

# ENGLISH 4000-01W: MEDIEVAL BRITISH LITERATURE

Spring 2018 \* T/Th 3:30-4:45 \* PAF 308

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Office Hours: M: 11-1 online; T: 10-10:55 and 2:20-3:20; Th: 10-10:55 and 4:50-6; or by appt.



## ***Course Description***

Vikings? Check. Chivalry? For sure. Perilous travels abroad? You bet. Fart jokes? But of course. Welcome to medieval Britain! In this course we will read widely in the diverse genres, subjects, and linguistic traditions associated with the roughly thousand-year period of literary history commonly referred to as the Middle Ages. More specifically, we will consider the broader social and cultural implications of the period's status as a "middle" age by paying careful attention to what, if anything, the texts characterized as "medieval" have in common with each other as well as with literatures of other eras, including our own.

## ***Course Objectives and Program Goals***

The English Department has a commitment to writing instruction and revision in all of our classes. According to the revised English Program Learning Outcomes, students in this course will be able to:

- Understand and assess the traditions, conventions, and contexts associated with the study of the English language and its literatures within the Middle Ages.
- Apply critical thinking skills to the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information and ideas from diverse oral, written, and/or visual sources.
- Conduct research, develop organizational strategies, and compose professional documents using the academic conventions of English Studies as a discipline.

### ***Required Texts***

*The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Medieval Period* (Vol. 1). Ed. Joseph Black, et al. 3rd ed. (9781554812028)

\*\*\*Supplementary readings are available online or via CourseDen\*\*\*

### ***Required Work***

Fuller descriptions of your formal assignments and study guides for your exams will be posted to CourseDen.

- *Daily Participation* (15%): You are expected to not only do the assigned readings, but also to come to class prepared to discuss said readings. This does not mean that you have to have everything “figured out” ahead of time; questions and clarifications are perfectly reasonable ways to contribute to class discussions, though you need to make an effort to share your opinions and insights too if you want higher than a “C” in this component of your grade. Challenge yourself to talk at least once a week if not once a class. Bringing both the texts we’ll be discussing and the notes you took while reading those texts to class is a good starting point for being prepared for class discussions. If I get the sense that you are not reading, I will incorporate reading quizzes into this component of your grade. I will post your participation grade twice: around midterm and at the end of the semester.
- *Middle English Recitation* (5%): You will be responsible for preparing and reading a passage of around 25-30 lines from one of the texts we read in Middle English. You can either record yourself reading or come to read during my office hours, whichever is easiest and most comfortable for you. We will discuss the variety of online resources available to assist you in this endeavor during the first few weeks of class, and will also practice reading Middle English aloud together at several points during the semester.
- *Analytical Paper* (20%): a 4 to 5 page paper focusing on the close, analytical reading of a text or texts from the first half of the semester. I will give you a list of suggested topics. Alternatively, you may adapt one these or propose a topic of your own in consultation with me.
- *Getting Medieval Presentation* (15%): Working with a group of your peers, you will design a thirty-minute presentation on one of the topics outlined by the reading schedule below. Your primary goal is to shed additional light on the texts and themes that we have been discussing as a class by explicating their historical contexts as well as their connections to the present in more detail.
- *Term Paper* (30%): a 7 to 8 page research paper about a well-constructed subject related to the course topic and chosen in consultation with me. As part of this assignment, you will submit a proposal and annotated bibliography for your paper, which is worth 5% of the overall grade.
- *Final Exam* (15%): cumulative, writing intensive exam covering class readings, discussions, lectures, etc.

### ***Attendance***

You are expected to attend class daily and be on time. I take roll by asking the class a specific “attendance question”; if you show up after I am done with roll you will be considered late. You may miss three classes with no questions asked. Absences four and five will result in your final grade dropping by two percentage points each. Six or more absences will result in you not passing this class. Three late arrivals count as one absence. Leaving class early without

permission also counts as an absence. If you are asked to leave class for any reason, that too will count as an absence. Should you miss a class at any point in the semester, it is your responsibility to talk to your peers to figure out what you missed. In-class work cannot be made up except for cases of documented emergency and missing multiple in-class discussions will negatively impact your participation grade.

