

Christina M. Heckman			
<i>ENGL 201</i>	CHAUCER'S <i>CANTERBURY TALES</i>		<i>Fall 2003</i>
<i>AJLC 102</i>	T & Th 9:35-10:50 AM	Office Hours T & Th 11-12	<i>Rice 26</i>
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DESCRIPTION:

In this course, we will study one of the most diverse, complex, and ingenious texts in English literature, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The course is challenging, but reading Chaucer in his own Middle English tongue is well worth the special effort required to familiarize yourself with the language. During the first few weeks of the course, your language and translation skills will develop quickly, and you will soon have little difficulty in handling the language of Chaucer's text.

During the semester, we will read most of the *Tales* in Middle English, supplementing the remaining tales with a modern English translation. As we discuss the *Tales*, we will consider several critical approaches and perspectives, primarily through reading brief critical essays on Chaucer's writings in the *Companion to Chaucer*. By the end of the semester, you will gain familiarity with some aspects of literary theory and its terminology.

As a way to focus the course, we will address the theme of textual violence in the *Canterbury Tales*. This theme is meant to guide us into broader discussions of the social work performed by Chaucer's text. The questions that we raise through this theme will help us to perform our linguistic study and close reading of the text in a manner informed by current trends in literary criticism. We may discuss questions like: how does violence function differently in the various literary genres of the *Canterbury Tales*? How might Chaucer's text help us to consider the intersection between violence and religious practice, as they are represented in literature? To what extent does the deployment of violence in the *Canterbury Tales* intersect with issues of gender, class difference, racial difference, and sexuality?

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- to learn about Chaucer as the major writer of fourteenth-century England;
- to learn to read and pronounce Chaucer's own language, Middle English, so as to fully appreciate his artistry;
- to develop an understanding of the diverse genres of medieval literature (romance, fabliau, hagiography, fable, satire, sermon, and others), and to understand why Chaucer used them in writing the *Tales*;
- to understand how Chaucer, as a sometime court official connected with the royal household, engaged many of the major political and social issues of his time;
- to introduce practical and theoretical aspects of literary criticism, and to use these to improve critical reading and writing skills.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Requirements include class participation (including work in small groups, both in class and outside of class), regular (weekly) quizzes, one short paper (5-7 pages), one longer paper (8-9 pages), a midterm exam, and a final exam.

READING LIST:

- The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (bookstore)
A Companion to Chaucer, ed. Peter Brown (bookstore)
The Canterbury Tales, trans. Neville Coghill (on order at bookstore)

There are many useful online resources for Chaucer studies, such as the Chaucer MetaPage (www.unc.edu/depts/chaucer/index.html) and the Chaucer pages at Harvard University (icg.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer). The Chaucer MetaPage includes audiofile readings of the *Canterbury Tales*, and the Harvard pages are also excellent for practicing the pronunciation of Middle English. The college library includes a multitude of resources for Chaucer studies. NOTE: your papers will require the use of printed sources. You will not be able to rely solely on the web to research your assignments. Many web-based sources are excellent, but they cannot substitute for the many years of scholarship available in the library.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Class participation	20%
Quizzes	15%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%

PROCEDURES:

You must read the material assigned for each class meeting by that class period. Classes will combine informal lecture and discussion. Much of your success in the course depends on your reliability as a translator and your preparation; you must be able to translate with reasonable accuracy and demonstrate your understanding of the grammar on which translation depends. Beginning with the third week, the class will be divided into small discussion groups; you will engage in discussion with your small group frequently in class and occasionally outside of class. Periodically, your small group will be asked to help lead the class by raising a problem or issue you experienced in the translation. After the midterm, your small group will be asked to choose a short passage of Chaucer's text and prepare it for recitation; you will receive written guidelines for the recitation before the midterm break. You will also receive written instructions for small-group work outside of class, as well as study guides to help prepare you for class and focus your reading.

REGULATIONS:

You must participate in class. Your participation grade includes your preparation for class; active participation in class discussion, both in and out of your small groups; and completion of occasional brief tasks to be assigned for small-group work outside of class. These tasks will be considered part of your preparation for the next class day. A record of your attendance will be kept via sign-in sheet. This will count as part of your participation grade and will be included in the calculation of your final grade. If you arrive late and do not sign in, you will be considered absent.

