**English 8210:**

**Chaucer and the Critics**

**Fall 2016**

**Tuesday 12:30-3:00pm**

**Tate Hall 310**

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Office Hours: Tuesday 11am-noon, Thursday 2-3pm and by appointment

**Course Description:**

Perhaps because Chaucer’s oeuvre includes the major genres of medieval literature, Chaucer criticism has historically defined the field of late medieval literary studies, working as both a harbinger of critical trends and a bell weather of the current state of the field. We will read Chaucer’s works along with some of the most influential works of Chaucer criticism. A study of Chaucer criticism provides both a history of the field of Middle English criticism and a vehicle for entering into critical debates of 2016. We will consider established approaches such as manuscript history; source study and translation; medieval poetics and historicism in addition to newer approaches such as affect studies, animal studies, globalism, and media studies.

**Required Texts:**

The Riverside Chaucer, ed. Larry D. Benson

Other readings will be posted on the course blackboard site

**Recommended databases, on-line resources and journals:**

Middle English Compendium (available through databases on Ellis library website)

 includes on-line Middle English Dictionary

New Chaucer Society (<http://artsci.wustl.edu/~chaucer/bibliography.php>)

 Has searchable on-line bibliography of Chaucer criticism

International Medieval Bibliography (IMB)

 (available through databases on Ellis library website;

this is an interdisciplinary search engine)

Harvard Chaucer Website (<http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer>)

includes instruction on pronunciation of ME

Chaucer Metapage (http://englishcomplit.unc.edu/chaucer/)

The Labyrinth (<http://www8.georgetown.edu/departments/medieval/labyrinth/>)

TEAMS Middle English Texts:

 http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/tmsmenu.htm

Internet Medieval Sourcebook: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html

Journals largely devoted to Chaucer include *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* and the *Chaucer Review*. Other top medieval journals that publish some essays on Chaucer include *Speculum*, *Exemplaria, Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, *New Medieval Literatures* and *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*

**Course Requirements:**

Active class discussion

This is an essential element of a seminar. I encourage you to think of the class as a collaborative project and to take an active role in determining the focus of discussions.

Close Reading Presentation and Short Paper (3-4 pages)

Please select a brief passage of Chaucer’s poetry for your assigned day and be ready to walk the class through a close reading of the passage. You will also write up your close reading as a short paper. Please type up the passage you are reading in its entirety on the top of the page. The paper can move beyond the limits of close reading, but must begin with a close reading of one passage. Be sure to make ample use of the Middle English Dictionary (MED) in your analysis.

Critical Presentation

Please choose ONE of the critical articles assigned for the class. You will be responsible for leading class discussion on that article. Please send questions ahead of time via blackboard to help frame discussion.

Critical Review

Please write a review of a book chapter or article. You may choose to write on the same article as your critical presentation, or another one useful to your research project. You should: 1) briefly summarize the article (commenting on both its conclusions and methods), 2) suggest what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the essay 3) consider how the project engages fields of inquiry within medieval studies and (optional) 4) comment on how you see the article or chapter as useful to your research project Your review should be 3-4 pages. Critical Reviews are due no more than one week after the article is discussed in class or by 10/25.

Contextual Materials Class Presentation

Each student will sign up to give a 15-minute report one of the weeks of class focused on additional primary source material to be added to the syllabus for that day. For example, you might choose a portion of a rhetorical treatise to be read with the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*. Your presentation should suggest ways in which this material can illuminate one of the Chaucerian texts assigned for your chosen class day. You can use your in-class presentation to try out some preliminary ideas for your final paper. In addition to the presentation, you are responsible for posting comments and discussion questions (250-500 words) on the class blackboard site 5 days before class to stimulate and frame class discussion.

Abstract:

You will write a 250-word abstract of your final paper for an imaginary panel on “Chaucer and the Critics.” The abstract should include your thesis, the main texts you address, and an account of how your paper intervenes in existing scholarship. Proposals should be double-spaced and turned in electronically. At this time, you will also be asked to turn in an **annotated bibliography** of at least ten items, including primary and secondary sources. You **will revise the abstract** based on my comments.

*I will grade BOTH the initial and the revised abstract.*

Final Paper (due December 9)

You are required to write a long graduate seminar paper (15-20 pages plus bibliography). Your paper should include (1) a substantial reading of a Chaucerian text, (2) engagement with the criticism of your chosen text(s) and the scholarship around your chosen issue or topic and 3) The use of TWO or more supporting primary documents.

Paper Presentation and Workshop

On November 29, each of you will give a 10-minute presentation to the class on your final paper; there will be 5 minutes for questions and comments for each student. The second portion of class will be dedicated to a writing workshop in which you will be asked to comment in detail on some of your classmates’ papers. A 15-page draft will of your final paper will be due at this time.

