

English 5250 – Studies in Medieval English Literature: “Getting Medieval”

Section 001 (#15244)

Blended / TH 5:30pm – 8:10pm

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Course Description

This course has two goals. First, we will acquaint ourselves with some of the major genres of English literature in the later Middle Ages--dream visions and Arthurian romances, travel literature and miracle tales, allegories and, well, more allegories. The texts date from c. 1350-1500, an era of great accomplishment and considerable variety in English writing and great changes and considerable upheaval in English culture--a period marked by plague, heresy, rebellion, and civil wars. Secondly, we will explore some aspects of medievalism, that is, the ways in which “the middle ages” are received, represented, and put to use in modern culture, politics, literature and film.

The literature of the middle ages has the sometimes baffling quality of seeming simultaneously foreign and familiar, since in this historically remote period the basic structures (and basic problems) of contemporary culture were in the making; appreciating and understanding this paradox, and the medieval texts that express it, thus requires (and can help foster) some intellectual agility and an open mind. All texts used will be in Modern English translation, though we will occasionally dip into the Middle English originals.

Book List

- Mandeville, Sir John. *The Book of Marvels and Travels*. Trans. Anthony Bale. Oxford World's Classics, 2012. ISBN 978-0-19-960060-1 \$10.69.
 - Alternative: *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. Trans. C.W.R.D. Mosely. ISBN 978-0141441436. Penguin Classics, 1983. \$12.22.
- *The Gawain Poet: Complete Works: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Patience, Cleanness, Pearl, Saint Erkenwald*. Trans. Marie Borroff. Paperback. W. W. Norton & Company, 2011. ISBN 978-0393912357 \$22.23
- Kempe, M. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Trans. Lynne Staley. Norton Critical Edition. W.W. Norton, 2001. \$20.51.
 - Alternative: Kempe, M. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Trans. Barry Windeatt. Penguin Classics, 2000. ISBN-13: 978-0140432510. \$15.36.
- Langland, William. *Piers Plowman: An Alliterative Verse Translation*. Trans. E. Talbot Donaldson. W.W. Norton, 1990. ISBN 978-0-393-96011-2 \$25.91.
 - Alternative: Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*. Ed. Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen H.A. Shepherd. Norton Critical Edition. ISBN-13: 978-0393975598. \$20.62.
- Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte D'Arthur: The Winchester Manuscript*. Ed. Helen Cooper. Oxford World's Classics, 1998. Paperback. ISBN 978-0192824202 13.44

Assignment Overview

- Two essays 20% and 25% (for the better of two grades)

- Three possible due dates: 9/28, 11/9, 12/7
- ± 2000 words; electronic submission
- I will suggest possible topics but will not limit you to them
- My policy on extensions can be found [here](#)
- Plagiarism on papers, electronic or the old-fashioned kind, will mean an instant F for the assignment, my undying disapprobation, and possible disciplinary action by the university; please refer to [this site](#) for further details, and please please please ask me if you have any questions, about anything, ever.
- One literary imitation, 15%; pick **one** of these two options:
 - *Mandeville's Travels* imitation, due 9/14
 - 5-6 pages
 - *Piers Plowman* estates satire or confession imitation, due 11/2
 - 30 lines of alliterative verse
- Weekly Discussion Board Activity, 20% (pre-class, post-class, & responses)
 - Three groups with rotating responsibilities each week, starting 9/10
 - You'll take on each role 3 to 4 times over the semester
 - Due Wednesday midnight (pre-class) / Monday noon (post-class)
 - Ungraded, but carefully reviewed
- Other activities, 20% (5 % each), various due dates throughout the term
 - Critical essay summary (up to 2)
 - 2 single-spaced pp, following a template
 - PPT/VT glossary entries (up to 2)
 - It will be fun to learn how to do this!
 - Medieval movie review (1)
 - ± 500 words; not until December

