

Spring 2008 ♦ ENGL 581
M 4:00-6:40 ♦ HUM 324

Dr. Obermeier ❖ Chaucer's Women

Office Hours: TTh 2:00-3:00 and by Appointment in HUM 321

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Required Texts

Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. P. G. Walsh. Oxford UP, 2000.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Guillaume de Lorris & Jeun de Meun. *The Romance of the Rose*. Trans. F. Horgan. Oxford UP, 1994.

Obermeier, Anita and Gregory Castle. *Guide to Style*, 2004. On class website.

Class Website: <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/Eng581/index581.html>

eReserve Site: <http://ereserves.unm.edu/eres/coursepass.aspx?cid=2692> (Password: Criseyde)

Recommended Texts

Chaucer Studio Recording of *The Book of the Duchess*. (I am trying to get the tape converted to a CD).

Chaucer, G. *Troilus and Criseyde*. Trans. Nevill Coghill. Penguin, 1971.

Chaucer, G. *Love Visions*. Trans. Brian Stone. Penguin, 1983.

See also #116 in the *Guide to Style* for additional general background reading suggestions.

Course Requirements

1 5-page paper worth 10 %

1 15-page paper worth 30 %

Final Exam worth 15 %

Electronic Discussion Forum/Class Participation worth 25 %

Oral Presentation & Literature Review worth 20 %

Middle English Reading Test; see #3 under policies

For grading rubrics and scale, see: <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/gradingrubric.html>

Tentative Syllabus

(You need to have read the selections on the days indicated. Page numbers refer to the *Riverside Chaucer*. Don't forget the Explanatory Notes to each work, at the back of the *Riverside Chaucer*.)

- TH 1.24 Introduction to the Course: Video Presentation: *Prologue to Chaucer*. Preliminary linguistic discussion: *English Goes Underground*.
- TH 1.31 Discussion of Middle English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation: *Riverside*: Introduction, xv-xxvi (Chaucer's Life) and xxx-xxxviii (Pronunciation, esp. table on p. xxxii). The section on inflections and syntax in the Introduction 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. As you read the following poems, pick out one and examine the language in it carefully. We will discuss those poems' language in class based on the principles of the linguistic introduction. Short Poems: Intro (631-33), "An ABC" (637-40), "To Rosemounde," "Womanly Noblesse" (649-50), "Complaint unto Pity" (640-41), "Merciles Beaute (659), "Against Women Unconstant" (657).
- TH 2.7 *The Romance of the Rose* 1-61, 319-35; Compare to *Romaunt of the Rose*, Fragment A (685-94); *Anelida and Arcite* (375-81).
F. N. M. Diekstra, "Chaucer and the Romance of the Rose."
Slavjoi Zizek, "Courtly Love or Woman as Thing."
- TH 2.14 *Book of the Duchess* (329-46), *Parliament of Fowls* (383-94). Pick two of the three for your response.
Cyndy Hendershot, "Male Subjectivity, Fin Amor, and Melancholia in *The Book of the Duchess*."
James Miller, "How to See Through Women: Medieval Blazons and the Male Gaze."
Barrie Ruth Strauss, "Freedom through Renunciation? Women's Voices, Women's Bodies, and the Phallic Order."
- F 2.15 **Last day to change grading options.**
- TH 2.21 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* Books I, II, IV (sections vi and vii only), V. Compare Chaucer's translation, if you like (395-472).
Troilus and Criseyde, Book I (471-88).
Margaret Hallissy, "The Three Estates of Women's Lives."
Sally Mapstone, "The Origins of Criseyde."
- TH 2.28 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Books I and II (471-513).
Laura F. Hodges, "Criseyde's widewes habit large of samyt broun."
Kathryn Jacobs, "Mate or Mother: Positioning Criseyde Among Chaucer's Widows."
Presenter: Jacquie Sarsfield-Vassal on *TC*.
- F 2.29 **Last day to drop a course without a grade.**
- TH 3.6 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book III (513-37). Pick two of the three for your response.
David Aers, "Criseyde: Woman in Medieval Society."
Alcuin Blamires, "Questions of Gender in Chaucer, from *Anelida* to *Troilus*."
H. A. Kelly, *Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer*, 49-67. Especially 59-67.
Presenter: Ketiavia Segovia on "The Knight's Tale."
- TH 3.13 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Books IV and V (538-85). **Paper 1 Due.**
Brewer, Derek. "Troilus' 'Gentil' Manhood."
Mann, Jill. "The Feminized Hero." Especially 129-35, 142-44.
Presenter: Loretta Tollefson on *TC*.
- TH 3.16-23 **Spring Break**
- TH 3.27 Final Thoughts on *Troilus and Criseyde*. *Legend of Good Women* (587-613).

