

HL4002: *THE CANTERBURY TALES*

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is not only among the best-known English poems but also one of the most diverse, containing within it the full range of medieval genres, from romances and saints' lives to blood-soaked tales of revenge and (yes) a racy joke or two. The poem has been compared to a gothic cathedral in its vastness as well as its ability to accommodate seemingly contrary elements and styles, from the grand to the grotesque. Reading the *Tales* is an ideal introduction to the complex thought, culture, and history of the late-medieval period—an age that was profoundly different from our own yet trembling on the cusp of modernity. You will be reading in Middle English, but no prior experience is expected or required.

Course Outline

Week	Topics	Readings
13 January	Setting out	<i>The General Prologue</i>
20 January	Noble designs	<i>The Knight's Tale</i>
27 January	The Miller's challenge	<i>The Miller's Prologue and Tale; The Reeve's Prologue and Tale; The Cook's Prologue and Tale</i>
3 February	The saint who did nothing	<i>The Man of Law's Introduction, Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue</i>
10 February	"Who painted the lion?"	<i>The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale; The Shipman's Prologue and Tale</i>
17 February	Settling scores	<i>The Friar's Prologue and Tale; The Summoner's Prologue and Tale</i>
24 February	Two marriages from hell	<i>The Clerk's Prologue and Tale; The Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue</i>
2 March	None	Recess Week
9 March	The imitators	<i>The Squire's Introduction and Tale; The Franklin's Prologue and Tale</i>
16 March	Questionable morals	<i>The Physician's Tale; The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue and Tale</i>
23 March	"Lat the chaf be stille"	<i>The Prioress's Prologue and Tale; The Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas;</i>

		<i>The Monk's Prologue and Tale; The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue</i>
30 March	Lose your illusion	<i>The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale; The Cannon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale; The Manciple's Prologue and Tale</i>
6 April	Chaucer repents (or else doesn't)	<i>The Parson's Prologue and Tale; Chaucer's Retraction</i>
13 April	Receptions: Whose Chaucer? (<i>essay due</i>)	<i>Tale of Beryn</i> and additional short excerpts (provided by instructor)

Assessment

Weekly Study Questions	10%
Scholarly Essay (~2000 words)	20%
Presentations	10%
Seminar Participation	10%
Final Exam	50%

Textbooks/References

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Jill Mann (London: Penguin, 2005). ISBN-10: 014042234X