Fall 2005  ◆  ENGL 451/551  
M 6:30-9:00  ◆  DSH 331

Dr. Obermeier

Middle English Dialects

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Required Texts
Reserve and eReserve files.

Recommended Texts for Medieval Studies Students

Course Requirements
2 Graded Exercises  worth 10 %
Midterm  worth 15 %
Final  worth 20 %
1 8-10-page paper  worth 25 % (for undergraduates 5-6 pages)
Class Participation  worth 30 %
For grading rubrics and scale, see: http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/gradingrubric.html

Tentative Syllabus
NOTE: When preparing the Texts in BT, I suggest the following procedure. Read first for comprehension, using the glossary. Read again, aloud, for sound. Read the headnotes carefully. Note unusual or significant morphological forms (inflections), sounds, and lexical items in the text. (Bring questions about them to class.)

M 8.22  Introduction to the Course and Video Presentation: English Goes Underground.

M 8.29  Read BT chapters 1-3 (3-18). Translate The Peterborough Chronicle 1137 (BT 74-80).

M 9.5  Labor Day. Class Excused.

F 9.16  Last day to change grading options.

M 9.19  Read BT chapter 5 (38-55), chapter 5 in Moore and Marquardt (on eReserve). Translate Brut lines 86-173 (BT 102-5).

F 9.30  Last day to drop a course without a grade.

M 10.3  Read BT chapters 6-7 (56-64). Translate The Owl and the Nightingale lines 1-200 (BT 81-89).

M 10.10  Read Sir Orfeo (BT 112-31). Midterm Exam Prep.

M 10.17  Midterm Exam. Read The Cloud of Unknowing (BT 132-40)

M 10.24  Continue The Cloud. Read Piers Plowman (BT 141-60), especially 7a. Review BT 6.3.

Course Objective
This course provides an introduction to those principal dialects of Middle English, demonstrated by selected readings, in the context of the development of the language from Old English to Early Modern English (c. 1150-1500). We will be looking at the language both diachronically (the historical development) and synchronically (the differentiation of dialect features at a given time). The primary goal of the course is to familiarize students with the range of texts available in different dialects during the period. Students should, for example, be able at the end of the course to read Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in the original North-West Midlands dialect with a full appreciation of the contribution of the language to the artistry of the poem, and to recognize its difference from the London dialect of Chaucer. The secondary but desirable goal of the course is to enable students to identify dialects: thus, at the end of the course, faced with an unknown Middle English text, the student should be reasonably able to identify its provenance, on the basis of phonology, morphology, syntax and lexical peculiarities.

Course Policies
1. Papers must conform to the presentational guidelines set forth in the Guide to Style or the MLA, should represent your best effort, and will be graded accordingly. Please note that I encourage you to discuss topics, outlines, and rough drafts with me during my office hours or via email. You will be given a separate instruction sheet for each assignment. Papers have to be submitted on time.

2. Tests: Tests are closed book and consist of short ids, passage ids and translation as well as essay questions. I will distribute a study guide before each test.

3. 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 situation, 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.

4. Assignments: Students must attempt all assignments to pass the course. 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: I am currently updating mine. Generally, all handouts will also be posted to the website. I will keep you apprised as to the availability of other materials and links. For now, you might try these:

Chaucer’s Pronunciation: http://icg.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/pronunciation/

The IPA Chart: http://www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/IPA/fullchart.html

The IPA Chart Pronounced:
http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu/departments/linguistics/VowelsandConsonants/course/chapter1/chapter1.html

The Middle English Compendium: http://elibrary.unm.edu/genlibsite/articles/databasesindexes.php contains the Middle English Dictionary.