

# English 350 PM Chaucer

(Guidelines subject to change)

Spring 2010  
Instructor: John Black  
Classroom: PPHAC 116  
Class schedule: W 6:30-9:30

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Office: Zinzendorf 303  
Office Hours: T 2:30-3:30, W 5:15-6:15,  
and by appointment  
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## Required texts:

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Ed. V. A. Kolve and G. Olson. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Norton, 2005. ("CT" on syllabus.)  
Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Dream Visions and Other Poems*. Ed. Kathryn L. Lynch. New York: Norton, 2007. ("DV" on syllabus.)  
Other selected materials, as posted to Blackboard ("Bb" on syllabus) or distributed in class.

## 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://academics.vmi.edu/english/audio/audio_index.html) and  
<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  
<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~amtower/texts.htm> (esp. for dream visions) and on other sites listed here

## 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 the language or the history of the Middle English period is assumed, so we will spend considerable time in the first few classes getting comfortable with the language and the cultural contexts for Chaucer's 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:

Quizzes.....	15%	Final exam.....	20%
Group Presentation on Critical Theory.....	10%	Informal Writing and Class Participation.....	15%
Mid-term exam.....	20%	Individual Oral Reading.....	pass/fail
Paper.....	20%		

The instructor will apply both quantitative and qualitative assessments in determining grades for assignments and for the course. Final grades are calculated on 10-pt. scale: 90=A-, 80=B-, etc.

**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. For example, a student whose attendance is verified at a MCTC production or at 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. One hundred points is the maximum total for 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 **personal integrity**. Students who exhibit this quality are ethical and honest, are engaged in class, turn in thoughtful assignments, are responsive to the world beyond themselves, meet deadlines, and keep me informed of any difficulties or successes they have while in my class. **Also:** 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: [jblack@moravian.edu](mailto:jblack@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 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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 who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support (1307 Main St., 861-1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Learning Services Office.

**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: consult the *Student Handbook* or consult <http://www.moravian.edu/studentLife/handbook/academic/academic2.html> and 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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(Syllabus subject to change)

Jan.	20	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
	27	W	Introduction (DV xvii-xx) and assigned section for comprehension from <i>The Book of the Duchess</i> (DV 3-37), <i>The House of Fame</i> (DV 39-92) [audio - excerpt online], or <i>The Parliament of Fowls</i> (DV 93-116) [audio - excerpt online]
Feb.	3	W	Introduction (CT xv-xix); <i>Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 269-284) [audio - cassette; excerpts online]; practice for translation, pronunciation; review Riverside xxix-xxxviii (Bb); contexts - Ackerman: "Social and Religious Backgrounds" (Bb); <b>introduce group presentation assignment</b>
	10	W	<i>The Canterbury Tales -The General Prologue</i> (CT 3-22) [audio - cassette; excerpts online]; review Riverside xxxviii-xliv (Bb); contexts - Ackerman: "Popular Christian Doctrine" (Bb); video; <b>introduce Paper assignment</b>
	17	W	<i>Knight's Tale</i> (CT 23-70) [audio - excerpt online]; contexts - Ackerman: "The World View of the Middle Ages" (Bb); video; in-class worktime on group presentations (time permitting); discuss mid-term exam
	24	W	<i>Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 102-130) [audio - excerpts online]; critical essays on <i>Wife of Bath</i> (Bb); <b>group presentations on critical essays</b>
Mar.	3	W	<b>Mid-term exam</b>
	10	W	<b>No class</b> - Spring Break
	17	W	<i>Miller's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 71-87) [audio - online]; <i>Reeve's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 88-98); <i>Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue</i> (CT 185-211); video
	24	W	<b>Library research session (meet in Reeves); paper proposal due</b> ; <i>Prioress' Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 248-254); <i>Clerk's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 154-184) [audio - excerpt online]; <i>Franklin's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 212-32)
	31	W	<i>Friar's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 131-139); <i>Summoner's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 140-154); <i>Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale</i> (CT 233-247) [audio - cassette; excerpt online]; contexts - Ackerman: "Chaucer, the Church, and Religion" (Bb); video; review oral presentation skills
Apr.	7	W	<i>Manciple's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 285-292); from <i>Parson's Prologue</i> [audio - cassette] <i>and Tale</i> (CT 203-305); <i>Chaucer's Retraction</i> (CT 306) [audio- cassette]; video; <b>draft workshop for paper</b>
	11	Sun.	Field Trip - tour of the medieval collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art
	14	W	<i>Cook's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 99-101); introduce and work on 'Bethlehem Tales'; individual oral reading
	21	W	<b>Presentation of 'Bethlehem Tales'</b> ; discuss final exam
	28	W	<b>Paper due; oral presentations on papers</b> ; course review and evaluation

**The final exam is scheduled for Wed. May 5 at 6:30pm in PPHAC 116. Plan accordingly.**