**30:429 — Chaucer and his Contemporaries**

**Reading List & Course Outline**

**2015-2016**

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**CHO 107**

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**Office hours:** I have an open door policy. If the door is open you are most welcome to come in.

This course is an introduction to the English literature of the late 14th century. Yes, the texts will all be read in their original Middle English, but don’t let that scare you off. Once you get used to it, Middle English is not that hard and you will learn a lot about the historical development of English as a language. The 14th century marks the big comeback of English as a player on the stage of world literature. Blame it all on the 14th century—without these guys, there would be no William Shakespeare, no Jane Austen, no Margaret Atwood to follow.

required texts: Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (Norton Critical Edition)

Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*

A.C. Cawley and J.J. Anderson eds. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,*

*Pearl, Cleanness, Patience* (Everyman)

Langland, *Piers Plowman (B-text)* — text available for free on-line!

Reading List:

First Term: Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* -- excerpts from "The Parson's Tale"

-- "The General Prologue"

-- "The Knight's Tale"

-- "The Miller's Tale"

-- "The Reeve's Tale"

-- "The Wife of Bath's Prologue & Tale"

-- "The Clerk's Tale"

-- "The Franklin's Tale"

-- "The Pardoner's Tale"

-- "The Prioress' sTale"

-- "The Nun's Priest's Tale"

Second Term: Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*

The Pearl-Poet, "Pearl"

"Patience"

"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"

Langland, *Piers Plowman (B-text)*

**Distribution of Grade:**

First Term (40%)

- 2 short in-class presentations (5% each) — to be scheduled

- 1 session as in-class article discussion leader (5%) — Dec. 4/7, 2015

- participation (5%)

- 1 major paper (20%) -- January 6, 2016

Second Term (60%)

- 1 session as in-class article discussion leader (5%) — Feb. 29/Mar. 2

- 1 seminar discussion paper (10%) — March 21/23, 2016

- 1 session as seminar presider (5%) — March 21/23, 2016

- participation (10%)

- 1 research paper\* (20%) -- April 8, 2016

- Final Examination (10%) -- April 15, 2016

\*You are strongly encouraged to present your research paper at the Senior Students Colloquium in April.

**Percentage value of letter grades:** A+ 4.3 gpa 95 - 100

A 4.0 gpa 85 - 94 Exceptional

A- 3.7 gpa 80 - 84

B+ 3.3 gpa 77 - 79

B 3.0 gpa 73 - 76 Above Average

B- 2.7 gpa 70 - 72

C+ 2.3 gpa 67 - 69

C 2.0 gpa 63 - 66 Average

C- 1.7 gpa 60 - 62

D 1.0 gpa 50 - 59 Needs Improvement

F 0.0 gpa 0 - 49 Failure

**Statement on Accommodation:**

Brandon University is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities. If you need such accommodation, please contact Michelle Magnusson, Disability Services Coordinator, Student Services (MCK 106). Students are responsible for registering with the Special Needs Coordinator and for requesting the appropriate accommodation with reasonable advance notice.

**Statement of Fair Warning:**

Literature deals with subjects central to the human condition. Works covered in this course can include (but are not limited to) themes of sexuality, religious expression, violence, suicide, racism, and negative views of women. Students may on occasion find some of the worldviews and/or topics discussed in class personally offensive, disturbing, or otherwise troubling.

**Course assignments:**

There are multiple short assignments worth small marks where you can learn the medieval ropes slowly rather than one or two big ‘win or lose’ assignments. There is also a lot of emphasis on you doing the talking rather than you listening to me lecture all the time.

**Short presentation #1—Chaucer’s ‘General Prologue’ (5%)**

Chaucer’s ‘General Prologue’ is the first full text we will be reading so it will be scheduled early in the course — mid to late September.

You have 5 - 8 minutes to talk about your chosen pilgrim as he/she appears in the 'General Prologue'. Choose something very specific to speak about, the one possession, or word, or image, or detail etc... which you believe is the key to understanding the portrait of your chosen pilgrim. Your presentation will begin the discussion of that character, so don't be worried that you lack the time to say all there is to say about that particular pilgrim. On the other hand, you must be prepared to speak when the class is up to that point in the text. Top of the list = sooner, bottom of the list = later. Your presentation should be 5 - 8 minutes long. You will be CUT OFF after 10 MINUTES.

