

Spring 2009 ♦ ENGL 351-001 (16085)  
 TTh 11:00-12:15 ♦ HUM 108  
**Dr. Obermeier ♦ Chaucer's Canterbury Tales**  
 Office Hours: TTh 1:30-2:30, and by Appointment in HUM 321  
 ☎ and Voice Mail: 505.277.2930  
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 Mailbox on office door or in English Department Office via receptionist



### Required Texts

Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. P. G. Walsh. Oxford UP, 2000.  
 Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales: Complete*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000 (or *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987, if you already have it.)  
 Chaucer Studio Recording of *The General Prologue* (CD): <http://creativeworks.byu.edu/chaucer/> (10\$—we can do an omnibus order, if you like).  
 Class webpage: <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/Eng351CT/index351CT.html>  
 eReserve File: link on class webpage. Password = Chaucer351. Unless otherwise identified, most items are taken from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. by V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2005).  
 Obermeier, Anita, and Gregory Castle. *Guide to Style*. 2005. On class webpage.

### Course Requirements

|   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|
| ME Translation Exercise                             | worth 10% |  |
| 5-page Paper  | worth 10% |  |
| 8-10-page Research Paper                            | worth 25% |  |
| In-class Midterm                                    | worth 10% | Grading is done on a standard 0-100 scale.<br>For grading rubrics and scale,<br>see class website. |
| In-class Final                                      | worth 20% |  |
| 10 1-page Written Responses                         | worth 10% |  |
| Active Class Participation                          | worth 15% |  |
| Middle English Reading Test; see #6 under policies. |           |  |

## Tentative Syllabus

eReserve (eR); Link on class webpage (CWP)

- T 1.20      Introduction to the Course. Video presentation: *Prologue to Chaucer*.  
Th 1.22      Preliminary Linguistic Discussion: Video presentation: *English Goes Underground*. Introduction xxvi-xxix (Pronunciation, esp. table on p. xxviii).
- T 1.27      Introduction xxix-xxxviii (Inflections, Syntax, Idiom, Versification). This section is dense and rather difficult to assimilate all at once. We will cover most features in class, but you will be expected to read this section slowly, returning to it as necessary. Read the first 118 lines of the *General Prologue* and be ready to examine its language carefully. We will discuss the language in those lines in class based on the linguistic introduction.
- Th 1.29      Introduction xiii-xxv (Chaucer's Life) and to the *CT. General Prologue* lines 1-284. Preferably, listen to your CD while you are reading. Augustine, "On Pilgrimage"; Gower, "On Monks" (eR). "The Ptolemaic System" (CWP).
- T 2.3      *General Prologue* lines 285-541.  
Th 2.5      *General Prologue* lines 541-855. **Response 1 due.**
- T 2.10      Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Intro, Books I-III (1-57).  
Th 2.12      Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Books VI-V (70-114). **Response 2 due.**  
F 2.13      **Last day to change grading options.**
- T 2.17      *The Knight's Tale*, Parts 1 and 2 (to line 1518). "Epic and Romance Handout" (CWP).  
Th 2.19      *The Knight's Tale*, Parts 2 and 3 (to line 2350). Audio clips on eR.
- T 2.24      *The Knight's Tale*, Parts 3 and 4 (to line 3108). **Response 3 due.**  
Th 2.26      *The Miller's Prologue and Tale*. Audio clips on eR. **Translation Exercise due.**  
F 2.27      **Last day to drop a course without a grade.**
- T 3.3      *The Reeve's Prologue and Tale. The Cook's Prologue and Tale*. "The Dramatic Principle" (Kittredge p. 534-8) (eR). *Introduction to The Man of Law's Tale*.  
Th 3.5      *The Man of Law's Tale*. **Response 4 due.**
- T 3.10      *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*. "The Old Woman's Speech" and "Against Jovinian" (eR). Audio clips on eR.  
Th 3.12      *The Wife of Bath's Tale. The Friar's Prologue and Tale*. **Response 5 due.**
- 3.15-22      Spring Break
- T 3.24      *The Summoner's Prologue and Tale*. **Midterm Exam Prep. Paper 1 due.**  
Th 3.26      **Midterm Exam**. Blue books are optional, but some form of paper is required.
- T 3.31      *The Clerk's Prologue and Tale*.  
Th 4.2      *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*. "Woman and the Pear Tree" (eR). **Response 6 due.**
- T 4.7      *The Squire's Tale. The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*.  
Th 4.9      *The Physician's Tale. Introduction and Prologue to the Pardoner's Tale and The Pardoner's Tale*. Jean de Meun, "False Seeming's Speech" (eR). "Indulgences" (CWP). Audio clips on eR. **Response 7 due.**

