

ENGL7003: Game of Thrones: Medieval English Political Poetry
Eric Weiskott
Spring 2018, T 4:30-6:50
Office hours: W 1:00-2:00 (Stokes S407)

Before House Stark and House Lannister came the House of York and the House of Lancaster. The fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries in England witnessed a series of social and political upheavals, from the Black Death to the Wars of the Roses and the Reformation. English poetry responds to and intervenes in these events. Political writing influenced the decisions of kings, shaped public perception of national politics, and landed people in prison (or worse). This course makes a survey of the genre, 1300-1600, with special focus on William Langland's *Piers Plowman*. We read canonical authors such as Chaucer and Langland alongside little-known texts from print and manuscript archives. Topics include periodization, multilingualism, the relationship between literature and politics, and the histories of poetic forms. No prior knowledge of Middle English required.

REQUIRED TEXT (available at the BC Bookstore)

Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-text, ed. Derek Pearsall (Exeter, 2008)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (inexpensive paperbacks; also free online)

Medieval English Political Writings, ed. James M. Dean (Medieval Institute, 1996)

Wynnere and Wastoure and The Parlement of the Thre Ages, ed. Warren Ginsberg (Medieval Institute, 1997)

SCHEDULE

Singing and/or working (complaint and manorialism)

Jan 16 *Song of the Husbandman* (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-song-of-the-husbandman)
Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry* (excerpt)
Pronunciation (mediakron.bc.edu/alliterativepoetry/pronunciation)

Crisis (Chaucer, ballads, and Westminster)

(Jan 22) *Discussion post 1 due on Canvas

Jan 23 Chaucer, *Parliament of Fowls*

Davis, "Hymeneal Alogic"

Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II"

(Jan 29) *Discussion post 2 due on Canvas

Jan 30 Charles d'Orléans, *Fortunes Stabilnes*, ballade 43

(d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/mooney-and-arn-kingis-quair-and-other-prison-poems-fortunes-stabilnes)

Chaucer, *Lak of Stedfastnesse*

Chaucer, *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse*

Gower, *Cinkante Balades*, dedication 1 (including the Latin) and balade 51

(d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/yeager-gower-french-balades-cinkante-balades)

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London Lickpenny (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-london-lickpenny)

Butterfield, "Chaucer's French Inheritance"

Scattergood, "Social and Political Issues in Chaucer"

Politics in the future tense (prophecy, alliterative meter, and the Wars of the Roses)

(Feb 5) *Discussion post 3 due on Canvas

Feb 6 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Prophecies of Merlin*, ed. Reeve

Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-thomas-of-erceldoune-prophecy)

Ercyldoun's Prophecy (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-ercyldouns-prophecy)

Wynnere and Wastoure

(d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/ginsberg-wynnere-and-wastoure)

Flood, "*Wynnere and Wastoure* and the Influence of Political Prophecy"

Kennedy, "'Game of Thrones' Is Even Whiter Than You Think"

(vice.com/en_us/article/8gexwp/game-of-thrones-is-even-whiter-than-you-think)

Eric's One-Page Guide to Middle English Alliterative Meter

Watch *Game of Thrones*, season 7 episode 2 (prophecy scene)

(youtube.com/watch?v=GvHoOv12PFc)

*Introductory meter exercise: Scan *Winner and Waster*, ll. 1-10

(Feb 12) *Discussion post 4 due on Canvas

Feb 13 *The Prophecy of Merlin* (Dublin MS, Bodley MS, and Magdalene Coll. MS)

(d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/dean-medieval-english-political-writings)

"The root is dead the swan is gone"

Shakespeare, *King Lear* (excerpt)

Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses*, ch. 1

Weiskott, "*The Ireland Prophecy*"

Manuscripts (mediakron.bc.edu/alliterativepoetry/manuscript-guide)

(Feb 19) *Discussion post 5 due on Canvas

Feb 20 "Balat set upponne the yates of Caunterbury" (in Strohm, *Politique*, ch. 4)

Allan, "Yorkist Propaganda"

Strohm, *Politique*, ch. 4

Watch *Game of Thrones*, season 2 episode 4 (Stark-Lannister battle scene)

(youtube.com/watch?v=ecGIBjzjHcg)

An imaginary bomb with real shrapnel (*Piers Plowman* and the Peasants' Revolt)

(Feb 26) *Discussion post 6 due on Canvas

Feb 27 Langland, *Piers Plowman*, Prologue and passūs 1-2

Kane, "Langland, William (c.1325-c.1390), poet"

