



HL2001

Introduction to Medieval Literature



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HSS 03-77
Office hours by appointment

Seminar:
Wednesdays, 1430-1730
LHS-TR+94

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to Middle English literature. We will read a wide variety of genres and subjects, from the aggressive debate of 'The Owl and the Nightingale' to adventurous medieval romances, and from the tragedy of *Troilus and Criseyde* to the religious comedy of the Second Shepherds' Play. As we explore this diversity, we will consider early English literature in the context of important historical and cultural changes during the Middle Ages.

Selected texts will be read in Middle English with the help of a glossary. No experience reading Old or Middle English is required. All course texts will be made available online.

Assessment:

Creative Assignment (due in or before class, 11 March)	30%
2,000 Word Research Essay (due 19 April)	40%
Presentations	20%
Participation	10%

The essay should engage critically with the texts and with scholarly debates about them. It should be polished and fully referenced. It should make a clear and well-argued claim that is supported by close reading of the text and of relevant outside sources. All paragraphs should be related to this topic and follow a coherent, persuasive structure. Points should be fully developed and supported with specific evidence. As the major written assignment for this course, your essay will be submitted through Turnitin.



For the creative assignment, you will choose a medieval text to adapt into a form of your choice (e.g. film, radio play, comic book, short story). This will require you to think about the relative importance of various elements of the medieval work, as well as how they would have been received by their original audience. The creative assignment will be submitted along with a short essay (500 words) explaining the choices you have made for your adaptation.

You will present in class on the literary texts and historical sources under discussion, situating them within the broader academic field. You will also present your own research in progress at an in-class mini-conference.

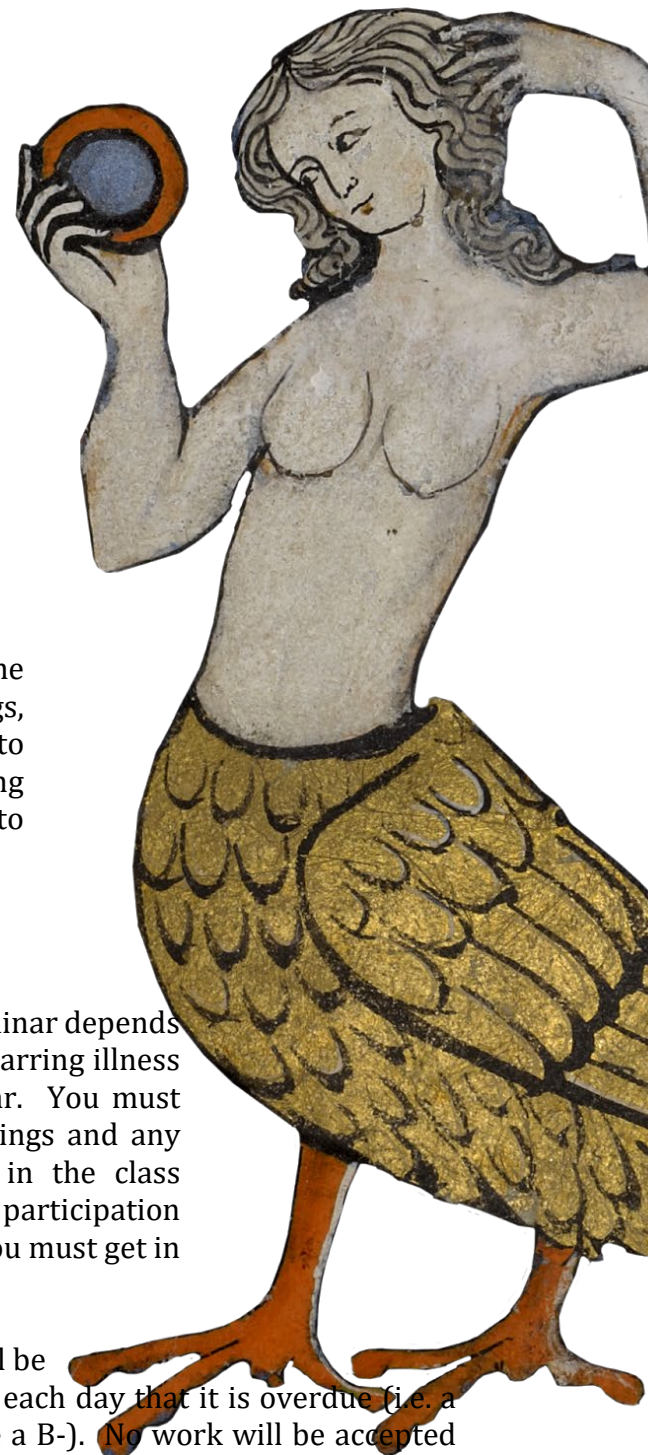
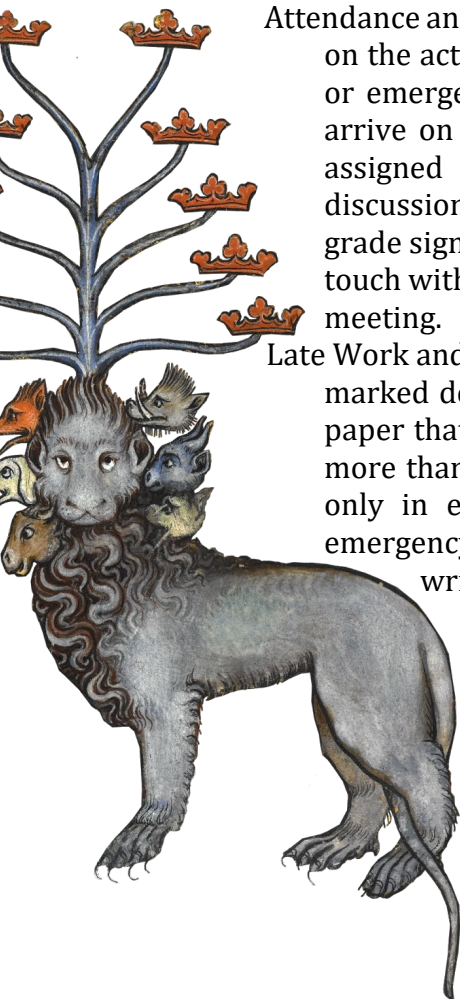
The participation grade will reflect your commitment to the class as evidenced by attendance, preparation of readings, contribution to discussions, and productive responses to others' ideas. Read the assigned texts thoroughly, making notes as you go. Note questions and problems that occur to you, and be ready to share these ideas in class.