There will be a sign up sheet posted outside my office, CHO 107, on a first come, first served basis. Only one student per pilgrim!

The pilgrims you have to choose among are the following:

Monk \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Friar \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Clerk of Oxford \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Franklin \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5 Tradesmen \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Doctor of Physik \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Wife of Bath \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parson \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Plowman \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Miller \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Reeve \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Summoner \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Pardoner \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Host \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Short Presentation #2 — *The Canterbury Tales* (5%)**

Scheduling depends on the topic you pick. You will be required to present when we are up to that tale in the class. 1 = sooner, 13 = later.

These presentations, largely thematic in focus, are also to be in the 5 - 10 minute range. You will be cut off after 10 minutes, so be very selective about what you present. Your presentation is the introduction to the topic, so don't be worried that you lack the time to say all there is to say about the subject. Topics will be first come, first served. The sign up sheet will be posted outside my office in late September.

1. Medieval anti-marriage literature and the Wife of Bath's Prologue. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. The Wife of Bath's Tale and the genre of romance. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Connections between the Wife of Bath's Prologue & Tale \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. Meaning of the Clerk's Tale in light of lines 1142-62 (p. 183). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. The answer to the question at the end of the Franklin's Tale. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. The theme of language in the Pardoner's Prologue \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. Symbolism in the Pardoner's Tale. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. Conclusion of the Pardoner's Tale, especially his treatment. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. Anti-Semitism in the Prioresse's Tale. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. Notions of femininity in the Prioresse's Tale. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

11. Notions of masculinity in the Nun's Priest's Tale. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

12. Language and rhetoric in the Nun's Priest's Tale. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

13. The challenge of closure in the Nun's Priest's Tale. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**First-Term Article Discussion Assignment (5%):**

Scheduled: December 4, 7, 2015

When we go over *The Canterbury Tales* in class, we are just barely scratching the surface of its complexity. In large part it's our inexperience as readers of medieval literature (not to mention the language) that holds us back from a fuller literary appreciation. To help us gain some of that critical experience we will be discussing in class 4 scholarly works (articles or chapters from books).

Each of you will be responsible for leading the discussion of ONE of the papers (the issues raised by/insights of/critical approaches to/problems with/strengths of/connection to other tales …..). The others will be responsible for participating in the discussion. We shall aim for each paper to have a minimum 25-minute period for discussion. Your grade is a balance of leading and participating in the discussion.

Because we are a small group we will focus our critical reading around one or two of Chaucer’s Tales. The group will have a say in which Tale(s) to focus on for critical discussion.

I will select and provide the group with all necessary copies of the articles. You will be assigned an article at random.

**First-Term Participation (5%):**

The key to participation is to remember that it means speaking up meaningfully in class. Participation is very different from attendance. You can be present at every class but still not participating.

**First-term major paper (20%):**

You may make either short presentation the starting point for the major paper in first term or I provide some other suggested topics below. If there is a topic that you really would like to work on beyond these two options, come and talk to me about it. You MUST have my approval before writing the major term paper on a topic of your own choice. You are strongly encouraged, but not required to use secondary sources for the first-term major paper. You are also encouraged to consider submitting your paper to the Senior Student Colloquium to be held at the end of classes in April. Talk to me about it for more information.

Due: January 6, 2016 (I certainly won’t object if you want to submit it in December!)

Length: 10 typed, double-spaced pages, regular 12 pt font

Format: CHICAGO is the most common format for documentation in Medieval Studies. Thus your term paper must follow Chicago-style format.

Suggested topics:

1. A feminist perspective on any two of Chaucer's 'Tales'. Include as one of your choices either the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale' or the 'Clerk's Tale'.

2. A source study of any one Tale in the textbook.

3. The character and role of the Host (or Knight) as revealed throughout *The Canterbury Tales*.

4. A detailed analysis of the Pardoner, taking into consideration all his appearances in *The Canterbury Tales*. How well does this teller match his Tale?

5. A detailed discussion of relationships between tales. Consider such elements as interaction between pilgrims, thematic connections, choice of genre, rhetorical techniques, etc.

6. An examination of the tales read in class in terms of the criteria of 'best sentence and most solas'. In your judgement, which tale is the winner? Of course, you will explain and illustrate the reasons for your choice.

7. Attitudes toward love (both sacred and profane) and/or marriage in *The Canterbury Tales*.

**Second-Term Article Discussion Assignment (5%):**

Scheduled: February 29/March 2, 2016

This assignment is essentially the same as in first term except it focuses on second term material.