Tentative Schedule

MODULE		DATE(S)	TOPICS AND REQUIRED READING	ASSIGNMENTS
1	Introduction	AUG 27	<u>Introduction; Thinking About the Middle Ages</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How Pandemics Wreak Havoc" (Canvas) • <i>The Book of Marvels and Travels</i> Prologue, 5-7 	
2	"Travel" "Literature"	SEP 3	<u>The Travels of Sir John Mandeville: Pilgrimage; Monsters; Circumnavigation, Geotheologicopolitics</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Book of Marvels and Travels</i>, pp. 7-124 	

		SEP 10	<u>Mandeville and Medievalism</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Saint Erkenwald</i> (GP:CW 175-83) • Justice, "Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?" (Canvas) • Holsinger, "Thorkel Farserk Goes for a Swim: Climate Change, the Medieval Optimum, and the Perils of Amateurism" 	
3	Autobiography?	SEP 17	<u>Margery Kempe: Your Own Personal Jesus</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i> (selections) • Strohm, "The social and literary scene in England" (Canvas) 	Mandeville imitation due 9/14
4	Chivalry and Romance I	SEP 24	<u>Courtly Triangles</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> (GP:CW 201-60) • Chaucer, "The Franklin's Tale" (Canvas) 	
		OCT 1	<u>A Little Criticism</u> (read any four) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisher, "Leaving Morgan Aside: Women, History and Revisionism in <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>" (Canvas) • Heng, "Feminine Knots and the Other <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>" (Canvas) • Miller, "The Ends of Excitement in <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>: Teleology, Ethics, and the Death Drive" (Canvas) • Dinshaw, "Getting Medieval: Pulp Fiction, Gawain, Foucault" • Žižek, "Courtly Love, or, Woman as Thing" (Canvas) 	First essay due date, 9/28
5	Dream Visions	OCT 8	<u>Dreaming in Middle English I</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pearl</i> (GP:CW 125-160) • Chaucer, <i>The Parliament of Fowls</i> (Canvas) 	

		OCT 15	Dreaming in Middle English II: Piers Plowman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Son, are you asleep?” (Prologue and Passus 1, <i>PP</i> 1-22) 	
		OCT 22	Satire, Allegory, Personification, Reform, Farts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Money Makes the World Go ‘Round (Passus 2-4, <i>PP</i> 22-39) The Seven Deadly Sins—Live! (Passus 5, <i>PP</i> 39-60) 	
		OCT 29	Strivings against the Statute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hunger Games (Passus 6, <i>PP</i> 60-70) The Tearing of the Pardon (Passus 7, <i>PP</i> 70-77) The Inner Journey (Passus 8-9, <i>PP</i> 77-87) 1351 Statute of Laborers & associated petitions (Canvas) 	
6	Chivalry and Romance II	NOV 5	Malory: IOKIYAKOTRT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LMD 3-32 (“How Uther Pendragon...”); 50-57 (“The Wedding of King Arthur”); 528-30 (Caxton’s Preface) LMD 120-68 (“The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney”) <u>Either</u> Cannon, “Malory’s Crime: Chivalric Identity and the Evil Will,” or Finke & Shichtman, “No Pain, No Gain: Violence as Symbolic Capital in Malory’s <i>Morte d’Arthur</i>” (Canvas) 	<i>Piers Plowman</i> imitation due 11/2
		NOV 12	Malory: Lusty Deeds & Tears <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 403-67 (“The Tale of Sir Lancelot...”) Strohm, “Mellyagant’s Primal Scene” (Canvas) Scala, “Disarming Lancelot” (Canvas) 	Second essay due date, 11/9
		NOV 19	Malory: Everybody Dies, Maybe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LMD 468-527 (“The Death of King Arthur”) 	

7	Medieval Cinema	DEC 3	At the Movies I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Knight's Tale</i> (2001) (Canvas) • Essays on <i>A Knight's Tale</i> & Medieval Film (TBD) 	
		DEC 10	????	Third essay due date, 12/7