Course Policies:

Attendance and Participation: The success of any seminar depends on the active participation of all its members. Barring illness or emergencies, you must attend every seminar. You must arrive on time, having done the required readings and any assigned work, and be ready to participate in the class discussion. Failure to do so will reduce your participation grade significantly. If you need to miss a class you must get in touch with me *before* that week's meeting.

Late Work and Extensions: if your essay is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for each day that it is overdue (i.e. a paper that would have received a B will receive a B-). No work will be accepted more than three days late without prior permission. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, including documented illness or genuine emergency. You can earn a two-day extension if you work on your paper with a writing coach at the LCC Communication Cube.

Seeking Help Outside Class: you are encouraged to use any form of legitimate aid to help you write papers and research topics that interest you. Obvious sources of legitimate assistance include your tutors, the coaches at the LCC Communication Cube, and the subject librarians at the library. If you work on a paper with a writing coach, you are eligible for a two-day extension. Please speak to me if you would like to take advantage of this!



Generative AI: generative AI (such as ChatGPT) is not designed for research and is inclined to be wrong. You must follow the university's prevailing policies about how to acknowledge the use of generative AI in your work. You must not use it to replace your own thinking or learning. You are responsible for the work you submit, and must treat the output of generative AI with extreme caution.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Don't do it! If I find that you have misrepresented someone else's work or wording as your own you will fail the assignment and possibly the course. If you are unsure of how or when to cite a source, please ask me or refer to the university's academic integrity resources online.

Useful Resources

[The Middle English Dictionary](#)

Harvard's website on Chaucer's language, including [pronunciation](#), [vocabulary](#), and [grammar](#)

William Chester Jordan, [The Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia for Students](#)

Oxford's [Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages](#)

Andrew Galloway, [The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Culture](#)

The English section of [The Internet Medieval Sourcebook](#)

The 'Resources' section of the University of Kent's [MEMSLib](#)

Questions?

Feel free to come to me if you have any questions! Most importantly, if you feel that you're falling behind in the course for any reason, please talk to me. The sooner we discuss any obstacles to your success in this class, the more likely it is that we will be able to fix them.





COURSE SCHEDULE

1. *The Owl and the Nightingale* (14 January)

Since the language of this text is difficult, we will read it in translation. Choose between a [close prose translation](#) and a [freer verse translation](#). The first forty lines of the poem in the original language are [here](#): read through them alongside your chosen translation to get a sense of the poet's own words.