**Grading:**

Class Discussion (20%)

Close Reading Presentation and Paper (10%)

Critical Review and Presentation (10%)

Contextual Materials Presentation (10%)

Abstract (initial draft, rewrite) (5% each)

Final Paper (40%)

**Schedule of Readings:**

8/23: Introduction

Introduction to the *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. xv-xlvii

Chaucer’s short poems:

“Chaucers Wordes Unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn,”

“Truth,” “The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse”

with corresponding Explanatory and Textual Notes

Hanna, “Authorial Versions, Rolling Revision, Scribal Error? Or the

Truth about ‘Truth,’” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 10 (1988)

 Bale, “From Translator to Laureate: Imagining the Medieval Author”

 *Literature Compass* 5:5 (2008)

Visit to Special Collections

8/30 *Book of the Duchess*

excerpt from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* on Ceyx and Alycyone

Carruthers, “’The Mystery of the Bed Chamber’: Mnemotechnique and

 Vision in Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*” from

*The Rhetorical Poetics of the Middle Ages* (2000)

Fradenburg, "My Worldes Blisse": Courtly Interiority in *The Book of*

*the Duchess*” from *Sacrifice Your Love* (2002)

9/6 *House of Fame*

excerpts from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Ovid’s *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*,

Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* and Dante’s *Commedia*

Evans, “Chaucer in Cyberspace: Medieval Technologies of Memory and

the *House of Fame,*” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001)

 Hsy, from *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism and*

 *Medieval Literature* (2013)

9/13 (Fragment 1) *Canterbury Tales, General Prologue*

 Robertson, from *A Preface to Chaucer* (1962)

 Patterson, “Historical Criticism and the Development of Chaucer Studies”

in *Negotiating the Past* (1987)

Mann, “The General Prologue and Estates Literature” (1973) reprinted

 In *Geoffrey Chaucer’s* The Canterbury Tales, *A Casebook* (2007)

9/20 *Knight’s Tale*

Howard, from *The Idea of the* Canterbury Tales (1976)

Fowler, “Afterlife of the Civil Dead” from

*Critical Essays on Geoffrey Chaucer* (1998)

9/27 *Miller’s Tale*

Patterson, “The Miller’s Tale and the Politics of Laughter” (1987)

 Reprinted in *Literary Practice and Social Change, 1380-1530* (1990)

*Reeve’s Tale*

Kolve, “Death as Tapster” in *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative* (1984)

10/4 (Fragment 2) *Man of Law’s Tale*

Lavezzo, “Beyond Rome: Mapping Gender and Justice in

*The Man of Law’s Tale*”

 Nelson, “Premodern Media and Networks of Transmission

in the Man of Law’s Tale,” *Exemplaria* 25:3 (2013)

 Dinshaw, “Pale Faces: Race, Religion and Affect in Chaucer’s Texts

 And Their Readers,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001)

10/11 (Fragment 3) *Wife of Bath’s Tale*

Dinshaw, “’Glose/bele chose’: The Wife of Bath and Her Glossators” from

 *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* (1989)

Edwards, from *Afterlives of Rape in Medieval English Literature* (2016)

10/18 (Fragment 4) *Clerk’s Tale*

Miller, “Love’s Promise: *The Clerk’s Tale* and the

Scandal of the Unconditional” in *Philosophical Chaucer* (2004)

 *Merchant’s Tale*

 Burger, “In the Merchant’s Bedchamber” in

*Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture* (2012)

10/25 (Fragment 5) *Squire’s Tale*

Ingham, “Little Nothings,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 31 (2009)

Crane, from Animal Encounters (2013)

*Franklin’s Tale*

Kittredge, from *Chaucer and His Poetry* (1915) reprinted

 in the *Canterbury Tales* (Norton, 2005)

**ABSTRACT DUE for final project**

11/1 (Fragment 6) *Physician’s Tale*

Bloch, “Chaucer’s Maiden’s Head,” *Representations* 28 (1989)

*Pardoner’s Tale*

Kruger, “Claiming the Pardoner,” *Exemplaria* 6 (1994)

Ganim, from *Chaucerian Theatricality* (1990)

11/8 (Fragment 7) *Prioress’s Tale*

Holsinger, from *Music, Body, and Desire* (2001)

*The Nun’s Priest’s Tale,*

 Camargo, “Medieval Rhetoric Delivers,” *New Medieval Literatures* 9 (2008)

**REVISED ABSTRACT DUE**

11/15 (Fragment 8) *Second Nun’s Tale*

Life of St Cecilia from the *Golden Legend*

Sanok, “Performing Feminine Sanctity” JMEMS 32 (2002)

 (Fragment 10) *Parson’s Tale* and *Retraction*

 For the *Parson’s Tale*, read at least

lines 1-132, 316-36, 387-89, 956-62, 1029-1080 and choose one of the seven deadly sins to read

Trigg, from *Congenial Souls* (2002)

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

11/29 **PAPER PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOP**

12/6 Contemporary Chaucerianisms:

Selections from Patience Agbabi, *Telling Tales* (2015)

Selections from Bryant, ed. *Chaucer Hath a Blog* (2010)

 And http://houseoffame.blogspot.com/

http://refugeetales.org/about-refugee-tales/

**Final Paper due December 9 by 4pm**