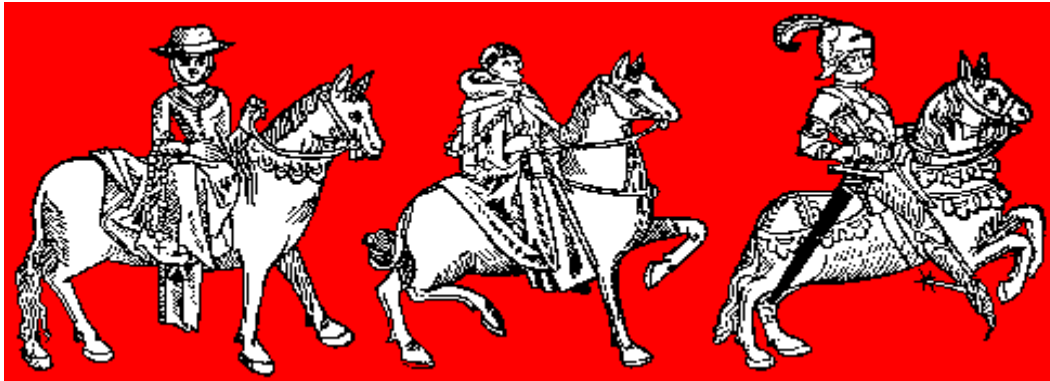


Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

English 351.001

Kellie Meyer

MWF 12:00 – 12:50



The late fourteenth century writer Geoffrey Chaucer was the most important writer of Middle English and one of the greatest poets of all time. Though he wrote many wonderful works such as the *Book of the Duchess*, the *House of Fame*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, *Romaunt of the Rose*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*, he is best known for *The Canterbury Tales*, his longest and finest work, despite its unfinished state. Written primarily in decasyllabic couplets, a form invented by the poet, the tales are told by a diverse assembly of narrators on a pilgrimage to Becket's shrine in Canterbury. These pilgrims, including the poet himself, represent the full spectrum of the various classes and occupations of medieval life, and their interactions, as well as the tales they tell, reveal the superstitions, religious beliefs, politics, philosophy, imagination, and harsh reality of the time period. Through an investigation of the General Prologue and fourteen of the tales, we will journey through the Middle Ages enjoying chivalric romances, bawdy fabliaux, folktales, and sermons; stories ranging from the sacred to the profane, comedy to tragedy, satire to genuine pathos, fables and folklore to realistic portraits of life in this era. In this class, we will go beyond a simple reading of the texts and analyze both the tales and the characters who tell them, as well as examine how these characters interact with each other, and function in the tales as a whole. This will be achieved through an immersion in the texts, an introduction to the history, art, culture, and the religious and philosophical debates of the time period, extra-curricular research, frequent writing, and lively and informed class discussions.