

English 350 PM Chaucer

(Guidelines subject to change)

Spring 2008
Instructor: John Black
Classroom:
Class schedule: W 6:30-9:30

Email: jrb1@moravian.edu

Office: Zinzendorf 303
Office Hours: T 2:15-3:15, W 5:15-6:15
and by appointment
English Dept. Phone: 861-1390

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 Writing Center Writer's Handbook: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/>

Course Description, Objectives, and Format:

Welcome to English 350! This course is devoted 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.... 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." For our class, no previous knowledge of Middle English is assumed, so 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 reading 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 oral presentations on your paper and on other course materials, and complete several translation 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 as you plan and work on your assignments. A library research session, 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 - 10%; Group Presentation on Critical Theory - 10%; Mid-term exam - 20%; Paper - 20%; Oral Presentation on Paper - 5%; Final exam - 25%; 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.**

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance, preparation and participation are crucial, given the compactness of the evening schedule. Be here: You are expected to attend each class. **Be prompt:** Class begins at am 6:30pm 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. (A good rule of thumb for college courses is 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in 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. 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 one class may affect your final grade. Missing more than two 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.*

Other notes: 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. Please silence and put away all cell phones, pagers, etc. before coming into the classroom. Please arrange to go to the restroom before or after class, or during break.

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 schedules my posted office hours just won't work, so I'm also available by appointment: jrb1@moravian.edu.

Other Resources:

- With your work 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/writingCenter/appointments.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, 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. 26-31 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>

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Jan.	16	W	Introduction; policies; syllabus; video; Chaucer's life; canon and chronology of Chaucer's works; Middle English language, pronunciation, and versification; overview of resources for the study of Chaucer
	23	W	<i>Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale</i> (252-261) [audio – cassette; excerpts online]; practice for translation, pronunciation; review xxix-xxxviii; contexts – Ackerman: "Social and Religious Backgrounds" (Bb)
	30	W	<i>The Canterbury Tales</i> – introduction (3-22); <i>The General Prologue</i> (23-36) [audio – cassette; excerpts online]; review xxxviii-xliv; contexts – Ackerman: "Popular Christian Doctrine" (Bb); introduce group presentation assignment
Feb.	6	W	Read the following in translation, primarily for content (online; see Bb for urls): <i>The Book of the Duchess</i> (329-346), <i>The House of Fame</i> (347-373) [audio – excerpt online], and <i>The Parliament of Fowls</i> (383-394) [audio – excerpt online]
	13	W	<i>Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale</i> (105-122) [audio – cassette; excerpts online]; critical essays on <i>Wife of Bath</i> (Bb); group presentations on critical essays ; discuss mid-term exam
	20	W	<i>Knight's Tale</i> (37-66) [audio – excerpt online]; contexts - Ackerman: "The World View of the Middle Ages" (Bb); video
	27	W	Mid-term exam
Mar.	5	W	No class – Spring Break
	12	W	<i>Miller's Prologue and Tale</i> (66-77) [audio – online]; <i>Reeve's Prologue and Tale</i> (77-84); <i>Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue</i> (153-168); video
	19	W	<i>Prioress' Prologue and Tale</i> (209-212); <i>Monk's Prologue and Tale</i> (240-252); <i>Clerk's Prologue and Tale</i> (137-153) [audio - excerpt online]; video; Paper proposal due
	26	W	Library research session ; free time for work on papers
Apr.	2	W	<i>Friar's Prologue and Tale</i> (122-128); <i>Summoner's Prologue and Tale</i> (128-136); <i>Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale</i> (193-202) [audio – cassette; excerpt online]; contexts - Ackerman: "Chaucer, the Church, and Religion" (Bb); video; review oral presentation skills
	9	W	<i>Franklin's Prologue and Tale</i> (178-189); <i>Parson's Prologue</i> [audio – cassette] <i>and Tale</i> (287-327); <i>Chaucer's 'Retraction'</i> (328) [audio– cassette]; video; draft workshop for paper
	16	W	<i>Cook's Prologue and Tale</i> (84-86); 'Bethlehem Tales'; discuss final exam; course review and evaluation; Paper due; oral presentations on papers
	23	W	No class – in lieu of field trip (TBA)

Final exams are scheduled for Apr. 28-May 3. Plan accordingly.