

Fall 2003 ♦ ENGL 650-002 (13779)

W 4:00-7:30 ♦ ORT 121

**Dr. Obermeier ❖ The Gawain-Poet**

Office Hours: MW 1:30-2:30, and by Appointment in HUM 321

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**Required Texts**

Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, eds. *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*. Exeter: U of Exeter Press, 1987

Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson. *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997.

You should also have a bible, preferably the Douay-Rheims version, although that might be harder to find.

**Recommended Texts**

Borroff, Marie. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Patience, Pearl: Verse Translations*. Norton, 2001.

Mossé, Fernand. *A Handbook of Middle English*. Johns Hopkins, 1991.

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

A number of critical works will be placed on Reserve and readings from this material may be assigned as your various interests emerge during the course of the seminar.

**Course Requirements**

1 Oral Presentation worth 5%

1 Oral Presentation plus Written Review worth 15%

1 Passage Explication worth 10%

20-page paper worth 50%

Active Class Participation worth 20%

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

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**Tentative Syllabus**

You should read all the poems as soon as possible, if only in translation, since we will be discussing connections between the poems as they arise. Be sure to read all the scriptural sources for each section.

W 8.27 Introduction to the Course: Video on Middle English. Sights and Sounds of the Pearl Manuscript.

W 9.3 *Pearl* ll. 1-600. In *A Companion*:  
Malcolm Andrew: "Theories of Authorship"  
Michael Bennett: "The Historical Background"  
David Aers: "Reflections on the *Gawain-Poet*"  
-- --: "The Self Mourning: Reflections on *Pearl*" (R)

W 9.10 *Pearl* ll. 601-1212. In *A Companion*:  
Nicholas Watson: "The *Gawain-Poet* as a Vernacular Theologian"  
Sarah Stanbury: "Feminist Masterplots: The Gaze on the Body of *Pearl's* Dead Girl" (R)  
John Bowers: "Pearl in Its Royal Setting: Ricardian Poetry Revisited" (R)

W 9.17 *Patience*. In *A Companion*:  
Richard Newhauser: "Scriptural and Devotional Sources"  
A. C. Spearing: ?? (The *Gawain Poet*?) (R)

F 9.19 **Last day to change grading options**

W 9.24 Verses, Illustrations, and Design. In *A Companion*:  
H. N. Duggan: ""Meter, Stanza, Vocabulary, Dialect"

Edward Condren: *The Numerical Universe of the Gawain-Pearl Poet* (chapter 2) (R)  
J. Lee: "The Illuminating Critic: The Illustrator of Cotton Nero A.x" (R)  
P. F. Reichardt: "Gawain and the Image of the Wound" (R)  
M. Whitaker: "*Pearl* and Some Illustrated Apocalypse Manuscripts" (R)  
Boroff?

- W 10.1 *Cleanness* ll. 1-600. In *A Companion*:  
Jane Gilbert: "Gender and Sexual Transgression"  
Michael Calabrese and Eric Eliason: "The Rhetorics of Sexual Pleasure and Intolerance in the Middle English *Cleanness*" (R)
- F 10.3 **Last day to drop a course without a grade**
- W 10.8 *Cleanness* ll. 601-1148.  
Sarah Stanbury: *Seeing the Gawain Poet: Description and the Act of Perception* (chapter ??) (R)  
A. Frantzen: "The Disclosure of Sodomy in *Cleanness*" (R)  
**First Version of Term Paper Due**
- W 10.15 *Cleanness* ll. 1149-1812. In *A Companion*:  
A. C. Spearing: "Poetic Identity"  
**Term Papers Distributed to Other Class Members**
- W 10.22 Workshop Session on Term Papers.**
- W 10.29 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ll. 1-490. In *A Companion*:  
Elisabeth Brewer: "The Sources of *SGGK*"  
Ralph Elliott: "Landscape and Geography"
- W 11.5 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ll. 491-1125. In *A Companion*:  
Derek Brewer: "Armour II: The Arming Topos as Literature"
- W 11.12 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ll 1226-1997.  
Sarah Stanbury: *Seeing the Gawain Poet: Description and the Act of Perception* (chapter ??) (R)
- F 11.14 **Last day to withdraw without approval of college dean**
- W 11.19 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ll. 1998-2531. In *A Companion*:  
Derek Pearsall: "Courtesy and Chivalry in *SGGK*"  
Helen Cooper: "The Supernatural"
- W 11.26 *St. Erkenwald* (handout) and overflow session.
- W 12.3 Student Conference Presentations.
- W 11.10 *Sir Gawain* on Stage and Film. In *A Companion*: David J. William: "Sir Gawain in Film"

