

English 350 Chaucer

(Guidelines subject to change)

Spring 2006
Instructor: John Black
Classroom: Zinzendorf 103
Class schedule: TTh 10:20-11:30

Office: Zinzendorf 303
Office Hours: W 5:15-6, Th 2:15-4,
and by appointment
English Dept. Phone: 861-1390

Email: jrb1@moravian.edu

Required texts:

Benson, Larry D., ed. *The Riverside Chaucer*. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
Other selected materials, as posted to Bb or distributed in class.

Other useful books:

Refer to 'Selected Bibliography' on class Bb site.

Some useful websites for Chaucer studies:

Pronunciation: <http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/pronunciation/>
Readings of selections from Chaucer's works
http://academics.vmi.edu/english/audio/audio_index.html
<http://www.towson.edu/~duncan/chaucer/indexn.htm> (click on "Sounds" in side bar)
Images: <http://www.towson.edu/~duncan/chaucer/indexn.htm> (click on "Images" in bar)
Harvard Chaucer Website: <http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/>
Chaucer Metapage: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/chaucer/>
Middle English texts and Modern English translations: <http://www.librarius.com/> (and on other sites listed here)

Some useful websites for writing and composition:

The University of Victoria's Hypertext Writer's Guide: <http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/>
The University of Wisconsin - Madison Writing Center Writer's Handbook:
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/>

Course Description, Objectives, and Format:

Welcome to English 350! This course is devoted primarily to the study of the works of Chaucer, to an examination of their cultural contexts, and to an exploration of a range of critical approaches relevant to his works. As R. James Goldstein, a professor and scholar of Chaucerian studies, has noted, "Geoffrey Chaucer is a poet of remarkable contradictions. Although his habitual narrative persona was modest and self-effacing, he was also the first English poet who aspired to become a literary classic of lasting fame. Fully immersed in the aristocratic court culture of his day, he also maintained some distance in perspective on his social betters. Interested in serious philosophical issues like free will vs. determinism, he also enjoyed joking about lower bodily functions. Described as a "friend of women" by one early admirer, he was also accused of rape (though the charges were later dropped in mysterious circumstances). Most of his modern admirers see him as a typically orthodox late-medieval Christian; others insist he is the first modern (or even "post-modern") English writer, who challenges the common religious and political pieties of his age. After 600 years his work has lost none of its power to charm and to challenge us." As no previous knowledge of Middle English is assumed, we will spend considerable time in the first few classes getting comfortable with the language of this "charming and challenging" figure and with the cultural contexts for his works.

In this course, you will learn to read the Middle English of Chaucer, study closely selections from Chaucer's works, and examine the contexts in which the works were produced. In doing so, you should further develop an interest in and appreciation for the medieval era and for its role in shaping many of the values we hold today. Through our study of Chaucer and related materials, this course will also allow you to continue establishing your own distinctive

approach to literary scholarship. As literature is a representation of reality, reading it requires you to interpret and to support your interpretation. Our discussions and written assignments will help you refine the critical reading, writing, and research skills essential not only to reading literature, but also to critical assessment and understanding in general. And, along the way, you'll get to enjoy some great reading! While we'll occasionally use short lectures, audio-visual aids, Blackboard postings, and presentations, our class will consist primarily of writing and discussion: *preparation and participation are, therefore, essential to the success of the class and to your success in it.*

Assignments, Exams, and Evaluation:

English 350 is an upper-level, major elective course; your work for the class should reflect deliberation and sophistication in thinking and writing. As assignments for the course, you will draft and revise one 15 page paper, make a brief oral presentation on your paper, and complete several quizzes and other shorter assignments. There will also be mid-term and final exams. Specific requirements for the assignments and exams will be discussed in advance of each. I encourage and expect you to consult with me throughout the course of your assignments. Draft workshops and individual conferences will help you strengthen your writing process. **I do not accept papers that have not been reviewed in the draft workshop process.** Drafts and papers are due in class on the due dates noted on the syllabus. **In addition to the final version of a paper, all preliminary drafts, notes, etc. are to be handed in; otherwise, the assignment is incomplete and will not be accepted. I do not accept or read late papers, except under very unusual circumstances.**

