

Fall 2006 ♦ ENGL 650A-001 (17686)

T 3:30-7:00 ♦ DSH 317

Dr. Obermeier ❖ Chaucer and Friends

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

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Mailbox on office door or in English Department Office via receptionist

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.

Gower, John. *Confessio Amantis*. Russell Peck, ed. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000. Vol. 1.

Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*. Eds. Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen Shephard. New York: Norton, 2006.

Obermeier, Anita. *Guide to Style*, 2005. (\$2) Order from me.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Ed. Vantuono. Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 1999.

eReserves: <http://ereserves.unm.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=4308> Password: lobo650.

Other online source links on course website: <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/Eng650/index650.html>

We will not be reading the entirety of all of these texts, though if you choose to do your essay on one of them, you will of course read the whole thing. There will also be handouts and on-line texts to be read throughout the semester.

Course Requirements

2 Oral Presentations of Essays	worth 10% (5% each)
1 Review of Critical Work	worth 15%
1 Passage Explication	worth 10%
25-page Research Paper	worth 45%
Active Class Participation	worth 20%

Recommended Texts

Middle English Dictionary accessible under the *Middle English Compendium* on UNM's Research Database Page.

A number of critical works are on hard copy Reserve.

Tentative Syllabus

(PP = Piers Plowman; WP = Link on my website; most articles on eReserves = eR; * = not for review)

- T 8.22 Introduction to the Course: Black Death (in PP 427-28), Wilton Diptych, Ricardian Poetry.
- T 8.29 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 1-841.
Sarah: Review of Michael Bennett, "The Court of Richard II and the Promotion of Literature."
Thorlac Turville-Petre, "The Brutus Prologue to SGGK."
Amelia: Review of Laura Barefield, "Reading the Past in 1400."
- F 9.1 **Last day to add courses or change sections.**
- T 9.5 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 842-1689.
Amelia: Review of Francis Ingledew, SGGK and the Order of the Garter.
Christine Chism, "Heady Diversions: Court and Province in SGGK."
Rhonda Knight, "All Dressed Up with Someplace to Go: Regional Identity in SGGK."
- T 9.12 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 1690-end.
Ad Putter, "The Social Function of Courtly Romance."
Amelia: Explication of Text Passage.
- F 9.15 **Last day to change grading options.**

- T 9.19 “The Statute of Labourers, 1349” in *PP* (428-30); “Ordinance of Laborers” (WP); “Letters and Sermon of John Ball” in *PP* 484 (and WP); Froissart’s *Chronicles of the Peasants’ Revolt* pp. 61-82 (WP); Gower, *Vox Clamantis* Book 6, ch. 8-18 (eR); Chaucer, “Lak of Stedfastnesse,” (654); *Richard the Redeless* in *PP* (463-68) (full version linked on WP).
Steven Justice, “Wyclif in the Rising.”
- T 9.26 *Piers Plowman*, Prologue, Passus I-VII (2-123).
Ralph Hanna III, “The Dating of the A, B, C Versions” in *PP* (591-96).
Christine: Kathryn Lynch: “A Grammar of Dream and Vision for Medieval Poetry.”
Salter and Pearsall, “Allegory and Realism” in *PP* (514-22).
Marisa: Explication of Text Passage.
Essay Topic Statements Due.
- F 9.29 **Last day to drop a course without a grade.**
- T 10.3 *Piers Plowman*, Passus VIII-XIV (123-241).
Marisa: Review of Mary Clemente Davlin, *The Place of God in Piers Plowman and Medieval Art* (a short excerpt of it is in *PP* 612-16).
Caroline M. Barron, “William Langland: A London Poet.”
C. David Benson, “Beyond the Myth of the Poet.”
- T 10.10 *Piers Plowman*, Passus XV-XX (240-366).
Lawrence Clopper, “Langland’s Friars.”
Marisa: Elizabeth Kirk, “Langland on Women and Gender” in *PP* (616-26).
- T 10.17 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Compare Chaucer’s translation, if you like (395-).
Katherine: Ann Astell, “Boethian Lovers.”
Robert McMahon, “The Structural Articulation of Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*.”
P. E. Phillips, “Boethius’s *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and the *Lamentatio/Consolatio* Tradition.” (You can read two out of three.)
First Drafts of Essays Due.
- T 10.24 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Books I and II.
Lee Patterson, “Trojan History and the History of Trinovantum.”
Marisa: Sarah Stanbury, “The Lover’s Gaze in *T&C*.”
Marion Turner, “*T&C* and the ‘Treasonous Aldermen’ of 1382: Tales of the City in 14th-Century London.”
Katherine: Explication of Text Passage.
- T 10.31 Workshop Session on Essays.
- T 11.7 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Books III and IV.
Sarah: Review of R. F. Yeager, ed., *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*.
Katherine: Elizabeth Robertson, “Consent, and Female Subjectivity in Chaucer’s *T&C*.”
Richard Zeikowitz, “Dramatized Sodmical Discourse: The Case of *Troilus* and *Pandarus*.”
- F 11.10 **Last day to drop a course without approval of college dean.**
- T 11.14 *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book V; Maidstone, *Reconciliation of Richard II with London* (WP); *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* (587-503). *Introduction to the Man of Law’s Tale* (87-89).
Katherine: Review of R. A. Shoaf, ed. *Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde*: “Subgit to all Poesye.”
Sarah: Paul Strohm, “What Can We Know about Chaucer That He Didn’t Know about Himself?”
Nancy Bradley Warren, “‘Olde Stories’ and Amazons: The *Legend of Good Women*, the ‘Knight’s Tale’, and Fourteenth-Century Political Culture.”
- F 11.17 **Chaucerian Dalliance Dinner** 7 pm. Invitation Issued in November.