You are required to submit written work and take exams on the scheduled dates. Unless emergency conditions can be proved, extensions can be considered only if you speak with the instructor in advance. Papers will be considered late if you submit them after class on the due date or, if you miss class, before or during class time in my mailbox.

Papers handed in late will receive a deduction in the grade for the assignment. The grade will be lowered by one grade (for example, a B+ would be lowered to a B) for each day past the due date. No paper will be accepted five days after the due date (i.e., a paper due on Thurs. will not be accepted after Monday).

Academic honesty: all work submitted for this class is governed by the Oberlin College Honor Code. On each assignment, quiz, paper, and exam, you are required to write in full and sign the Honor Pledge: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the Honor Code as outlined in the student handbook and on the Honor Code web page (www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html).

CLASS MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

- Tues Sept 2 Introduction to Chaucer and Middle English language. *The Canterbury Tales* in the context of Chaucer's canon and the fourteenth century. Fragment I: The General Prologue; orientation to *The Riverside Chaucer*. For Thurs., read the General Prologue in translation (handout) and read lines 1-200 of the GP in Middle English.
- Thurs Sept 4 The General Prologue (lines 1-200) and Chaucer's social ladder: from the Knight to the Wife of Bath.
- Tues Sept 9 The General Prologue (in Middle English, lines 200-700).
Companion to Chaucer (hereafter *CtoC*): Swanson, "Social Structures"
- Thurs Sept 11 The General Prologue (in Middle English, lines 700-858).
First Quiz: GP, lines 400-700. Quiz format will be distributed 9/9 in class.
- Tues Sept 16 The Knight's Tale: whole tale in translation and Book 1 in Middle English.
CtoC: Brewer, "Chivalry"
- Thurs Sept 18 The Knight's Tale, Books 2-3 (in translation). Book 3, lines 1881-2088, in Middle English. Second Quiz.
- Tues Sept 23 The Knight's Tale, Book 4, in Middle English.
- Thurs Sept 25 The Miller's Prologue and Tale (this and all subsequent readings in Middle English)
- Tues Sept 30 The Reeve's Prologue and Tale. Third Quiz.
- Thurs Oct 2 Fragment II: The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale, Books 1-2.
- Tues Oct 7 The Man of Law's Tale, Book 3. Fourth Quiz.
- Thurs Oct 9 Fragment III: The Wife of Bath's Prologue. ** First Paper due **

Tues Oct 14 The Wife of Bath's Tale.
CtoC: Voigts, "Bodies"

Thurs Oct 16 Midterm Examination.

Tues Oct 21 No class. Fall Break.
 Thurs Oct 23 No class. Fall Break.

Tues Oct 28 The Friar's Tale.
 Thurs Oct 30 The Summoner's Tale. Fifth Quiz.

Tues Nov 4 Fragment IV: The Clerk's Prologue and Tale. Recitations in my office this week.
 Thurs Nov 6 The Clerk's Tale. Sixth Quiz.
CtoC: Watson, "Christian Ideologies"

Tues Nov 11 The Merchant's Prologue and Tale. Finish recitations in my office this week.
 Thurs Nov 13 The Merchant's Tale.

Tues Nov 18 Fragment V: The Franklin's Prologue and Tale.
 Thurs Nov 20 The Franklin's Tale. Seventh Quiz.

Tues Nov 25 Fragment VI: The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale.
 Thurs Nov 27 Thanksgiving. No class.

Tues Dec 2 Fragment VII: The Prioress's Tale. Eighth Quiz.
 Sylvia Tomasch, "Postcolonial Chaucer and the Virtual Jew" (ERES)

Thurs Dec 4 The Nun's Priest's Tale.

Tues Dec 9 Fragment VIII: The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale. Ninth Quiz.
 Thurs Dec 11 Fragment X: The Parson's Prologue and Tale (extracts). ** Second Paper due **

Fri Dec 19, 2PM Final Exam