

**Chaucer: Dream Visions
English 381
Fall 2016**

University of Massachusetts Boston
MWF 1:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.
McCormack 01-0417

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DESCRIPTION:

In this course we will examine how Geoffrey Chaucer, also known as the “Father of the English Language,” positions his work within contemporary and ancient literary traditions, historical and political events of his own day, and the growing prestige of the English language. Through close readings of his works in the original Middle English, you will gain an understanding of his immeasurable literary and linguistic influence on English literature. In particular, this course will focus on Chaucer’s “dream visions” and their ancient literary heritage, which includes the works of Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Dante, and Boccaccio. Course activities include oral readings, translation exercises, scholarly research, formal papers, and even an online annotation assignment.

OBJECTIVES:

In this course you will learn or enhance your understanding of:

- the social, political, and ethical issues and controversies that emerge in Chaucer’s works
- the effects Chaucerian texts had on the establishment of English as a literary language
- the performative and interactive nature of medieval textuality
- how Chaucerian poetry and prose engage in late-fourteenth-century debates surrounding gender and sexuality, social status, and national identity
- literary, historical, and cultural contexts that influenced Chaucer’s works
- research and writing skills and processes in printed and digital contexts

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Only one printed text is required for this course. You need to buy the specified edition of Chaucer’s works because we will be using the materials found in this particular edition.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Dream Visions and Other Poems*. Ed. Kathryn L. Lynch. Norton Critical Edition. W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Additional readings marked “WIKI” are available on the course wiki page: <http://engl381-mueller.wikispaces.umb.edu>. You must bring these assigned readings to class, printed out or on your laptop/tablet (not your cell phone).

REQUIREMENTS:

1) three 1500-2000-word papers; 2) Twitter annotation assignment; 3) a Middle English language exam; 3) regular attendance and participation in class discussion and activities.

Reading: Since the readings will be primarily in Middle English, I have attempted to keep the required reading to a minimum. This does not mean, however, that the time it will take to complete the reading will be less than the standard upper-level English course. Consider your reading load to be equivalent to between **forty and fifty pages of present-day English prose per week. Be sure to bring the assigned readings to every class meeting.**

Writing: Guidelines for each paper will be disseminated in class within a couple weeks of their due dates. All papers should adhere to MLA format and be composed and submitted via Google Docs. For each paper, an evaluation sheet that specifies the grading guidelines will be provided. One of the first two papers may be revised for an entirely new grade if all deadlines and basic requirements have been met. This revision must be submitted no later than December 7th.

Twitter Annotation: **From week 3 on, you will be expected to write at least one tweet as an annotation to the reading for each class, using the hashtag #eng381. If you are not on Twitter, you will need to set up an account at <https://twitter.com>.** You must add these annotations before the class when the reading will be discussed. While one tweet is the minimum requirement, I would encourage you to add many more, especially because your comments must be short. This extra effort will not go unnoticed!

Attendance and Participation: It is absolutely essential that you attend class on time and come prepared to participate, which means completing the reading and assignments, listening attentively to lectures and other students' comments, asking questions, bringing the assigned text to every class, and actively discussing the readings. Discussion will not be as useful or engaging if not all students are in attendance or prepared for class. Absences will not only leave you behind and affect your grades, but also impede the effectiveness of this course for your classmates.

More than one absence will result in a penalty in regards to your participation/attendance grade for the course: for every day missed after the first, your overall participation grade may be lowered by one letter grade. You are responsible for keeping up with the syllabus and/or changes to the syllabus.

If you have to miss because of a verified illness, death in the family, jury duty, military service, religious holiday, or participation in a school event, notify me by e-mail before the class and the absence may be excused. Absences for any other reason will be considered unexcused.

Late or incomplete assignments: It is imperative that you meet all assignment deadlines since the format of this class relies upon student participation. You should resist the temptation to blow off informal assignments – I will check and give significant credit for them. Late or incomplete work will receive a 10% grade deduction for every day (every day, not every class meeting!) it is late or unfinished.

Disability: You should inform me during the first two weeks of the term of any disability you have so that the appropriate accommodation may be made. Disabilities should be documented at the Ross Center, 2nd floor Campus Center, Room 2100, phone (617) 287-7430.

Academic Honesty Policy: You are expected to abide by the University's Code of Student Conduct in all of their classes at UMASS Boston
(http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/code/).

GRADING:

Three (1500-2000 word) papers – 45%; Twitter annotation assignment – 20%; Middle English language exam – 15%; attendance and class participation – 20%.

Grades are assigned as follows:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72

Please understand that A's and B's will be assigned to work that exceeds the average. Extra credit will not be given.

COURSE SCHEDULE* (Readings are due on the date listed.)