Weighting of assignments: The instructor will apply both quantitative and qualitative assessments in determining grades for assignments and for the course. Final grades calculated on 10-pt. scale: 90=A-, 80=B-, etc. Quizzes and Reading Responses - 20%; Midterm exam - 20%; Paper - 20%; Final exam - 25%; Oral Presentation on Paper - 5%; Informal Writing and Class Participation - 10%; and Individual Oral Reading - pass/fail. **You must complete all these requirements in order to be eligible to pass the course.**

Extra credit: Students may earn up to a total of three points of extra credit to be added at the end of the semester to their lowest assignment grade. Extra credit is earned through confirmed participation in various activities related to literature and writing. A student whose attendance is verified at a MCTC production or a MC poetry or fiction reading will earn one point for each activity. Attendance at performances and readings at other Lehigh Valley institutions may also be eligible for extra credit. Similarly, any student for whom submission of creative work to *Manuscript* or other literary journal is verified will earn one point. Also, any student for whom a session with the Writing Center is verified will earn one point. Total extra credit may not exceed three points.

Attendance and Participation:

Be here: I will take roll regularly. You are expected to attend each day. **Be prompt:** Class begins at 10:20 am sharp. **Be prepared:** Your first responsibility is to read carefully, re-read, and be prepared to discuss, both orally and in writing, all assignments. You should expect to devote several hours to preparing for each class. **Participate:** Classes become more meaningful the more you engage yourself in them. You are expected to read aloud and to make comments or ask questions on the readings and topics each day. I will not hesitate to call on you if you are not contributing. Class time allotted for group work, group discussion, draft feedback, etc. is instructional time; you are expected to remain focused on the assigned activity for all of the allotted time.

If you know you will be absent from class, please talk to me beforehand. If you are sick, please notify me as soon as possible. *Your absence from more than three classes may affect your final grade. Every three times you come to class late or leave early without talking to me first will also count as*

an unexcused absence. Missing more than five classes may result in your failing the course. If you are absent, it is wholly your responsibility to determine what was covered in class and what revisions, if any, were made to the syllabus in your absence.

One of the qualities I expect and appreciate most in students is **professionalism**. Students who exhibit this quality are alert, responsive, and tactful in class, turn in thoughtful assignments, meet deadlines, and keep me informed of any difficulties or successes they have while in my class.

Note: Please refrain from bringing food and drink into the classroom. Also, please turn off all cell phones and beepers before coming into the classroom. Please arrange to go to the restroom before or after class.

Office Hours:

Students are always welcome in my office. My office hours are times that I have set aside specifically to talk with you – not only about class and assignments, but also about life at Moravian, about something fun and exciting you've done, or whatever. Make use of them. I realize that for some of us my posted office hours just won't work, so I'm also available by appointment: jrb1@moravian.edu.

Other Resources:

- When working on written assignments, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the help available through appointment at the Writing Center (2nd fl, Zinzendorf). For more information, visit its website at: <http://home.moravian.edu/public/eng/wc.htm>
- Similarly, the librarians in Reeves are very resourceful. Make it a habit of consulting with them when research questions arise. The library webpage (<http://home.moravian.edu/public/reeves>) is an excellent resource, offering live online help and research guides.
- The Learning Services Office (1307 Main St., 861-1510) provides many services to help you achieve academic success: <http://home.moravian.edu/public/stusvc/learning/>
- Another important resource that provides help with the demands of college life is The Counseling Center (also at 1307 Main St., 861-1510): <http://home.moravian.edu/public/stusvc/counseling/>
- Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Office (1307 Main St., 861-1510) as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism, intentionally representing someone else's work as your own, is a breach of personal integrity and a violation of the College's Academic Honesty Policy: see pp. 54-59 in the *Student Handbook* or consult <http://www.moravian.edu/studentLife/handbook/academic2.htm>

Read this policy in its entirety. I take the provisions of the Academic Honesty Policy very seriously and am obliged to report any suspected cases of plagiarism, the consequences of which may be failure, suspension, or dismissal from the College. If you plagiarize, you will receive a 'zero' on the plagiarized assignment, which will very likely result in your failure for the course. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism will not be accepted as an excuse. If at any time you have any questions about documenting sources properly (MLA style) or as to whether or not the aid you are receiving is authorized, don't hesitate to ask me. The Reeves Library online research tutorial also addresses the issue:

<http://home.moravian.edu/public/reevestutorial/pages/index.htm>

English 350

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Jan.	17	T	Introduction; policies; syllabus; video – <i>Chaucer and Middle English</i> ; pronunciation and phonology of ME; IPA; resources
	19	Th	Chaucer’s life; canon and chronology; language and versification (xv-xliv); refer also to online resources regarding language and versification
	24	T	<i>Nun’s Priest’s Prologue and Tale</i> (252-261) [audio – cassette; excerpts online]; practice for translation, pronunciation; begin reading Bb articles on contexts
	26	Th	<i>Nun’s Priest’s Tale</i> (con’t); contexts – Ackerman: “Social and Religious Backgrounds” (Bb)
	31	T	<i>Nun’s Priest’s Tale</i> (con’t); contexts – Ackerman: “Popular Christian Doctrine” (Bb)
Feb.	2	Th	Contexts - Ackerman: “The World View of the Middle Ages” (Bb); Muscatine: “Chaucer’s Religion and the Chaucer Religion” (Bb)
	7	T	<i>The Book of the Duchess</i> (329-346)
	9	Th	<i>The House of Fame</i> (347-373) [audio – excerpt online]
	14	T	<i>The Parliament of Fowls</i> (383-394) [audio – excerpt online]
	16	Th	Exam ; group presentations assigned
	21	T	<i>The Canterbury Tales</i> – introduction (3-22); <i>The General Prologue</i> (23-36) [audio – cassette; excerpts online]; paper assigned ; writing rubric; discuss features of good writing
	23	Th	<i>General Prologue</i> (con’t); video – <i>Prologue to Chaucer</i>
	28	T	<i>Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale</i> (105-122) [audio – cassette; excerpts online]; individual oral readings in ME this week (TBA) ; begin reading assigned critical essay on <i>Wife of Bath</i> (Bb)
Mar.	2	Th	<i>Wife of Bath</i> (con’t); group presentations on critical essays
	7	T	No class – Spring Break
	9	Th	No class – Spring Break
	14	T	<i>Knight’s Tale</i> (37-66) [audio – excerpt online]; video – <i>From Every Shires Ende</i>

	16	Th	<i>Miller's Prologue and Tale (66-77)</i> [audio – online]; <i>Reeve's Prologue and Tale (77-84)</i> ; <i>Cook's Prologue and Tale (84-86)</i> ; <i>Introduction to Man of Law's Tale (87-89)</i>
	21	T	<i>Shipman's Tale (203-208)</i> ; <i>Prioress' Prologue and Tale (209-212)</i> ; <i>Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas (212-217)</i> ; <i>Monk's Prologue and Tale (240-252)</i> ; paper proposal due
	23	Th	Meet in Reeves – library instruction section; review assignment rubric and writing rubric; read sample paper in advance of class (Bb) ; critique sample paper in class
	28	T	<i>Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale (193-202)</i> [audio – cassette; excerpt online]; <i>Friar's Prologue and Tale (122-128)</i> ; <i>Summoner's Prologue and Tale (128-136)</i> ; review features of good writing
	30	Th	Draft workshop ; in-class activity on <i>CT</i> ; individual conferences (TBA)
Apr.	4	T	No class – All College Service Day
	6	Th	Paper due ; video – medieval England
	11	T	<i>Clerk's Prologue and Tale (137-153)</i> [audio - excerpt online] and <i>Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue (153-168)</i>
	13	Th	<i>Franklin's Prologue and Tale (178-189)</i> ; <i>Second Nun's Prologue and Tale (262-269)</i> ; <i>Manciple's Prologue and Tale (282-286)</i>
	18	T	<i>Parson's Prologue [audio – cassette] and Tale (287-327)</i> ; <i>Chaucer's 'Retraction' (328)</i> [audio– cassette]; review oral presentation skills
	20	Th	Oral presentations on papers
	25	T	Oral presentations on papers
	27	Th	Oral presentations on papers; discuss final exam; course review and evaluation

Final exams are scheduled for May 1-6. Plan accordingly.