- T 11.21 Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Prologue and Book I 65-138.
Christine: Review of Diane Watt, *Amoral Gower: Language, Sex, and Politics*.
 Frank Grady, “Gower’s Boat, Richard’s Barge, and the True Story of the CA.”
 Lynn Staley, “Gower, Richard II, Henry of Derby, and the Business of Making Culture.”
- T 11.28 *Confessio Amantis*, Books I and 8, 139-212.
 Joyce Coleman, “How Gower May Have Intended the *Confessio Amantis* to Be Read.”
Amelia: Tim Machan, “Medieval Multilingualism and Gower’s Literary Practice.”
Christine: Explication of Text Passage.
- T 12.5 *Confessio Amantis*, Book 8 and Epilogue 213-280; “O Deus Immense” (eR).
Christine: Michael Harnahan, “Speaking of Sodomy: Gower’s Advice to Princes in the CA.”
 Russell Peck, “The Politics and Psychology of Governance in Gower.”
- Th 12.7 **Final Essays Due in my Office at 2 pm.**

Course Objectives

The late fourteenth century in England, a generation after the plague swept through Europe decimating the population, was a time of political unrest and religious turmoil. A child king took the throne, peasants rose up in rebellion, the Bible was translated into English and heretics were burned at the stake. The last quarter of the century exhibited a highly imaginative and fertile period of heterogeneous literary composition. In addition, this was a time of high court culture and enthusiastic aristocratic patronage of the arts. The period from the accession of Richard II (1377) to his deposition by Henry IV (1399) will be the primary focus for this course. Although Geoffrey Chaucer is often called the Father of English Poetry and the uncontested literary giant of the fourteenth century, he does have to share the stage with several highly gifted authors, most notably John Gower, William Langland, and the Gawain-poet. Three are named, but really two are anonymous. Several of these poets knew each other; some wrote in alliterative verse—others developed different poetic genres. J. A. Burrow grouped these four authors under the rubric of “Ricardian Poetry,” positing similarities in style, narrative, and worldview. In this graduate seminar, we will study the major works of these four authors in depth by exploring the historical, political, cultural, and linguistic contexts in which these authors operated and their texts were created. For instance, how much did the aftermath of the plague influence this often highly public and socially critical literature? Was there really a “Ricardian Age”? Your own interests will influence the direction in which this exploration takes us, and will determine some of the supplementary texts and critical works we read.

Course Assignments and Policies

1. Oral Reports: Each of you will select **two** essays from the syllabus and prepare 15-minute critical reports of them to deliver in class. The rest of the class will have read the piece, so you should be prepared for discussion of your analysis. Preferably, one essay should be in your research area and one outside of it.

2. Review of Critical Work: A review of a critical work, taken from the attached reading list for the course, or from a work you have discovered in the course of your research. This can be either a monograph or a collection of essays (in which case you review the whole collection). You will write a 500-1000-word review, and give a 30-minute informal presentation in class. This assignment has two purposes: i) to give you practice in one of the requirements of the academic profession, and ii) to share with your classmates some of your research discoveries, and perhaps alert them to something they might also find useful. As far as possible, the oral review will be scheduled during the period when we are studying the text with which your critical work is primarily concerned. The written review will be due the following week. Your review should identify the theoretical approach of the author (or authors), outline the main arguments and point out the strengths and weaknesses of the work(s). You could use the reviews in *Speculum* or another academic journal as a model, such as *The Medieval Review* (online) <http://www.hti.umich.edu/t/tmr>.

3. Passage Explication: We will be covering a portion of the text each class. Each of you will be responsible for a close reading of twelve lines of text—preferably from the poem you have chosen as your specialty. Your close reading should contextualize the passage, argue for its significance, identify literary devices, unpack allusions and

analyze meaning. See the *Guide to Style* for sample explications. You have a week after your oral performance to hand in a final written version.

4. Term Paper: Writing is the core of academic life, and something that we all need to practice, continually. To this end, we will spend considerable time and effort on the essay. You will write one major paper in two stages as follows: The final essay will be 25 pages, due at the end of semester. First, a topic statement is due September 26. You will then write a draft of the essay by October 17, make three copies and give one to me and the other two to two classmates who are working on the same text, or a related topic. This means that each of you will have two essay drafts to comment on. These are to be returned two weeks later (October 31) with extensive and detailed comments, suggestions, criticisms, and research suggestions. You will then follow up on these three sets of comments and incorporate the results in your final version, as if you were submitting it for publication. The final essay should follow the *MLA* style sheet as outlined in the *Guide to Style*, should have substantive as well as attribution footnotes (not endnotes) as well as Works Cited and Works Consulted pages. All quotations from the primary texts should be in the original Middle English. Quotations from languages other than English or Middle English should be given in the original in your text and translated in a note. Electronic submissions will not be accepted. Essays are due December 7, 2006.

In addition, you will prepare an abstract of your paper, and we will plan the fall MSSA colloquium around "conference versions" of your papers. It would make sense if your book review and your close reading were to be related to your essay.

5. 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 **1** unexcused absence (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.

6. Pertinent Websites: My own website will be under construction all semester. Generally, all handouts will also be posted to the website. I will keep you apprised as to the availability of other materials and links.
Middle English Dictionary: <http://elibrary.unm.edu/genlibsite/articles/databasesindexes.php>.

7. Plagiarism: Don't do it! For clarification, see statements **#102-7** in *Guide to Style*.