Steiner, *Reading "Piers Plowman"*, Introduction

March 13 *PP*, passūs 3-5

Hanna, "Reading Prophecy/Reading *Piers*"

Middleton, "Narration and the Invention of Experience"

- Statute of Cambridge 1388
 *Intermediate meter exercise: scan *Piers Plowman* C.5.1-15
 *Topic study due (2-5 pp.)
- March 20 *PP*, passūs 6-7
 Audelay, *Carols*, 2 (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/fein-audelay-poems-and-carols-carol-sequence)
- March 27 Justice, “Literary History and *Piers Plowman*”
PP, passūs 8-9
 “Addresses of the Commons” (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-addresses-of-the-commons)
 “John Ball’s Sermon Theme” (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-john-balls-sermon-theme)
 “The Letter of John Ball” (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-letter-of-john-ball-royal-manuscript)
 “Piers’s Pardon, before and after 1381”
 “Tax Has Tenet Us Alle” (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-tax-has-tenet-us-alle)
 Sobecki, “Hares, Rabbits, Pheasants”
- Grammar, the ground of all (*Piers Plowman* and institutions of education)**
- April 3 *PP*, passūs 10-12
 “Thou That Sellest the Worde of God” (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-thou-that-sellest-the-worde-of-god)
 “Allas, What Schul We Freris Do” (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/dean-medieval-english-political-writings-allas-what-schul-we-freris-do)
 Cannon, “From Literacy to Literature”
 Hanna, “School and Scorn”
- Antique modernity (satire, prophecy, prosody, and the Tudors)**
- April 10 Dunbar, “Fra the Sessioun”
 Dunbar, *Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*, ed. Bawcutt
 MacDonald, “Alliterative Poetry and its Context”
- April 17 Gascoigne, *Steele Glas*
 “When Father Blithe the beggar can say two Creeds”
 Hardison, “Blank Verse before Milton”
 Act Touching Prophecies
 (mediakron.bc.edu/alliterativepoetry/act-touching-prophecies)
- April 24 Chaucer, *The Parson’s Prologue*
 Crowley, “The Printer to the Reader”
 Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes of Instruction*
 Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ch. 31
 Webbe, *Discourse on English Poetrie* (excerpt)
 Nicholson, “Englising Eloquence”
 Simpson, “Diachronic History”
- May 1 Donne, *Elegies*, 7 (poetryfoundation.org/poems/50663/elegy-vii-natures-lay-idiot-i-taught-thee-to-love)

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Donne, "Satire III" (poetryfoundation.org/poems/44125/satire-iii)
Elizabeth I, "The Doubt of Future Foes" (poetryfoundation.org/poems/44219/the-doubt-of-future-foes)
Elizabeth I, "In Defiance of Fortune" (poetryfoundation.org/poems/44220/in-defiance-of-fortune)
Elizabeth I, "On Monsieur's Departure"
(poetryfoundation.org/poems/44221/on-monsieurs-departure)
Drimmer, "Questionable Contexts"
Rush, "Licentious Rhymers"
May 8 *Paper/portfolio due (15-25/10-15 pp.)

GRADING

Discussion posts 15%

Oral presentation (to be scheduled), 5-15 min. + handout and/or Page on Canvas 20%

Paper/portfolio, 15-25/10-15 pp. 40%

Participation 10%

Topic study, 2-5 pp. 15%

ASSIGNMENTS

The Discussion posts, due on Mondays, should reflect your initial reactions to the material from the first half of the semester. They can, but need not, articulate an argument about the material. The topic study is an introductory essay on a problem, topic, or research or teaching question arising from the course material. The paper is an article-length research project that engages with prior scholarship and argues for its point of view in detail. Lynch School students may instead complete a teaching portfolio and/or lesson plan relating to the course material. Each student will also prepare one oral presentation (to be scheduled) of 5-15 minutes, supported by a handout and/or a dedicated Page on Canvas.

OBJECTIVES

In this course, you will explore many kinds of correspondence between English writing and politics before 1600: patronage, propaganda, friendship, exclusion, domination, inspiration, revolution. You will gain competence in reading all major (and some minor) genres and forms of early English poetry, including the now-defunct alliterative meter. You will read most of the final authorial version of *Piers Plowman*, the most persistently challenging premodern English poem. Along the way, you will also acquire reading proficiency in the Middle English language.

PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend each class having completed the assigned reading. Students should come to class prepared to actively discuss the language, rhetoric, and literary form of assigned primary texts and the arguments and ideas of assigned secondary criticism. This is a discussion-based class, and you typically will not need laptops or smart phones.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Boston College places great value on academic integrity (bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/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.