

ENGL3393: Chaucer
Eric Weiskott
Teaching Assistant: Erin Portman
Spring 2017, T/R 12:00-1:15
Office hours: T 2:00-3:00 (Stokes S407)

Geoffrey Chaucer was the first poet writing in English who was lauded and studied as literature in his own time. His body of writing, covering a breathtakingly wide range of subjects, is a subtle mix of satire and the sublime. This course is an introduction to Chaucer's poetry, including but not limited to his masterpiece, the *Canterbury Tales*. It is also an introduction to the Middle English language. The course is structured around the different genres and literary forms invented or reinterpreted by Chaucer, from tales of courtly love to fabliaux (fables) and dream visions. No prior knowledge of Middle English required.

REQUIRED TEXT (available at the BC Bookstore; the 1987 hardcover is also acceptable)
The Riverside Chaucer, ed. Larry D. Benson (3rd ed.) (Oxford University Press, 2008)

SCHEDULE

Who was Geoffrey Chaucer and what is Middle English?

- Jan 17 General Prologue (I 1-34)
Jan 19 General Prologue (I 35-78, I 747-858)
 Chaucer's Life (mediakron.bc.edu/mappingchaucer/chaucers-life)
 The Canterbury Tales (frame)
 (mediakron.bc.edu/mappingchaucer/the-canterbury-tales-2)
 Pronunciation (mediakron.bc.edu/alliterativepoetry/pronunciation)
 Watch Agbabi perform "Prologue (Grime Mix)" from *Telling Tales*
 (youtube.com/watch?v=-U-ozgjZfjQ)

Chivalry and courtly love (romance)

- Jan 24 *The Knight's Tale*, part 1 (I 859-1354)
 Butterfield, "Chaucer's French Inheritance" (20-23 only)
 *Discussion post 1 due on Canvas
Jan 26 *Knight's Tale*, part 2 (I 1355-1880)
Jan 31 *Knight's Tale*, part 3 (I 1881-2482)
 *Discussion post 2 due on Canvas
Feb 2 *Knight's Tale*, part 4 (I 2483-3108)
 *Introductory meter assignment: "Jabberwocky" and "Renouncement" on For
 Better for Verse (prosody.lib.virginia.edu)
Feb 7 *The Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas* (VII 691-966)
 Required film viewing: *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975)
 Day, "Monty Python and the Medieval Other"
 *Discussion post 3 due on Canvas
Feb 9 *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale* (V 709-1170)
Feb 14 *Franklin's Tale* (V 1171-1624)
 Manuscripts (mediakron.bc.edu/alliterativepoetry/manuscript-guide)

*Manuscript assignment *via* Yale Canvas Viewer
(vm-odaiprd-01.its.yale.edu/manuscripts/)

Dirty words and dirty deeds (fabliau)

- Feb 16 *The Miller's Prologue and Tale* (I 3109-3854)
 Feb 21 *The Reeve's Prologue and Tale* (I 3855-4324)
 Required film viewing: *A Knight's Tale* (2001)
 *Annotation assignment *via* Genius (genius.com/search?q=canterbury+tales)
 Feb 23 *The Cook's Prologue and Tale* (I 4325-4422)
 Casey, "Unfinished Business"
Riverside Chaucer, pp. xxxviii-xli (hardcover xlii-xlv) (*Versification* only)
 *Intermediate meter assignment: scan *Cook's Tale* (I 4365-4422)
 Feb 28 *The Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue* (IV 1213-2440)
 March 2 Midterm exam (in class)

Fallible authors (exemplum)

