



Chaucer: *Canterbury Tales*

ENGL 4240-01 (CRN 27784)

WGST 4930-01 (CRN 28266)

MWF 1:10-2:00 pm

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W 2-4; TH 1-3; F 10-11

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Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Course Description:

Like a medieval form of social media, the *Canterbury Tales* is filled with conversation and debate from different points of view. A sleepy eyed lover, nuns, a con-man, a knight, craftsmen, would-be saints and sinners—a wide slice of humanity who temporarily travel together and play a tale-telling game to pass the time. In the Middle Ages, the *Tales* would have been read aloud among a group of friends as entertainment. Like the travelers inside the text, these readers enjoyed the humor and drama of the stories, while also listening for the questions—the conversational gambits—embedded in them. Both then and now, these questions prompt readers to comment on topics and participate in lively multi-voiced debates. In this course, we will read Chaucer's *Tales* as this kind of interactive text—thinking through the different answers that radiate out from his questions. For instance, which path leads to true love? What happens when we take revenge? How can we work for the “common good?” How does money affect a person? What are the positive and negative stereotypes about women? (A surprising number of these are still in the news.)

This course teaches the basics of reading and pronouncing Chaucer's English. We will consider the way the *Canterbury Tales* and its manuscripts operate as a ‘game within a game,’ and will also analyze it as a much-admired piece of literature that continues to provide material for modern approaches such as Women's and Gender Studies, Disability Studies, and Ecocriticism.

Textbook:

Boenig, Robert, and Andrew Taylor, eds. *The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer*. 2nd Edition: Broadview Press, 2012. (Print Version Only)

Assignments and Grading Distribution

4 Reflection Papers (250–300 words apiece)	20%
First paper (1,300–1,500 words)	20%
Second paper (4,000–4,500 words)	30%
Mid Term Exam	20%
Participation (quizzes and homework)	10%

Paper One - Close Reading: Make sure to check with me about your ideas before beginning your paper. This paper will primarily focus on a key idea that you draw from a close reading of the text. You will submit a 250-500 word abstract and then complete a final 1,300–1,500 word draft.

Paper Two- Research: Talk with me about your ideas before you begin. You will create a first draft of your paper, which will be work-shopped in a small group meeting with me. The final version of Paper Two will be 4,000–4,500 words and include a minimum of 5 scholarly sources plus *The CT*.

Reflection Papers: These are bite-sized (250-300 word) opportunities to think through ideas, topics, characters, and tales. They are intended to let you synthesize the information you are reading. You will sign up to do 4 of them. If you have an idea for an alternative Reflection (perhaps on a different reading, or incorporating a creative component), contact me ahead of time and get it approved. (Reflections are due in paper form at the beginning of class on their individual due dates.)

Midterm Exam: The exam will assess your comprehension of the text and knowledge of terms. It will be divided into: 1/3 short answer, 1/3 identify 5 substantive elements in a short block of text (meaning of the passage, character, key concepts, literary terms- genre, meter, etc.), and 1/3 essay question asking you to synthesize information from the readings.

Participation: Chaucer wrote his tales to inspire conversation, so I think you'll find participation enjoyable. My expectations for "excellent" participation are:

- Student is present, on-time, has read the material for the day and prepared a 3-2-1 for each reading, i.e. 3 questions and 2 points about 1 passage in the reading.
- Student frequently contributes to class discussions and is clearly engaged in discussions even when not a direct participant (through active listening and note-taking).