### Course Objectives

The principal objective of this seminar is for each of you to undertake an in-depth study of a medieval text, and to become thoroughly familiar with the text itself, conversant with various critical approaches to that text and knowledgeable about important studies and critical works on the text. To that end, while we will all read all of the poems, I would like each of you to choose one poem on which you will focus most intensely and which will become your area of specialization. You should adopt a critical approach and methodology, which you sustain in the work you do on your poem during this seminar. There are numerous approaches to these poems: you could focus on dialect, the illustrations, the manuscript itself, source studies, structure, versification or imagery; you can take a New Historicist approach to the substance of the poems, an approach informed by feminist, gendered or “queer” theory, or a Marxist or deconstructionist approach. You could also compare various editions of a poem. We will encounter these various critical attitudes in the readings in the anthology and on Reserve.

### Course Assignments and Policies

**1. Oral Reports/Review:** Each of you will select **two** essays from the syllabus and prepare a 15-minute critical analysis of it to deliver in class. The rest of the class will have read the piece, so you should be prepared for discussion of your analysis. A formal written version (750 - 1000 words) of **one** such review should be handed in the week after you deliver it.

**2. 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 the text—preferably from the poem you have chosen as your specialty.

**3. Term Paper:** You will write one major paper in two stages. Your first version will be marked and commented on by me, and then will be circulated to other members of the class working on the same poem for their criticism and suggestions offered during a workshop session. You will then revise the paper and hand in a final version, as if you were submitting it for publication. The paper should be approx. 20 pages (5,000 words) long and conform to the *Guide to Style* and/or the *MLA Manual of Style* guidelines.

In addition, you will prepare an abstract of your paper and present a conference version of it at a “Student Conference” to be held during class time toward the end of semester. All work must be handed in on the due date, typed, double spaced, on one side of the page only.

**4. 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.

**5. 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.

Integrating Time and Space: The Literary Geography of Patience, Cleanness, The Siege of Jerusalem, and St. Erkenwald

Author: Price, Patricia Source: *Medieval Perspectives* 11, (1996): p. 234-50 Doc. Typ

Piers Plowman, St. Erkenwald, and the Rule of Exceptional Salvations

Author: Grady, Frank Source: *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 6, (1992): p. 61-88 D

Kowalik, Barbara Title: Traces of Romance Textual Poetics in the Non-Romance Work Ascribed to the Gawain-Poet Source: In: Simons, John (ed.); ix, 161 pp.; *From Medieval to Medievalism*; St. Martin's, New York Pagination: 41-53

Heathens and Saints: St. Erkenwald in Its Legendary Context

Author: Whatley, Gordon Source: *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 61, no. 2 (1986 Apr.): p. 330-363

The Psychology of St. Erkenwald

Author: Quinn, William A. Source: *Medium Aevum* 53, no. 2 (1984): p. 180-193

St. Erkenwald and the Raising of Lazarus

Author: Frantzen, Allen J. Source: *Mediaevalia: A Journal of Mediaeval Studies* 7, (1981): p. 157-171

Pearl and St. Erkenwald: Some Evidence for Authorship.

Author: Peterson, Clifford J. Source: *Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language* {Oxford OX2 6DP, England}25, (1974): p. 49-53 D

The Authorship of St. Erkenwald

Author: Benson, Larry D. Source: *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* {Urbana, IL}64, (1965): p. 393-405

Saint Erkenwald

Author: Peterson, Clifford

Publication: U of Pennsylvania P Philadelphia 1977

In: (1977):

The Gawain Poems: A Reference Guide, 1978-1993

Author: Blanch, Robert J.

Publication: Whitston Albany, NY 2000

In: (2000):

14. Medieval Misogyny and Gawain's Outburst against Women in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Author: Morgan, Gerald Source: *Modern Language Review* 97, no. 2 (2002 Apr): p. 265-78

The Cinematic Consciousness of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Author: Lowe, Jeremy Source: *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13, no. 1 (2001 Spring): p. 67-97 Doc.