Each of you will be responsible for leading the discussion of ONE paper (the issues raised by/insights of/critical approaches to/problems with/strengths of/connection to other tales …..). The others will be responsible for participating in the discussion. We shall aim for each paper to have a minimum 25-minute period for discussion. Your grade is a balance of leading and participating in the discussion.

The articles will be on either Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* or the work of the ‘*Pearl*-Poet’.

I will select and provide the group with all necessary copies of the articles. You will be assigned an article at random.

**Seminar Presentation and 2nd-Term Major Research Paper:**

**The Major Research Paper** **(20%)** is due officially on April 8, 2016.

**Length:** 12-15 typed double-spaced pages, standard 12-pt font

**Format: CHICAGO** is the most common format for documentation in Medieval Studies. Thus your term paper must follow Chicago-style end note format.

**Research requirement:** 5 critical, scholarly sources. (Wikipedia, btw, doesn’t count!)

Please note that the standard format in Medieval Studies is **Chicago Style**. This paper must therefore be written using the Chicago style of documentation.

The major paper in this course is a research paper and has a **research requirement**. You must cite at least **five** critical, scholarly sources (i.e. articles published in academic books and academic journals) in your paper, as well as the primary texts of the romances themselves. You may certainly use the articles we discussed in class, provided of course that they are appropriate to the topic.

It is expected that you will transform your SEMINAR PAPER into your term paper using the written feedback you receive from me and the seminar presider as well as the oral feedback from the group. However, you may, if you wish, write your research term paper on a different topic.

**The Seminar Presentation (15% overall):**

Note that you will NOT read your seminar paper to the class. Everyone will have already read your paper before the class begins, so the emphasis of the seminar will be on discussion -- your defence and further elaboration upon what you have written.

If you are in the third or fourth year of your degree, you are encouraged to read your full paper during the Senior Student Colloquium in April.

**SUGGESTED SEMINAR / RESEARCH TERM PAPER TOPICS**

TBA early in second term.

**SEMINAR WEEK: March 21 - March 23.** There will be TWO presentations per class.

You will be assigned a date for your seminar presentation and a date for your turn as a seminar presider. Consider your assigned dates as carved in stone -- last minute alternate dates will not be allowed unless you end up hospitalized!

I will assign the dates after everyone has chosen her/his topic.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SEMINAR PRESENTER (10%):**

1. You must make available a hard copy of your paper for each member of the group (4 copies in all) a minimum of 48 hours BEFORE your presentation -- that is, have it ready to hand out the class before. Failure to provide copies in advance automatically results in a grade of ZERO for the presentation. (Failure to turn up to give your presentation also of course results in a grade of ZERO for the presentation.) Please note that I will make all the copies of your paper for you, provided that you give me a hard copy early enough.

2. Your paper should be no more than 15 standard font double-spaced typed pages -- few conferences allow for papers which are more than 20 minutes long. It’s a research paper, so you MUST reference at least 5 scholarly critical sources on the subject. Use Chicago Style, which is the most typical format found in Medieval Studies.

3. After you are introduced by the seminar presider, you will have the opportunity to make a 5 MINUTE opening statement on the highlights and major points of your argument. The remainder of your time (20 minutes) will be discussion of your written work.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SEMINAR PRESIDER (5%):**

1. Briefly introduce the speaker.

2. Time management -- it’s your responsibility to keep the presentation on pace. Total time allotted (including intro and opening statement) is 25 minutes.

3. Lead the discussion. Keep the discussion going.

4. Provide written feedback on the paper (especially things that you think need improvement) to the presenter (with a copy to me) at the end of the class.

5. Failure to turn up on your assigned date to preside at a presentation automatically results in a grade of ZERO for presiding.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GROUP:**

Read the two papers BEFORE coming to class that day and be ready to participate. Remember, you will take a turn as a seminar presider too! And speaking of participation …..

**Second-Term Participation (10%):**

You should be an old hand at participation in the class by now, so the value in second term is higher.

**Final Examination: April 15 a.m., 2016**

Worth only 10%, the ‘final exam’ will be more of a final 1-hour test in which you get one last chance to show off what you have learned during the course. I am willing to make this final test optional — in which case, I would do the math to figure out your final grade based on term marks. That is, x/90 = y/100.