Ground Rules for This Class

- **Come see me!** I am always happy to meet and talk with students. My office is on the second floor of Adorjan Hall, Room 233. Please feel free to drop in during my office hours, or to ask for a meeting at other times. You can email me at any time and I will get back to you as I can, although it might not always be immediately.
- **No electronics.** The most current research shows that you retain more information if you read from hardcopy and take notes by hand. Hence, we will only be using electronics in class on particular (prior announced) days. For everyday classes, you will need to purchase the book in hardcopy and bring a paper notebook to class. (If you need an accommodation, please read "Disability Services and Academic Accommodations" below.)
- **Absences:** You have three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Starting with your fourth absence, your final course grade will be lowered by 3 points for each new absence. Email and let me know if you are going to be absent. If you give me enough warning, I can often arrange for you to attend via Skype to avoid accruing an absence. You are responsible for keeping up with the reading and getting notes from a classmate for days you are absent.
- **Late to class:** If you arrive after I have taken roll, you can "buy back" that absence by emailing me a 250 word summary of the class before the end of the day. (That lets me know you were there taking good notes, and also makes you try a little harder to be on time next time.)
- **Late Assignments:** The final grade of an assignment will be reduced 1/3 letter grade for each day it is late. If you know in advance you need extra time, contact me and make arrangements.

Chaucer Resources:

Dictionaries: Middle English Dictionary: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>
 Oxford English Dictionary: <http://ezp.slu.edu/login?url=http://www.oed.com>
 Glossary: Canterbury Tales Glossary: <http://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/glossary>
 Resources: Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer Website: <http://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu>
 EChaucer: <http://ummutility.umm.maine.edu/necastro/chaucer/index.html>
 Scholarship: Open Access Companion to *The CT*: <http://www.opencanterburytales.com>
 Pleasure: Chaucer Doth Tweet: <https://twitter.com/LeVostreGC>
 Burton Raffel's verse translation of *The CT*
 Jerry Ellis's *Walking to Canterbury*

Student Success Center

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center, a one-stop shop, which assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning) by visiting the Student Success Center or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Disability Services and Academic Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability_services@slu.edu or 314.977.3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at: http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed. Specific College of Arts & Sciences Academic Honesty Policies and Procedures may be found at: <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

Reading & Assignment Schedule

Jan W 18	Introduction to Chaucer and Middle English / In-class intro to General Prologue
F 20	General Prologue (1-387) ☛ Middle English (ME) Assignment due in class
M 23	General Prologue (388-858) [Sign up for Reflection Paper Options] ☛ ME Assignment due in class
W 25	Knight's Tale in Modern English (ModE) Translation at eChaucer (Handout from https://machias.edu/faculty/necastro/chaucer/index.html)
F 27	Larry Benson- "Courtly Love and Chivalry" Troubadour & Trouvère Lyrics (Handout) ☛ Reflection Option 1: Courtly Love Tropes – Using Hanna's article as a starting point, find elements of courtly love within the Knight's Tale. How do they compare to the troubadour poems? [Last Day to drop without a W]
M 30	John Stevens- "The Game of Love" Laura Kendrick- "Games Medievalists Play" Gower's Descriptions of the perfect lover from the <i>Confessio Amantis</i> . Review Squire description in General Prologue 79-100 [Further reading: Joyce Coleman- <i>Public Reading and the Reading Public</i> ; Rebecca Krug- "From Law to Practice: Women, Resistance, and Writing"] ☛ Reflection Option 2: Finding Pilgrim Lovers – In the General Prologue, it is clear that the Squire plays "the game of love." Which other pilgrims are described in ways that make you think they might "play" as well? Pick one or two and write up an argument for viewing them within Steven's framework. (Stay within Kendrick's rules for how medievalists "play" the game.)
Feb W 1	Miller's Prologue 3109-3186; Miller's Tale 3187-3415 Laura Kendrick- "Humor in Perspective"
F 3	Miller's Tale (Second half) 3416-3854 ☛ Reflection Option 3: Joining the Game – Where in the Miller's Tale does Chaucer use questions, references, or humor to invite us into the game? Write a short essay on that invitation; or write a lyric or contrafacta responding to an invitation and write a brief explanatory paragraph.
M 6	D.S. Brewer- "The Fabliaux" Reeve's Prologue 3855-3920; Reeve's Tale 3921-4324
W 8	Derek Pearsall- Cecily Champagne portion of <i>The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer</i> (1990) Christopher Canon – "Uncertainty Certainty" ☛ Reflection Option 4: Rewriting the Reeve's Tale- Raptus vs. Consent – Briefly rewrite the Tale to make it either: 1. fit another genre (can be a modern genre) and/or 2. not contain legally definable "raptus." Then write a paragraph about why this was difficult/easy, more humorous/less humorous, creepier/less creepy, etc.
F 10	Cook's Prologue & Tale 4325-4422 Beginning of Second Fragment: Man of Law's Introduction and Prologue 1-133
M 13	Betsy McCormick- "Debating the Legend's Women." Alcuin Blamires- "Introduction" to <i>The Case for Women</i> Wife of Bath's Prologue 1-450
W 15	Wife of Bath's Prologue (second half) 451-856 ☛ Reflection Option 5: Nature of Women' debate scavenger hunt and presentation – Find three examples of <i>querelle</i> arguments in modern culture. Make sure to bring your examples in a way that can be shared in class. In your reflection, consider how the debate has changed and/or stayed the same. Is it deployed at the same group of women? What can it tell us?

F 17	Wife of Bath's Tale 857-1264 [Articles for further reading: Emma Lipton "Love and Marriage in the Wife of Bath's Prologue" http://www.opencanterburytales.com/open-review-home/the-wife-of-baths-prologue/ ; and Elaine Tuttle Hansen- Intro to feminism]
Sat 18	☞ ☞ ☞ Upload a one-page abstract of Paper One ☞ ☞ ☞
M 20	Tara Williams- Womanhede: "Introduction" and "The Clerk's Tale." Friar's Prologue 1265-1300 Summoner's Prologue 1665-1708 Clerk's Prologue 1-56 Clerk's Tale 57-273
W 22	Clerk's Tale (middle section) 274-700
F 24	Clerk's Tale (last part) 701-1212, and 7 line "Murye Wordes of the Hoost" ☞ Reflection Option 6: Interpreting Griselda – How does a knowledge of the "Nature of Women" debate and/or the social condition of women help you interpret the Clerk's Prologue, Tale, and or the Murye Words of the Hoost? Focus on one passage, (though you can mention others).
M 27	Ruth Mazzo Karras "Sex and Marriage" in <i>Sexuality in Medieval Europe</i> Merchant's Prologue 1213-1244 Merchant's Tale 1245-1695
March W 1	Merchant's Tale 1696-2020
F 3	Merchant's Tale 2021-2418
Sat 5	☞ ☞ ☞ Paper One Due ☞ ☞ ☞
M 6	Exam Prep
W 8	Midterm exam
F 10	Modern Adaptations of the CT (In class only)
March 13-18	Spring Break
M 20	Squire's Prologue 2419-2440 + 1-8; Franklyn's Prologue 673-728; Franklyn's Tale 729-1018
W 22	Franklyn's Tale (middle section) 1019-1466
F 24	Emily Houlik-Ritchie- Eco-critical Franklyn's Tale Franklyn's Tale (last part) 1467-1624 ☞ Reflection Option 7: Who is the Most Fre? The Franklyn's Tale offers the "most fre" question as its overt conversational gambit. However, since Chaucer is always slippery—is that a sincere question? What other questions (or ways of reading that one) does the tale pose? Convince me that you have found another way of reading the Franklin's Tale.
M 27	Physician's Tale & Words of the Host 1-328; Pardoner's Prologue (329-462)
W 29	Pardoner's Tale (463-968)
F 31	Shipman's Tale (1-444); Host's words to Shipman and Prioress (435-452)
April M 3	Miriamne Ara Krummel- "Introduction: Haunted by Jews..." Prioress's Prologue (453-487); Prioress's Tale (488-690) ☞ Reflection Option 8: The Othering Pilgrims – Pick a detail within the Prioress or Pardoner's Prologue or Tale and consider how it is being used as a religious sign. Use Krummel's article to help you think through--How does this sign substantiate, trouble, and/or reject medieval prejudices? What do you think Chaucer seems to be doing with this tale?
W 5	"Chaucer's Self-representation" Prologue to Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas (691-713); Tale of Sir Thopas (714-917) Prologue to Chaucer's Melibee (919-966)