2. [Sir Orfeo](#) (21 January)

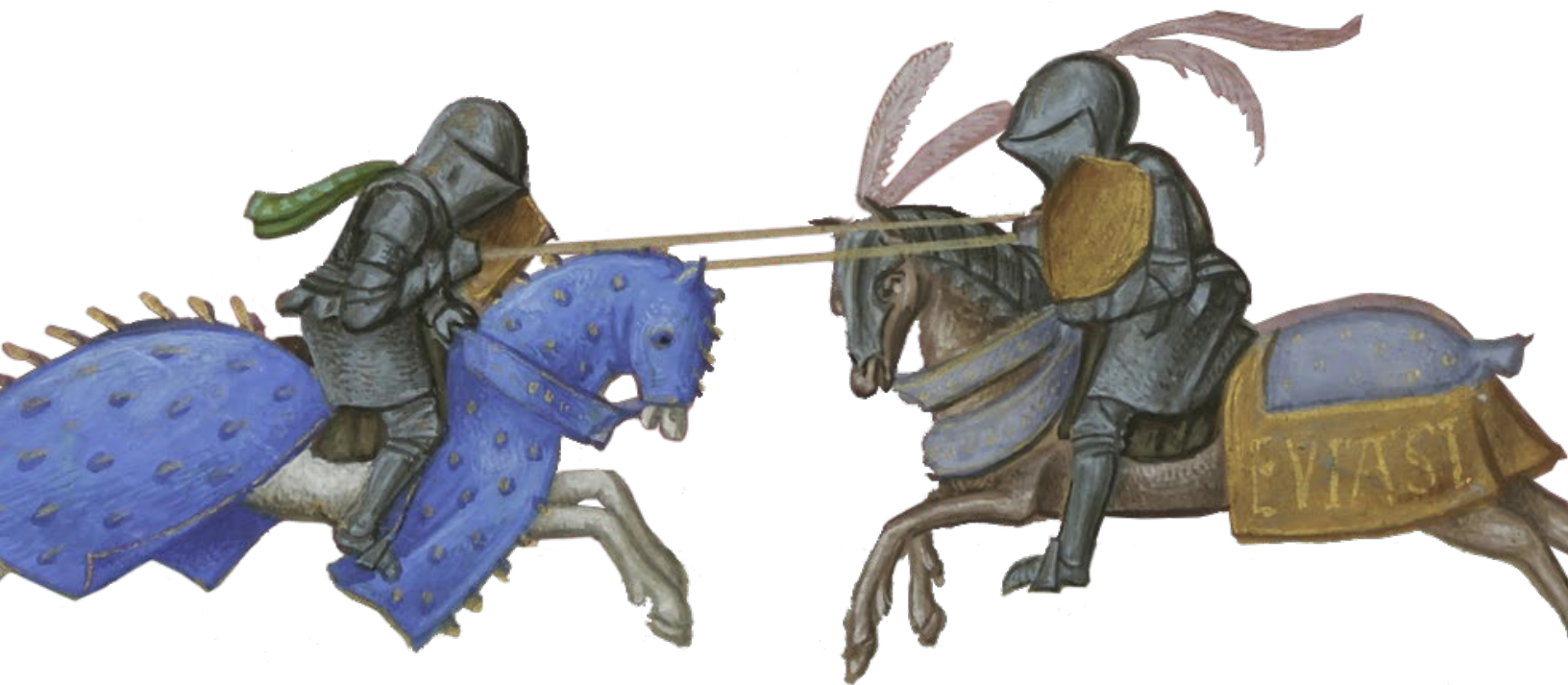
3. [Sir Gowther](#) (28 January)

4. Geoffrey Chaucer, [Troilus and Criseyde](#) (Books 1-3) (4 February)

5. Geoffrey Chaucer, [Troilus and Criseyde](#) (Books 4-5) (11 February)

6. No class: Chinese New Year

7. Presentations of creative work (25 February)



RECESS WEEK

creative project due 11 March

8. Thomas Hoccleve, *My Complainte* and *Dialogue* (11 March)
9. Selections from Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* (18 March)
10. [‘The Awntyrs off Arthure’](#) (25 March)
11. [The Second Shepherds’ Play](#) (1 April)
12. *Pearl* (8 April)
13. Conclusion and Research Presentations (15 April)

research essay due 19 April