Paper 1: Report on Chaucerian Historical/Cultural Background

Content: Write a 5-page report on the historical/cultural background of a subject related to Chaucer's poetry. As I have been trying to express in class, Chaucer's works were created in a historical and cultural context, and knowing about that context helps us understand Chaucer's poetry better. I have listed a number of topics below with their rough application to Chaucer's works. **If you are interested in a historical/cultural topic not listed here, please run it by me.**

Anne of Bohemia/Queen Anne (*PF, LGW*)
Astrology/Astronomy (Shorter Poems, *HF, PF, TC*)
Chaucer as a Customs Officer
Chaucer's Audience (*TC*)
Chaucer's Education
Chaucer's London (*TC*)
Chess in the Middle Ages (*BD*)
Classical Gods and Goddesses (Shorter Poems, *HF, BD, PF, TC, LWG*)
Dante Alighieri (*HF*)
Giovanni Boccaccio (*AA, TC*)
Great Rising of 1381/Peasant Revolt (*TC*)
Hundred Years War, specifically the English involvement (*TC*)
Hunting as an Aristocratic Sport (*BD*)
John of Gaunt (*BD*)
John Gower (*TC*)
King Richard II (*FP, TC, LGW*)
Lapidaries (*HF*)
Marguerite Poetry (*LGW*)
Medieval Marriage (or classical marriage represented in MA) (*BD, PF, TC, LGW*)
Ovid's *Heroides (LGW)*
Patronage in Chaucer's Time
Troubadour Lyrics (Shorter Poems)
Troy/Trojan History in medieval England (*TC*)
Virgin Mary (*ABC*)

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 consult between 3-5 scholarly sources to write your report. 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.

This paper is designed to hone your research skills in this subject area before you approach the final paper. **You may work in pairs or alone**.

Structure: Title your report; the title can be more specific and/or applied to a particular work. The bulk of the paper consists of your summarizing and commenting on what you have learned from your sources; you don't have to tie it to Chaucer's poetry at this point. Reflect briefly on how you might pursue this line of research further. Since you will be reporting on what you find in your sources, you need to be extra careful about proper attribution. See *Guide to Style* on **Plagiarism #102-107**. Attach a Works Cited page.

I would like to reiterate that you are writing a **formal** paper, both in content and in style. I encourage you to edit, revise, and proofread your papers, striving for coherence, grammatical correctness, and good transitions.

Note: The following sections in the *Guide to Style* might be especially helpful for this assignment: **1-10, 28-30, 32, 42-50, 53-62, 72-76, 81-83.**

Due Date: Tuesday, 10.28.2008