- March 14 General Prologue (I 669-714)
The Pardoner's Introduction and Prologue (VI 287-462)
 Watch Brinkman, "A Brief History of Rhyme"
 (bababrinkman.com/a-brief-history-of-rhyme/)
 MediaKron workshop; form teams
 March 16 *The Pardoner's Tale* (VI 463-968)
 Whitney, "What's Wrong with the Pardoner?"
 March 21 General Prologue (I 445-76)
The Wife of Bath's Prologue (III 1-856)
 Watch Agbabi perform "What Do Women Like Bes'?" from *Telling Tales*
 (youtube.com/watch?v=8LptEFGhR7A)
 March 23 *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (III 857-1264)
 March 28 MediaKron teams meet
 March 30 General Prologue (I 208-69)
The Friar's Prologue and Tale (III 1301-1664)
 Weiskott, "Chaucer the Forester"
 April 4 *The Summoner's Prologue and Tale* (III 1665-2294)
 April 6 *The Prioress's Prologue and Tale* (VII 453-690)
 *Popular culture assignment: Discussion post on Canvas analyzing at least three
 original tweets (not retweets) by Chaucer Doth Tweet
 (twitter.com/levostregc)

Winged wonders (dream vision)

- April 11 *The Book of the Duchess*, ll. 1-709
 *MediaKron maps due
 April 18 *Book of the Duchess*, ll. 710-1334
 Butterfield, "Chaucer's French Inheritance" (entire essay)
 Paper planning exercise
 April 20 *The House of Fame*, books 1-2 (ll. 1-1090)
 *Paper skeleton due (1 p.)

April 25 *House of Fame*, book 3 (ll. 1091-2158)
 April 27 *The Legend of Good Women*, prohemium (ll. 1-579, text F)

Shorter poems (lyric)

May 2 *Chaucer's Retraction* (X 1081-1092)
Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn
The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse
Lak of Stedfastnesse
 Edwards, "Chaucer and 'Adam Scriveyn'"

May 4 *Anelida and Arcite*
 Review session
 *Paper due (7-10 pp.)

May 12 Final exam (12:30pm)

GRADING

Annotation and popular culture assignments 10%
 Discussion posts 10%
 MediaKron mapping project 10%
 Midterm and final exams 20% each (40% total)
 Paper, 7-10 pp. 20%
 Participation 10%

OBJECTIVES

In this course, you will learn about Chaucer's poetic corpus and its cultural contexts. Special emphasis will be laid on Chaucer's many styles and his cosmopolitanism. Along the way, you will gain reading proficiency in the Middle English language and competence in scanning iambic pentameter, which Chaucer invented.

ASSIGNMENTS

The Discussion posts should reflect your initial reactions to the material of the first four weeks. They can, but need not, articulate an argument about the material. This course is accompanied by a website powered by MediaKron, a digital tool developed here at BC. In the second half of the semester, you will work in teams to research, design, and compose an interactive map on MediaKron for one of Chaucer's tales. For the meter assignments, you will explore meter using the interface on For Better For Verse and then practice on Chaucer's *Cook's Tale*. For the manuscript assignment, you will browse the Yale Canvas Viewer and come to class with one observation or question about a Chaucer manuscript. For the annotation assignment, you will create a username on Genius and contribute ten annotations to one or more Chaucer tales. For the popular culture assignment, you will create a Discussion post analyzing at least three original tweets (not retweets) by Chaucer Doth Tweet. The paper is a research project that engages with prior scholarship and argues for its point of view in detail.

EXAMS

The midterm will consist of eight short-answer questions about material from the first half of the course. The final will consist of fifty multiple-choice questions about material from the second half of the course, plus five short-answer passage identifications. Make-up exams will only be

given in extenuating circumstances and only if I am informed one week before the exam.

EXTRA CREDIT

Recitation from memory of the opening of the General Prologue (I 1-18) will increase a grade of your choice by 1/3 of a letter (*e.g.*, B on the midterm becomes a B+).

PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend each class having completed the assigned reading and/or film viewing. Students should come to class prepared to discuss Chaucer's texts as literature and as language. This is a discussion-based class, and you will not need laptops or smart phones.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Boston College places great value on academic integrity (bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html). I have a zero tolerance policy for intentional plagiarism. All quotations or paraphrases of sources must be cited parenthetically or in a footnote (examples: libguides.bc.edu/c.php?g=44446&p=281300).

ACCESSIBILITY

If you are a student with a disability seeking accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities.