

## Chaucer

Fall 2020

Instructor: Deb Streusand

### Course Description:

This course will explore selected works of Chaucer through the lens of authorship and authority. We will analyze Chaucer's use of his sources in the context of his own ideas about what it means to derive "authority" from one's literary predecessors. In addition to authority and authorship, the course will engage with issues of allusion and allegory, genre, gender, and literary portrayals of the relationships humans have with each other, God/the Gods, and Fate. You will gain an understanding of Chaucer's role in literary history by examining how Chaucer used his sources and how others used his works as a source.

### Course Goals:

Students will learn:

- about Chaucer's life, his work, and the history surrounding his texts
- how to read and understand short passages in Middle English
- how to analyze the relationship between a text and its source(s)
- how to examine a literary work in its historical context
- how to read and discuss a critical article in a way that illuminates the text it's about

### Texts:

*The Norton Chaucer*: Middle English edition of all Chaucer's works, pub. Spring 2019. I will also put Modern English versions of *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame*, our first two texts for the course, on Moodle to help you acclimate yourselves to Middle English.

Selections from: Ovid's *Heroides*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* and *Teseida*, *The Roman De La Rose*, and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (Available on Moodle)

Scholarly articles by: Antony Goedhals, Lara Ruffolo, Jeff Espie and Sarah Star, Laura J. Getty, Ilan Mitchell-Smith, David Lavinsky, and Anne McTaggart (Available on Moodle)

### Assignments:

- Paper #1: Your first paper will examine a specific aspect of the relationship between a source text and Chaucerian text we have read. Your job is to ask and answer how Chaucer appropriates and re-develops one defined element of the source, not to characterize the entire relationship between the two. This paper will be 4-6 pages and will be worth 25% of your grade.
- Paper #2: Your final paper will analyze Chaucer as source rather than adapter. You will select a literary work that adapts a Chaucerian text and examine the adaptation in the context of our discussions about Chaucer's use of sources. How does the later author's approach echo Chaucer's and/or differ from it? You will submit a one-paragraph proposal with a thesis statement for approval ahead of time. The most obvious options for this paper would be Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. If you want to delve further into the medieval period, you might look at John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, or the anonymous *The Canterbury Interlude*. There are

other options, and you can be creative about what works you want to use. If you choose a text that is not obviously an adaptation of a Chaucerian work, briefly make an argument in your proposal showing that the text uses Chaucer as a source. This paper will be worth 35% of your grade, 10-12 pages. The one-paragraph proposal will be worth an additional 5%.

- Quizzes: You will have 3 quizzes on Moodle over the course of the semester to monitor and spur your progress in Middle English. These quizzes will be worth 15% of your grade. These quizzes are already available on Moodle, and you may retake them as many times as you need to before they are due.
- Weekly Reading Responses: You will submit 5 2-page reading responses over the course of the semester. You may choose which readings to respond to, but don't let the responses pile up at the end of the semester when you also have your final paper to think about—if you do, you are likely to regret it! These responses will be worth 10% of your grade.
- Participation: Your participation in class discussion will be graded as well. I am aware that talking in class is easier for some than for others. If you are a quieter student, I will take note of whether your participation increases over the course of the semester and reward such engagement accordingly. Participation will be worth 10% of your grade.

### **Course Format:**

Each 75-minute class period will generally include a 10-15 minute lecture, a 10-15 minute mini-lesson on Middle English, and 30-45 minutes of seminar-style discussion. There may be additional short in-class activities on occasion.

### **Schedule:**

#### Day 1

- Introduction: Course Goals and Expectations
- Lecture: Who Was Chaucer?
- Middle English: What is Middle English?
- In-class Reading and Discussion: “Chaucer’s Wordes Unto Adam”

#### Day 2

- Due: Read *The Book of the Duchess*
- Middle English: What Can I Learn about Chaucer by Knowing the Language?
- Lecture: The Dream Vision as Genre
- Discussion: Chaucer’s Representation of Himself

#### Day 3:

- Due: Read Goedhals article, “*Auctour and Auctoritee in Chaucer’s The Book of the Duchess?*”
- Middle English: How to Pronounce Vowels
- Lecture: Medieval Ideas of Authority and Authorship
- Discussion: *Book of the Duchess*

#### Day 4

- Due: Read *House of Fame*, Book I
- Middle English: How to Pronounce Diphthongs
- Lecture: Fame and Fortune
- Discussion: *House of Fame*

#### Day 5

- Due: Read Book II of *House of Fame*
- Middle English: How to Pronounce Consonant Clusters
- Lecture: Chaucer and Allegory
- Discussion: *House of Fame*

#### Day 6

- Due: Read Book III of *House of Fame*
- Lecture: Chaucer’s Use of Classical Allusion
- Middle English: Close read a passage from *House of Fame*, applying your Middle English pronunciation skills to help you learn about the text
- Discussion: *House of Fame*

#### Day 7:

- Due: By this day, complete Moodle Quiz on Middle English pronunciation (instructions on there for how to upload recordings)
- Due: Read Ruffolo article, “Literary Authority and the Lists of Chaucer’s *House of Fame*”
- Middle English: Grammar
- Lecture: Ideas of Literary Authority
- Discussion: *House of Fame* and Authority/Authorship

#### Day 8:

- Due: Read Book I of *Troilus and Criseyde*, selections from *Il Filostrato*
- Middle English: Grammar
- Lecture: Italian Sources and Medieval Literature
- Discussion: *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Il Filostrato*

#### Day 9:

- Due: Read Book II of *Troilus and Criseyde*
- Middle English: Grammar
- Lecture: Gender in Chaucer and Boccaccio

- Discussion: *Troilus and Criseyde*

Day 10:

- Due: Read Book III of *Troilus and Criseyde*
- Middle English: Grammar
- Lecture: Romance, Family, and Friendship in *Troilus and Criseyde*
- Discussion: *Troilus and Criseyde*

Day 11:

- Due: By this day, complete Moodle Quiz on Middle English grammar
- Due: Read Book IV of *Troilus and Criseyde*
- Middle English: Vocabulary
- Lecture: Fate and God/the Gods in *Troilus and Criseyde*
- Discussion: *Troilus and Criseyde*

Day 12:

- Due: Read Book V of *Troilus and Criseyde*, selections from *Il Filostrato*
- Middle English: Vocabulary
- Lecture: War and Diplomacy in *Troilus and Criseyde*
- Activity: Close read a passage from *Troilus and Criseyde* in Middle English
- Discussion: *Troilus and Criseyde*

Day 13:

- Due: Read Espie and Star article, “Reading Chaucer’s Calkas: Prophecy and Authority in *Troilus and Criseyde*”
- Middle English: Vocabulary
- Lecture: Authorship and Authority
- Discussion: How does Chaucer represent and interpret authority in *Troilus and Criseyde*?

Day 14:

- Due: Read Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*
- Middle English: Vocabulary
- Lecture: Books, Songs, and Stories
- Discussion: *The Legend of Good Women*

Day 15:

- Due: Read Book IV of *The Aeneid*
- Middle English: Vocabulary
- Lecture: Genealogy of Adaptation, Homer to Virgil
- Discussion: Pre-Chaucerian Adapters

Day 16:

- Due: Read “The Legend of Dido” in *The Legend of Good Women*

- Middle English: Vocabulary
- Lecture: Genealogy of Adaptation, Virgil to Chaucer
- Discussion: *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Aeneid*

Day 17:

- Due: Read “The Legend of Hypsipyle and Medea” in *The Legend of Good Women*, XII of Ovid’s *Heroides* (Medea to Jason)
- Middle English: Vocabulary
- Lecture: Radical Adaptation
- Discussion: *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Heroides*

Day 18:

- Due: By this day, complete Moodle Quiz on Middle English vocabulary
- Due: Read “The Legend of Ariadne” in *The Legend of Good Women*, X of Ovid’s *Heroides* (Ariadne to Theseus)
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: Giving Women a Voice
- Discussion: *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Heroides*

Day 19:

- Due: Read Getty article, “‘Other Smale Ymaad Before’: Chaucer as Historiographer in the ‘Legend of Good Women’”
- Middle English: Essential vocabulary
- Lecture: Challenging Authority
- Discussion: *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Heroides*, *The Aeneid*

Day 20:

- Due: Paper #1
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups.
- Lecture: Trajectory of Chaucer’s career
- Discussion: How do Chaucer’s strategies of adaptation differ from *Troilus and Criseyde* to *The Legend of Good Women*? What have we learned about his approach(es) to his sources?

Day 21:

- Due: Read the “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales*
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: Frame Stories and World-Building
- Discussion: “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales*

Day 22:

- Due: Read selections from the *Teseida*
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: Medieval Epic

- Discussion: Approaching the Classics

Day 23:

- Due: Read “The Knight’s Tale”
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: Adaptation between Genres
- Discussion: “The Knight’s Tale,” the *Teseida*

Day 24:

- Due: Read Mitchell-Smith article, “As Olde Stories Tellen Us’: Chivalry, Violence, and Chaucer’s Critical Perspective in “The Knight’s Tale””
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: Some Versions of Authority
- Discussion: “The Knight’s Tale”

Day 25:

- Read “The Pardoner’s Tale” and chapter 21 of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (“The Tale of the Three Brothers”)
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: Looking Forward
- Discussion: Chaucer Adapting vs Adapting Chaucer

Day 26:

- Due: Final paper proposal
- Due: Read Lavinsky article, “Turned to Fables: Efficacy, Form, and Literary Making in ‘The Pardoner’s Tale’”
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: The Work Literature Does
- Discussion: Authority as a Creative Force

Day 27:

- Due: Read selections from *Roman de La Rose*
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: Romance as a Genre
- Discussion: What do these texts imply about women?

Day 28:

- Due: Read “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale”
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: What Genre is a “Tale?”
- Discussion: “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” and Romance

Day 29:

- Read McTaggart article, “What Women Want? Mimesis and Gender in Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale”
- Middle English: Analyze a short passage in small groups
- Lecture: Gender Trouble
- Discussion: Chaucer’s View of Women

Day 30:

- Due: Paper #2
- Wrap-up
- Course Evaluation Forms