### ***Deadlines and Submitting Assignments***

All of your work is due on the days and times indicated by the schedule below. You will submit your work electronically via CourseDen (or email if there happens to be server trouble). Your grade will drop by two grade scales (4 points) for every day that it is late, including weekends. If you are going to be absent the day that something is due, it remains your responsibility to make sure that your work is turned in on time. Failure to do so will result in your grade dropping. If you are having trouble with an assignment, come and talk to me **well ahead** of that assignment's due date; I do not grant last minute extensions for assignments nor can I be of much help the night before an assignment is due, but I am happy to do everything in my power to help you produce work that you are proud of. It is your responsibility to regularly back up your work and to ensure that the submitted product is formatted correctly. "My computer ate my file" and "I thought I uploaded the file" are not accepted excuses for late work, so I strongly suggest you save your work to a USB drive regularly (backing your work up on Google Drive or another cloud service might also be advisable) and double check that ALL of your submissions to CourseDen go through as planned. If you have questions or concerns about CourseDen, you should contact the Distance Learning office (<http://uwgonline.westga.edu/>) directly.

### ***Grading and Revision Policies***

Grades are based on student performance on each assignment. Simply turning in every assignment does not guarantee that you will receive the grade you want on those assignments, nor does earning a "good" grade on one assignment guarantee that you will earn a similar grade on the next assignment. The grading scale and standards I use are detailed in the "Grading Scale and Guidelines for Formal Assignments" document on CourseDen. I do not offer extra credit for this class. I do accept revisions of analytical papers **if you meet with me** to discuss your plans for revision **within a week** of me handing the graded paper back to you. You should come to this meeting with your **revision plan/goals typed up or written out**. Revised papers do not necessarily earn higher grades, but I do guarantee that your grade will not drop in any way should you decide to attempt a revision. If you are revising a paper that was penalized for plagiarism, your old grade and your new grade will be averaged to determine the final grade that you will receive. Any late penalties associated with the original assignment will also be applied to your revision.

### ***University Policies and Student Rights/Responsibilities***

Please carefully review the following Common Language for all university course syllabi: [https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/assets/docs/facultyresources/common\\_language\\_for\\_course\\_syllabi\\_v2.pdf](https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/assets/docs/facultyresources/common_language_for_course_syllabi_v2.pdf). It contains important material pertaining to university policies and responsibilities. These statements are updated as federal, state, university, and accreditation standards change, so you should review the information each semester.

### ***Academic Honesty***

The act of plagiarism—claiming someone else’s ideas, language, images, or other original materials as your own without giving full credit to your source—is a serious offense. As members of an academic community, it is important that we engage in responsible and honest communication with one another. Plagiarism, whether accidental or intentional, will result in a failing grade for assignment and will, as a result, negatively impact your overall grade. Repeat offenders will fail the course and might be subjected to additional action by the University.

If you are unclear about how to cite a source, ask me **before** you turn your work in. Sources you should consult before talking to me include:

- The department's website: <http://www.westga.edu/%7Eengdept/Plagiarism/index.html>
- The writing center’s site: <https://www.westga.edu/academics/coah/writing>
- The Bedford/St. Martin student site:  
[http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting2e/#t\\_526483](http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting2e/#t_526483)
- The research and citation section of Purdue’s online writing lab:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Submitting someone else's work as your own, resubmitting your own work done for another class, or collaborating with peers on individual assignments are also forms of academic dishonesty that will result in failing grades for the assignment in question.

### ***Accessibility Services***

UWG adheres to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that accommodations be made to make programs accessible for people with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability, please make sure to register at the Accessibility Services Office and provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Request as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services Office is located at 123 Row Hall. You may call them at 678-839-6428 or visit their website at <http://www.westga.edu/counseling/4486.php>.

### ***Classroom Environment***

Since everyone is expected to participate in class, it is important that you all feel comfortable doing so. Some of the content we will be discussing involves topics or perspectives with which you might not agree or feel wholly comfortable, and that is okay. Differing viewpoints are welcome in class discussions; however, disrespectful comments against specific individuals or groups will not be tolerated under any circumstances. In the event that such a statement is made, the speaker will be asked to leave class immediately and will be marked absent for the day. Disagreeing with someone is one thing, disrespecting or attacking him or her is another—do not do it. On a related note, it is disrespectful to both me and your fellow classmates to let your cell phones ring during our time together, so please turn off your phones before class. Other portable electronics should, likewise, be turned off during class unless you are given permission to use them for a specific purpose. If I see you text messaging, emailing, checking facebook, or doing work for another class, I will ask you to leave and mark you as absent.

