

Paper 2: Research Paper on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Content: Write an 8-10-page-paper (plus a works cited/works consulted page) literary analysis paper with secondary research on any work on the syllabus. You may also write on a comparative topic that affects more than one work, but make sure that it is a well-focused and limited topic that you can deal with adequately.

Suggestions for Topics

1. If you want to continue with the research you did in Paper 1 and now apply it and your analysis to a Chaucerian work, you can do that. Please consult with me first.
2. The purpose or effect of the frame narrative (the pilgrimage), or its relationship to one or more Tales.
3. The place or function of the “cherles tales” in the *CT*.
4. Examine Chaucer's reworking of his sources in a single Tale, looking at what the modifications reveal about the meaning of the Tale. You might want to consult *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales* (in Libros), which contains the stories Chaucer may have read.
5. Analyze Chaucer's use of a narrative genre by researching the characteristics of the genre and considering his modifications (*fabliau*, dream vision, saint's life, romance, etc.).
6. Compare one of the Tales with another medieval work of the same genre (e.g., “The Franklin's Tale” with one of the *Lais* by Marie de France—see link on website for online text of the *Lais*).
7. The interplay or balance of religious and secular Tales in the *CT*. (See also the Retraction?)
8. How well does Chaucer suit the Tale to the teller in the *CT*, essentially the dramatic principle? Is this a valid avenue of inquiry anyway?
9. The issue of sovereignty in marriage, as presented in the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, the Clerk's Tale, the Franklin's Tale, etc. Read Kittredge's article on the marriage group (found on eReserves) as a start and support or refute it.
10. If you are versed in modern critical approaches, apply one of them to one or more of Chaucer's works. Choose from Feminism, New Historicism, Marxism, Post-Colonialism, Psychoanalysis, Queer Theory, etc.
11. Chaucer's role in his own fiction.
12. The role of the Host of the *CT*.
13. The place of the “Parson's Tale” in the whole work. (Is there a “grand design” to the *CT*?)

14. The deceptiveness or slipperiness of language (see especially NPT, CYT, MancT).
15. Boethian influence on any of the Tales, or on the “grand design.”
16. Chaucer has been called a special friend to women? Support or refute this position.
17. **A topic of your choice to be cleared with me first.**

Format: I will **NOT ACCEPT** papers that do not follow the guidelines outlined in the online *Guide to Style* containing the format guidelines of the *MLA*, plus instructions on writing papers, sample introductory paragraphs with developed theses, frequent errors in critical writing, and a list of tools for the literature student. Review documentation procedures and follow the distinctions outlined for shorter and longer prose quotations. Persistent errors in format will result in lower grades.

Sources: You should draw on a minimum of 5 scholarly sources to support your thesis; this means you might actually have to look at 10 to find 5 useful ones. Only one of those sources should be an online source, such as a respectable website. In case of doubt, run the source by me first. Full-text databases are **NOT** considered online sources, as they usually only make regular scholarly journal articles available online. You should consult scholarly books and journals. Start with the *International MLA Bibliography* (NOT the Index of Periodicals) in and/or the *International Medieval Bibliography* in the UNM database system. Links to those and others are on the class website. After you identify potential books and articles in these databases, you need to check if they might be available through one of the online full-text resources or in the stacks in the form of essay collections. If not, you can order them through Interlibrary Loan (ILL): <http://illiad.unm.edu/illiad/logon.html>. Articles come through in a few days as pdf files, but you clearly must plan ahead. You should also search **Libros** for books on your topic, and you might try **WorldCat** in the database section. It lists all books published, while Libros only contains what UNM has.

Structure: I would like to reiterate that you are writing a **formal** paper, both in content and in style. Thus, your paper needs an introduction providing a context and a precisely phrased thesis at the end of the first paragraph (see especially #2-3 in *Guide to Style*). I encourage you to edit, revise, and proofread your papers, striving for coherence, grammatical correctness, and good transitions. **First drafts rarely hold up to critical scrutiny. I am available in office hours or via email to discuss ideas, outlines, and drafts of your paper with you before it is due.** Sample papers for this assignment can be accessed on the class website with a UNM netid and password.

Due Dates: Email proposal: Thursday, 4.23.2009; final paper due Thursday, 5.7.2009 in my mailbox or under office door.