- T 4.14 *The Shipman's Tale. The Prioress's Prologue and Tale.* Pope Gregory X, "On Christian Mistreatment of Jews" (eR).
- Th 4.16 *The Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas. The Tale of Melibee* (preferably you read through all of it; if not, then read to line 1125; skim until line 1515, and then read to the end). Audio clips on eR. **Response 8 due.**
- F 4.17 **Last day to drop a course without approval of college dean.**
- T 4.21 *The Monk's Prologue and Tale.*
- Th 4.23 *The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue.* Marie de France, "The Cock and the Fox"; Macrobius, "On Dreams" (eR). **Response 9 due.**
- F 4.24 **Chaucerian Dalliance Dinner. 6:30 pm.**
- T 4.28 *The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale.* Audio clips on eR. *The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale* (to line 913). "Medieval Alchemy" (CWP).
- Th 4.30 *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale* (line 914 to end). *The Manciple's Prologue and Tale.* Ovid, "Story of Phoebus and Coronis" (eR).
- T 5.5 *The Parson's Prologue and Tale* (pp. 269-70, 285-303). *The Retraction* (p. 310.) **Response 10 due.** Final Exam Prep.
- Th 5.7 Class cancelled because of a conference engagement of mine. **Paper 2 due.**
- T 5.12 **Final Exam** 12:30-2:30 in HUM 108. Blue books are optional, but some form of paper is required.

### Course Objectives

In this course, we will explore Chaucer's most famous work, the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's collection of pilgrimage tales is one of the greatest, most imaginative, and varied pieces of all English literature. Consider its fascinating historical backdrop in late fourteenth century England: a generation prior, the plague had swept through Europe decimating the population; political unrest and religious turmoil reign; a child king had taken the throne; peasants rose up in rebellion; the Bible was translated into English; heretics were burned at the stake—a world of both decay and renewal, of catastrophic violence and decline for some, but dazzling possibility for others. Through the voices of colorful storytellers, Chaucer's last great poem tests the boundaries of social possibility in a "disenchanted" age, weighing the competing claims of allegory and realism, chivalry and commerce, men and women, traditional authority and individual experience. And it does so in our ancestor language of Middle English, simultaneously a colorful, earthy, and lofty idiom. We will, in essence, ride along with the Canterbury pilgrims on our own journey through the Middle Ages.

Our goal in the course is to read every word of *The Canterbury Tales* in Middle English and to discuss every Tale. If you find the Middle English difficult and unfamiliar at first, I suggest you use a translation into modern English. See the class webpage for both online and hardcopy suggestions. Use the translation as a crutch but free yourself as soon as possible, since **all** discussions and examinations will be based on **the Middle English text**.

### Learning Outcomes Goals

At end of the course, students should be able:

- to demonstrate a working knowledge of Chaucer's Middle English
- to shown an understanding of the Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, as an individual text, a text within Chaucer's canon, and a text within literary history
- to evidence knowledge of English fourteenth-century culture and history
- to conduct research using appropriate methods and tools for Chaucer Studies
- to write competent analytical response papers and research papers
- to identify, analyze, and synthesize the acquired knowledge and skills in tests and papers

## Course Policies

**1. Tests and Papers:** Separate instructions are posted on the class website for each test and paper. Tests are closed book and emphasize detail knowledge through ids, analysis and close reading through passage ids, and synthesis abilities through essay questions.

**2. Attendance** is mandatory. Since your progress in the course will depend a great deal on what we discuss in class, I expect class attendance and participation (actual contributions to the class discussion). I will pass out attendance sheets, and it is your responsibility to sign the sheets. So, if the sheet passed you by, come up to the desk and sign at the end of class. Your participation grade will be affected after **2** unexcused absences (from a B+ to a B for one additional absence, etc.). An excused absence is a doctor's note, letter from an employer, etc. If you have an emergency, you can leave a message on my voice mail or email. **Note:** While you are welcome to check with me on what you have missed, I do not "reteach" class periods you missed during my office hours or over email. Please consult with your fellow students for notes.

**3. Written Responses:** You are expected to write a 1-page response for each session indicated, discussing the readings for that day or since the last response. These responses should be informal, journal-like, **typed** pieces, expressing your thoughts and reactions to the text. Do not be afraid to express puzzlement and unfamiliarity or even delight and interest. I am interested in your untutored, uncritical reactions to the texts. We will leave more structured and analytical writing for the formal papers. Each finished response will receive 10 points of credit; flimsy or superficial responses will receive only partial credit.

**4. Assignments:** Students must attempt **all** assignments to pass the course. This means that you cannot simply skip an assignment because you are happy with your grade at the time; hence, you cannot for instance skip the final.

**5. Pertinent Websites:** Generally, all handouts are posted to the class webpage. The webpage also contains other materials and links pertinent to the class. I suggest that you visit it soon to avail yourself of the content and tools offered there.

**6. Middle English Reading Test:** Toward the end of the course in my office, each student will be required to read aloud a passage of 20-30 lines of his/her choice from Chaucer in Middle English with the appropriate pronunciation. Listen to your CD or the online clips; study the pronunciation guide in the *CT*. The reading will not be graded, but thoughtful and dedicated attempts will weigh positively on your final grade.

**7. Plagiarism:** Don't do it! For clarification, see statements **#102-7** in *Guide to Style*.

**8.** The English Department affirms its commitment to the shared responsibility of instructors and students to foster and maintain a positive learning environment in and out of the classroom.

**9. Equal Access:** If you have a qualified disability that requires some form of accommodation to ensure your equal access to learning in this class, please see me as soon as possible so that we can work together to address your needs.

**10. Cell Phones:** Please turn them off or put them on vibrate.