Nicola F. McDonald, "Chaucer's *LGW*, Ladies at Court and the Female Reader."
Simon Meecham-Jones, "Intention, Integrity and 'Renoun': The Public Virtue of Chaucer's Good Women."
Presenter: Christine on *TC*.

- TH 4.3 *Legend of Good Women* (613-30), "The Tale of Melibee" (217-39).
Gila Aloni, "Lucrece's 'Might': Rhetorical/Sexual Potency and Poentiality in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Legend of Lucrece*."
Amada Walling: "'In Her Tellyng Difference': Gender, Authority, and Interpretation in the *Tale of Melibee*."
Presenter: Amelia Ranney on *LGW*.
- TH 4.10 "The Miller's Tale" (66-77), "The Reeve's Tale" (77-84), "The Cook's Tale" (84-87). For all *CT* tales, also read their portraits in the "GP" and the prologues, headlinks, or epilogues to the tales.
Louise M. Bishop, "'Of Goddess pryvetee nor of his wyf': Confusion of Orifices in Chaucer's Miller's Tale."
Barbara Nolan, "Promiscuous Fictions: Medieval Bawdy Tales and Their Textual Liaisons."
Presenter: Beverly Williams
- TH 4.17 "The Man of Law's Tale" (87-104), "The Prioress' Tale" (209-12), "The Second Nun's Tale" (262-70). Pick two of the three for your response.
Marjorie Elizabeth Wood, "The Sultanness, Donegild, and Fourteenth-Century Female Merchants: Intersecting Discourses of Gender, Economy, and Orientalism in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale."
Anne Laskaya, "'Female' Narrators and Chaucer's Masquerade."
R. D. Eaton, "Gender, Class and Conscience in Chaucer."
F 4.18 Tentative Date for **Chaucer Dalliance Dinner, 7 pm.**
- TH 4.24 "The Wife of Bath's Tale" (105-22), "The Clerk's Tale" (137-153), "The Physician's Tale" (190-3).
Tison Pugh, "Queering Genres, Battering Males: The Wife of Bath's Narrative Violence."
Tara Williams, "'T'assye in thee thy wommanheede': Griselda Chosen, Translated, Tried."
Presenter: Marisa Sikes on Chaucer's Lyrics.
- TH 5.1 "The Merchant's Tale," (153-68), "The Franklin's Tale" (178-89), "The Retraction" (328). **Final Exam Prep.** Pick two of the three for your response.
Conor Mc Carthy, "Love, Marriage, and Law: Three Canterbury Tales."
Sheila Delany, "Difference and the Difference It Makes: Sex and Gender in Chaucer's Poetry."
Elaine Tuttle Hansen, "Making Ernest of Game: The Franklin's Tale and Some Partial Conclusions."
- TH 5.8 **Paper 2 Due.** Class cancelled because of a conference obligation of mine. To make up for the lost class time, I am adding 10 minutes to each class period, hence the 4:00-6:40 time above. I hope that won't be too much of an inconvenience.
- TH 5.15 **Final Exam** at 5:30-7:30pm.

Course Objective

Chaucer has often been credited with creating the first psychologically viable women in English literature: The Wife of Bath and Criseyde, one a contemporary fourteenth-century antifeminist caricature, the other an ancient Juliet. In this course, we will test this scholarly commonplace and examine just how conservative or avant-garde Chaucer really was. Of course, Chaucer's canon

contains numerous women characters aside from Alisoun and Criseyde. Among them are nuns, lovers, martyrs, wives, virgins, bourgeois merchants, adulteresses, courtly as well as peasant women. In our inquiries, we will enlist feminist theory, genre criticism, and comparisons with other medieval women, both literary and historical.

Our second goal in the course is to read every word of Chaucer's poetry in Middle English. If you find the Middle English difficult and unfamiliar at first, I suggest you use a translation into modern English (online versions linked on my website) to help you follow the narrative line; but try to get free of the translation as soon as possible. In other words, use the translation as a crutch; however, since **all** discussions and examinations will be based on **the Middle English text**, you need to get off that crutch as soon as you can.