F 7	<p>“Socratic Dialogues”</p> <p>Tale of Melibee and Dame Prudence (selections): Melibee’s house and family are attacked (967-1004); Melibee attacks and Prudence defends women (1057-1114); Prudence advises how to choose counselors (1115-1189); Vengeance discussed (1355-1454); Prudence councils peace (1675-1704); Melibee meets with his enemies (1870-1888).</p> <p>[For additional Pley and Game: Cynthia A. Rogers- “Boethius and Lady Fortune”]</p> <p>☛ Reflection Option 9: Connecting Melibee– Choose a section of Melibee and connect it to another part of <i>The CT</i> that we have read. How does the repetition of this theme or trope add to our understanding of a topic, debate, character, etc.?</p>
M 10	<p>Jonathan Hsy- “Ability-Disability: Chaucer’s The Monk’s Tale”</p> <p>http://www.opencanterburytales.com/open-review-home/the-monks-tale/</p> <p>The Monk’s Prologue 1889-1990; The Monk’s Tale (1991-2375)</p>
W 12	<p>The Monk’s Tale second half (2376-2776)</p> <p>☛ Reflection Option 10: Visual Tragedy– The Monk’s Tale purports to be tragedy. Create a visual version of one of the episodes. Pick out the key elements and show the arc of the tragedy. This can be in the style of a graphic novel, medieval illumination, machinima, a video, etc.</p>
F 14	Easter Break
M 17	Easter Break
W 19	Nun’s Priest’s Prologue (2767-2820); Nun’s Priest’s Tale (2821-3272)
F 21	<p>Nun’s Priest’s Tale second half (3273-3446); Nun’s Priest’s Epilogue (3447-3462)</p> <p>Alex Mueller, “Entertainment vs. Education: The Nun’s Priest’s Tale.”</p> <p>http://www.opencanterburytales.com/open-review-home/the-nuns-priests-tale/</p> <p>☛ Reflection Option 11: Looking Through a Modern Lens– Use a key idea from Houlik-Ritchie, Hsy, or Mueller as a “lens” to explain something in one of the tales we’ve read thus far. You may use any tale, but don’t repeat the author’s explanation of <i>The CT</i>—Tell me something that you see.</p>
M 24	<p>Second Nun’s Prologue (1-119); The Canon’s Yeoman’s Prologue (554-719); The Manciple’s Prologue (1-104)</p> <p>Robert Lee-Meyers- “Abandon the Fragments.”</p>
W 26	<p>The Manciple’s Tale (105-362)</p> <p>☛ ☛ ☛ Email a draft of Paper Two by midnight to your group and to me ☛ ☛ ☛</p>
F 28	Our regular class is replaced by Group Conferences.
May M 1	Picking topics in-class for research in The Parson’s Tale. (How does this last tale reflect on the various topics we’ve looked at this semester? Humor, Romantic Love, Revenge/Quiting, Education vs Entertainment, Women, Marriage, Old Age, Worldly vs Spiritual, etc.)
W 3	The Parson’s Prologue (1-74); Parson’s Tale Topics (lines TBA)
F 5	<p>Parson’s Tale Topics (lines TBA)</p> <p>☛ Reflection Option 12: Reading Chaucer’s “Retraction”– Take a position on the “Retraction.” Is it written by Chaucer? How should we read it? Why is it included at the end of the Parson’s Tale in most manuscripts? Point to several passages in <i>The CT</i> as part of your thinking about this.</p>
M 8	☛ ☛ ☛ Paper Two Due ☛ ☛ ☛