

Fall 8-15-2005

ENG 3800-001: Medieval English Literature

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English 3800
Medieval English Literature
 Fall 2005

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Office Hours: MW 9-10, 12-1; F 9-10; and by appointment

About the Course

The richness and diversity of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English literature is one of the best-kept secrets of literary studies. Often deeply moving, frequently funny, and always fascinating, this eclectic body of work invites sensitive readers to listen for the human voices it embodies. In this class, we will explore a broad sampling of texts from Anglo-Saxon elegies such as *The Wife's Lament*, to the spiritual writings of Julian of Norwich, to medieval romances such as *Sir Orfeo*. As we consider the social contexts these works are responding to, we'll be discovering what new insights we can gain about, for example, their social, psychological, political, and spiritual visions. While our exploration of this literature will always include historical context, it will be enriched by the critical practices you bring to the texts, whether this be the indispensable skill of close, attentive reading, or this skill in conjunction with more formalized critical approaches such as psychoanalysis, structuralism, or deconstruction.

Required Texts

The Longman Anthology of British Literature, Vol 1, (Damrosch, ed)
The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet, (Finch, trans; Andrew and Waldron, ed)
Lais of Marie de France, (Hanning and Ferrante, trans and ed)

*I'll also be directing you to texts on-line when necessary

Course Requirements/ Evaluation

1) midterm exam	15%
2) final exam	20%
3) midterm paper	15%
4) final paper	20%
5) short writings, quizzes, etc	15%
6) class participation	15%

Note: You may choose to submit an essay from this course to your Electronic Writing Portfolio. For more information, see me and/or the assessment website (www.eiu.edu/~assess).

Policies

- 1) The reading load for this course is heavy and the material challenging, so make sure you allow yourself plenty of time to complete the assigned reading. Keep in mind that if you come to class unprepared, you'll lose participation credit. On the less punitive side, class is simply a lot more fun and interesting when you know what everyone else is talking about and have ideas of your own to contribute.
- 2) Much of what you will learn in this course will come from ideas generated in class discussion and so your presence in, and engagement with, the class are essential.
- 3) Assignments must be handed in within the first five minutes of class on the day they are due unless we have worked out a prior arrangement. Work handed in after that time will lose half a letter grade for each calendar day it is late. No work will be accepted a week after the deadline.
- 4) You must successfully complete all work for the course in order to receive a passing grade.

Plagiarism Policy

The following is the English department's statement concerning plagiarism:

“Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including a grade of ‘F’ for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

While I assume I'll have no need to impose penalties for plagiarism, the ones I consider appropriate are that the student fail the course and be reported to the Judicial Affairs Office. If at any point in your writing for this course (or for another, if you like) you're uncertain about whether you're using sources appropriately, please come and talk to me.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please let me know and please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Syllabus

(I'll notify you in advance of any changes)

Week 1: (Aug 22-26)

“The Wanderer,” “Wulf and Eadwacer,” “The Wife’s Lament” (*Longman*)

Week 2: (Aug 29- Sept 2)

“The Dream of the Rood,” “Judith,” Old English riddles (*Longman*)

Week 3: (Sept 5-9: no class Mon., Sept 5 for Labor Day)

Beowulf (*Longman*)

Week 4: (Sept 12-16)

Beowulf (*Longman*), Marie de France *Bisclavret* (*The Lais*)

Week 5: (Sept 19-23)

Yonec, *Lanval* (*Lais*)

Week 6: (Sept 26-30)

Geoffrey of Monmouth, Gerald of Wales, Edward I (*Longman*)

Week 7: (Oct 3-7; no class Fri., Oct 7 for Fall Break)

Review

Midterm Exam

Week 8: (Oct 10-14)

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (read the version in *Pearl Poet*)

Week 9: (Oct 17-21)

Julian of Norwich, from *A Book of Showings* (*Longman*)

Richard Rolle, from *The Fire of Love* (*Longman*)

First Paper is due

Week 10: (Oct 24-28)

from *The Cloud of Unknowing* (*Longman*)

Pearl (*Pearl Poet*)

Week 11: (Oct 31-Nov 4)

Chaucer, *The Pardoner’s Tale* (www.canterburytales.org)

Week 12: (Nov 7-11)

Sir Orfeo (tentative)

Week 13: (Nov 14-18)

Malory, “The Tale of King Arthur,” “Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere,”
(online)

Week 14: (Nov 21-25)
Thanksgiving Recess

Week 15: (Nov 28- Dec 2)
Malory, "Morte Arthur" (online)

Week 16: (Dec 5-9)
Paper presentations
Review
Final paper is due

You will have a final exam during exam week.