Course Policies

1. Tests and Papers: Separate instructions will be handed out for each test and paper. Tests are closed book. The final is closed book and consists of short ids, passage ids, and essay questions. I will distribute a study guide before the test. Paper instructions will be on the class website. I am also putting together a file with sample papers on the website and will email you user id and password when it is ready.

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 by absences. 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.

3. Middle English Reading Test: Each student will be required to read aloud a passage of 20-30 lines from Chaucer in Middle English with the appropriate pronunciation. You can check out tapes from me; study the pronunciation guide in the *Riverside Chaucer*. Students will be encouraged to do this reading aloud in class, as they can learn from each other; however, you can also read your passages privately in my office. The reading will not be graded, but thoughtful and dedicated attempts will weigh positively on your final grade.

4. Electronic Discussion Forum: The Internet discussion forum for *Chaucer's Women* is designed to provide an additional opportunity for scholarly exchange, especially discussion of interesting secondary material we don't have time to treat in class. The benefit here is that your thought processes do not happen in a vacuum, as everyone receives everyone else's responses and can respond to individual opinions, if so desired.

Format: Students read the essay(s) assigned for the week, paying particular attention to content, methodology, and argument. Don't be afraid to critique a certain approach or methodology. Then write a response to each article—half-page minimum recommended—and distribute it to the discussion list (CRISEYDE-L@UNM.EDU). I will keep a record of every student's submission for evaluation purposes. Ideally, contributions should elicit responses and discussion from the other group members. Contributions should be submitted to the list no later than Wednesday morning.

5. Oral Report and Literature Review:

Rationale: Effective speaking in the public arena is a highly prized skill both in the academic and business world; therefore, I request that each student give an oral presentation on a topic of his/her choice, providing an overview of the scholarship on that topic. You may, of course, consult me, but I hesitate to assign topics, as finding one's own interests is part of the graduate student experience. I suggest that you pick a piece of literature from the syllabus and then check the *MLA Online Bibliography* for the relevant criticism:

<http://elibrary.unm.edu/genlibsite/articles/databasesindexes.php?letter=M&verbose>

Structure: Presentations should be at least 30 minutes long and should be accompanied by a handout for the class, including a works cited page in MLA format. *The Guide to Style* #s 72-101 provide that information. Consider ten sources the bare minimum you are dealing with. You should be prepared to answer questions from the class as well as ask questions of the class.

Literature Review

Definition: A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers. Occasionally you will be asked to write one as a separate assignment, but more often it is part of the introduction to an essay, research report, or thesis. In writing the literature review, your purpose is to convey to your reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. As a piece of writing, the literature review must be defined by a guiding concept (e.g., your research objective, the problem or issue you are discussing, or your argumentative thesis). It is not just a descriptive list of the material available, or a set of summaries.

Besides enlarging your knowledge about the topic, writing a literature review lets you gain and demonstrate skills in two areas:

information seeking: the ability to scan the literature efficiently, using manual or computerized methods, to identify a set of useful articles and books

critical appraisal: the ability to apply principles of analysis to identify unbiased and valid studies.

(Courtesy of the University of Toronto Writing Center: <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/litrev.html>). See the course website for several other links about Literature Reviews and writing them.

Format: 6-8 pages double-spaced. You may hand in your Literature Review for your oral presentation up to two weeks after the presentation.

6. 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.

7. Pertinent Websites: My own website contains a file for this class with links to pertinent Chaucerian and other medieval sites: <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/Eng581/index581.html>. All handouts will be available from the website also. On my site, go to **Student Resources** and select the link for this class. I will keep you apprised as to the availability of other materials and links to background info. For now, you might try these:

Chaucer Title Abbreviations

Chaucer Studio (Tape & CD Orders)

Chaucerian Vocabulary Guide: False Cognates

Epic and Romance Handout

Grading Rubrics

Paper Grading Sheet

Harvard Chaucer Pages

Pronunciation Sites

Ptolemaic System

Translations

Middle English Dictionary: <http://elibrary.unm.edu/genlibsite/articles/databasesindexes.php>.

8. Plagiarism. Don't do it! For clarification, see #102-107 in the *Guide to Style*.