thanksgiving break, no class*

M 12/2: **Paper 3 Due**

W 12/4: Workshop for revision

*Final Exam Time: Final Revision Due*