Week 1: Introduction to Chaucer and his Poetry

September 7: Introduction to the course. Read "Chaucer's Words to Adam, His Own Scribe."
September 9: Short Poems. Read "Truth" (219-20) and "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse" (225-6). Also read and annotate [Phillips, "English Society, 1340-1400" \(WIKI\)](#). Continue to use sites reviewed in class, especially Geoffrey Chaucer Website for pronunciation and language review (<http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/pronunciation/>).

Week 2: Interpreting Dreams

September 12: [The Nun's Priest's Tale \(WIKI\)](#)
September 13: ****Add/Drop Ends****
September 14: Read and annotate [Mueller, "Entertainment versus Education" \(WIKI\)](#).
September 16: Read selection from Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (268-72). **OED/MED EXERCISE DUE.**

Week 3: Before the Book of the Duchess

September 19: Read selection from Jean de Meun's *Romance of the Rose* (275, 280-1) and Guillaume de Machaut's *The Fountain of Love* (284-99).
September 21: Read selection from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* [story of Ceyx and Alcyone] (251-7).
September 23: **MIDDLE ENGLISH EXAM**

Week 4: The Book of the Duchess

September 26: Read *Book of the Duchess*, lines 1-709.

September 28: Read *Book of the Duchess*, lines 710-1334.

September 30: Read selection from Kruger, *Medical and Moral Authority in the Late Medieval Dream* (366-84).

Week 5: Dreaming of Italy

October 3: Read selection from Boccaccio, *The Book of Theseus* (299-303).

October 5: Read selection from Dante, *Inferno* (282-3).

October 7: Read Cicero, *Scipio's Dream* (258-64).

Week 6: The Parliament of Fowls

October 10: ****Columbus Day**** NO CLASS

October 12: Read selection from Alain de Lille, *The Complaint of Nature* (273-4). **PAPER #1 DUE**

October 14: Read *Parliament of Fowls*, lines 1-336.

Week 7: Reading the Parliament of Fowls

October 17: Read *Parliament of Fowls*, lines 337-699.

October 19: Read Spearing, *The Parliament of Fowls* (325-35).

October 21: Read selection from Schibanoff, *Chaucer's Queer Poetics* (WIKI).

Week 8: Dreaming of Fame

October 24: Read selection from Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (265-8).

October 26: Read *The House of Fame*, Book I.

October 28: Read *The House of Fame*, Book II.

Week 9: What is the House of Fame?

October 31: Read selection from Dante, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* (283-4).

November 2: Read selection from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* [house of Fame or Rumor] (257-8) and selection from Virgil, *Aeneid* [description of Fame] (235).

November 4: Read *The House of Fame*, Book III.

Week 10: Dreams of Literary Success

November 7: Read selection from Muscatine, *Chaucer's Early Poems* (307-25).

November 9: Read selection from Evans, "Chaucer in Cyberspace" (229-31).

November 11: ****Veterans Day**** NO CLASS

Week 11: "Good" Women of the Ancient World

November 14: Read selection from Guillaume de Lorris, *Romance of the Rose* (275-80). **PAPER #2 DUE**

November 16: Read the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* (117-37).

November 18: Read *The Legend of Cleopatra* and *The Legend of Thisbe* (137-45).

Week 12: Victimized Women

November 21: Read *The Legend of Lucrece* and *The Legend of Ariadne* (164-77).

November 23: ****Course Withdrawal Deadline**** Read "Anelida and Arcite" (191-205).

November 25: ****Thanksgiving**** NO CLASS

Week 13: Women Write Back

November 28: Read Green, "Chaucer's Victimized Women" and Hansen, "The Feminization of Men in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*" (338-65).

November 30: Read selection from Virgil's *Aeneid* (231-44).

December 2: Read selection from Ovid's *Heroides* (245-51).

Week 14: Chaucer's Good Women

December 5: Read *The Legend of Dido* (146-56).

December 7: Read *The Legend of Hyppolyte and Medea* (156-63). **REVISION DUE (OPTIONAL)**

December 9: Read *The Legend of Philomela* (177-81).

Week 15: Dreaming of a Literary Future

December 12: Read *The Legend of Phyllis* and *The Legend of Hypermenestra* (181-9).

December 14 Read Chaucer's "Retraction" (WIKI). **PAPER #3 DUE**

*The course schedule is subject to change.

RESOURCES:

Healey Library <http://www.lib.umb.edu/>

See "Databases and Indexes" for access to:

Oxford English Dictionary

MLA Bibliography

Academic Support Services <http://www.academicssupport.umb.edu>

Campus Center 1-1100 to 1-1300 Phone: 617.287.6550

Middle English Dictionary <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>

Middle English Teaching Resources Online <http://metro.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

Useful Geoffrey Chaucer Websites

Larry Benson's site <http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/>

Jonathan Hsy's site <http://home.gwu.edu/~jhsy/chaucer-ppp.html>

British Library page on Caxton's *Canterbury Tales*

<http://www.bl.uk/treasures/caxton/homepage.html>