### ***Additional Help***

I am always happy to meet with you outside of class to discuss readings, your progress in the class, or any other questions/concerns/ideas you might have. I will be in my office during the office hours listed at the top of this syllabus. (On the occasion that I need to reschedule office

hours, you will be given as much advanced notice about these changes as possible.) If you are unable to come to office hours, let me know and will figure out another time to meet that is convenient for us both. I am also happy to answer specific questions over email and will do so as quickly as I can. That said, please do not panic if you do not hear from me right away, especially if you send your email at, say, midnight. If, however, I have not responded in 24 hours, feel free to send a follow up email.

The University Writing Center is another excellent resource that I encourage you to take advantage of as all writing benefits from multiple sets of eyes; indeed, professional writers workshop their pieces all of the time. You may go to the Writing Center at any stage in your writing process. For more information or to make an appointment, call 678-839-6513, visit TLC 1201, or email [writing@westga.edu](mailto:writing@westga.edu).

### ***UWG Cares***

College can sometimes feel stressful. Please know that everyone at UWG is committed to supporting you to the best of our abilities; we have been in your shoes. If at any point during the semester you or someone you know starts to feel overwhelmed, I would encourage you to call the Counseling Center (it is free and anything you discuss can remain confidential) at 678-839-6428. If you need me to help you find a particular support service or walk with you to an office, I am happy to do that; you need to know, however, that I am legally obligated to report any incident of sexual assault. If you are worried about someone who does not seem to want to ask for help, visit <http://www.westga.edu/uwgcares/> to file an anonymous report on that person. In case of emergency, do not be afraid to call national help lines, like the national suicide prevention lifeline at 800-273-8255 or the national sexual assault hotline at 800-656-4673.

### ***Schedule of Readings and Assignments (due the date on they are listed)***

This syllabus is a general plan for the course and might be modified as the semester progresses to meet course objectives and address the needs of the class. Most (if not all) of the changes made will be in consultation with the class as a whole. I will announce any changes made in class before sending an updated syllabus. Unless otherwise noted, you are to read the **entire** named section in the Broadview anthology, **including the introductions**. Readings from online sources or e-reserves are marked as such.

#### **Week One: Introductions**

Jan. 9	Course overview: establishing expectations. Historical overview: defining medieval. <b><i>Email me your top three choices for Getting Medieval by midnight tonight</i></b>
Jan. 11	Anglo-Saxon Britain and Old English: Heroic Immortality. <b><i>Homework due:</i></b> “The Medieval Period” (xxxiii-xlvi—stop at “After the Norman Conquest”—and lxx—start at “Language and Prosody”—to end); “The Battle of Maldon”; “Battle of Brunanburg”; “The Story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard” (“B” from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle)

#### **Week Two: Anglo-Saxon Community—Heroic and Christian Ideals**

Jan. 16	Christian Eternity. <b><i>Homework due:</i></b> Bede, from <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> ; Exeter Book Elegies; “The Dream of the Rood”; “Judith”
Jan. 18	Epic origin stories <b><i>Homework due:</i></b> <i>Beowulf</i> (to page 86—stop before section 19)

**Week Three: Britain's Continental Past—From Anglo-Saxon to Anglo-Norman (or the French Arrive!)**

Jan. 23	<b>Getting Medieval: Pagan and Christian worldviews</b> Old English as a cultural phenomenon, or giving Latin a run for its money. <i>Homework due:</i> Finish <i>Beowulf</i>
Jan. 25	Anglo-Norman Britain. <i>Homework due:</i> “The Medieval Period” (xlvi-lx—skip “Wales, Scotland, Ireland” and stop at “Cultural Expression in the Fourteenth Century”); Geoffrey of Monmouth, the <i>History of the Kings of Britain</i> (skip book two); Thomas of England, <i>Le Roman de Tristan</i> (e-reserve); Marie de France, “Bisclavret,” “Lanval,” and “Chevrefoil”

**Week Four: The Rise of Middle English and the Birth of Romance**

Jan. 30	Adapting and translating French. Introduce Analytical Paper. <i>Homework due:</i> “Sir Orfeo”
Feb. 1	The Matter of England. <i>Homework due:</i> <i>Athelston</i> ( <a href="http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-athelston">http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-athelston</a> )

**Week Five: From Folk Hero to Chivalric Knight**

Feb. 6	Formulaic style and thematic variety. <i>Homework due:</i> “The Medieval Period” lx-lxiii (stop at “Fifteenth-Century Transitions”); <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> Fitts One and Two
Feb. 8	<b>Getting Medieval: Differing Approaches to Romance</b> <i>Homework due:</i> finish <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>

**Week Six: The Layperson Speaks**

Feb. 13	Female voices. <i>Homework due:</i> Kempe, <i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i> (Proem, Preface, chapters 1-3, 11, 51-55 and 86); Norwich, <i>A Revelation of Love</i> (chapters 1-3, 5, 7, 11, 50-51, and 86)
Feb. 15	Male voices. <i>Homework due:</i> Langland, <i>Piers Plowman</i> Prologue (Broadview) and excerpts from Passus 5 (e-reserve “Langland, Piers Plowman 3”); Gower, lines 1-288 from Book 1 of <i>Confessio Amantis</i> (e-reserve: “Vol. 1 Gower Contexts,” pp. 8-12; read introduction on pp. 1-3, too)

**Week Seven: Traveling in England**

Feb. 20	Writing Workshop: articulating and developing an argument. <b>Bring a copy of your draft to class.</b>
Feb. 22	Father of English literature? <i>Homework due:</i> General Prologue to <i>Canterbury Tales</i> <b>Analytical Papers due by noon tomorrow (2/23).</b>

**Week Eight: Traveling in England Cont'd**

Feb. 27	<b>Getting Medieval: social interaction/social order.</b> <i>Homework due:</i> Chaucer, The Miller's Prologue and Tale <b>Last day to withdraw from class with a “W” is 2/28 (tomorrow).</b>
Mar. 1	Non-normative identities. <i>Homework due:</i> Chaucer, The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

**Week Nine: Traveling in England Cont'd**

Mar. 6	<b>Getting Medieval: misogyny and the feminine voice</b> <i>Homework due:</i> Chaucer, The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale
Mar. 8	Unfinished or unfinishable? <i>Homework due:</i> Chaucer, The Prioress's Prologue and Tale; Chaucer's Retraction

**Week Ten: Traveling Beyond England**

Mar. 13	Crossing the borders of time and space. <i>Homework due: The Travels of John Mandeville; Margery Kempe in Jerusalem (e-reserve)</i>
Mar. 15	<b><i>Getting Medieval: encountering non-British people and places</i></b> <i>Homework due: The Voyage of Saint Brendan (e-reserve); The Vision of Tundale, lines 1-310; (<a href="http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/foster-three-purgatory-poems-vision-of-tundale">http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/foster-three-purgatory-poems-vision-of-tundale</a>)</i>

**Week Eleven: Break**

Mar. 20	No class: spring break.
Mar. 22	No class: spring break.

**Week Twelve: Celtic Borderlands**

Mar. 27	Welsh, Irish, and Scottish perspectives. Introduce Term Paper Requirements. <i>Homework due: "Medieval Period" (liv-lv—stop at "The Thirteenth Century"); Y Goddoddin; First and Second Branches of the Mabinogi; "Cúchulainn's Boyhood Deeds" (e-reserve)</i>
Mar. 29	Online class: see CourseDen. <i>Homework due: Henryson, "Prolog," "Tail of the Cok and the Jasp" and "Tail of the Lyoun and the Mous" from Morall Fabillis (e-reserve: "Robert Henryson" supplement, pp. 1-15)</i>

**Week Thirteen: Performing Community**

Apr. 3	No class: Scholar's Day. <b><i>Last day to complete Middle English recitations is today by midnight.</i></b>
Apr. 5	Dramatizing belief. <i>Homework due: Mankind</i> <b><i>Term Paper Proposals and Annotated Bibliographies due by noon tomorrow (4/6).</i></b>

**Week Fourteen: Performing Community Cont'd**

Apr. 10	<b><i>Getting Medieval: the sacred and the profane.</i></b> York "The Crucifixion"; Wakefield <i>Second Shepherds' Play</i>
Apr. 12	Workshop: working with sources

**Week Fifteen: The End of an Era?**

Apr. 17	Civil War and Political Nostalgia. <i>Homework due: "The Medieval Period" lxiii-lxv—stop at "Language and Prosody"; Malory, Morte Darthur (Book 8); Caxton's Preface (Morte in Context)</i>
Apr. 19	Workshop: TBD by class.

**Week Sixteen: Conclusions**

Apr. 24	Peer review of Term Papers: <b><i>bring a printed copy of your draft to class.</i></b>
Apr. 26	Final Exam Review/Course Evaluations. <b><i>Term Papers due by midnight tomorrow, April 27<sup>th</sup>.</i></b>

**Final Exam: Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2-4 pm.**