

# English 4110-01W: Medieval British Literature

Fall 2015 \*M/W 9:30-10:50 \* HUM 206

Dr. Leah Haught

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Office Hours: M/W 3:30-5:30; Th 11:30-3:30; alternate/virtual meetings available by appt.



## ***Course Description***

Exactly what period of literary history is best described by the adjective “medieval” remains the subject of considerable debate within certain scholarly circles. “Medieval” is derived from the Latin *medium aevum*, meaning “Middle Age.” An important question, then, becomes precisely what the middle in this title refers to. When does this period of “middleness” begin and end? What, if anything, do the texts characterized as “medieval” have in common beyond that label? Within Britain, the roughly thousand year period typically referred to as the Middle Ages was inherently multicultural, witnessing a series of invasions and migrations that brought Celts, Romans, Vikings, Angles, Saxons, and French—among others—into contact with one another. Consequently, medieval literature written in Britain includes texts composed in Old and Middle English, yes, but also Latin, French, Irish, Scots, and Welsh. In this course, we will consider the broader social and cultural implications of Britain's multicultural Middle Ages by reading texts from a wide variety of literary traditions deemed “medieval” and composed by “British” authors or scribes. Most Middle English texts will be read in the original language; texts in other languages will be read in translation.

## ***Course Objectives***

- Students will develop the ability to understand, analyze, and critique selections of medieval literature in order to gain familiarity with the content and defining qualities of the period.

- Students will gain an understanding of the interrelationship between medieval texts and their cultural milieu.
- Students will recognize theoretical and critical approaches to the analysis of medieval literature.
- Students will demonstrate in both oral and written work a discipline-specific critical facility through convincing and well-supported analysis of related material.
- Students will demonstrate their command of academic English and the tenets of sound composition by means of thesis-driven analytical prose.
- Students will learn to use discipline-specific computer technologies related to the study of language such as listservs, word processing, and internet research.

### ***Required Texts***

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

*The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100-1500*. Ed. Larry Scanlon. (9780521602587)

*King Horn* (<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-king-horn-introduction> and <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-king-horn>)

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

### ***Required Work***

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

- *Daily Participation* (15%): You are expected to come to class not only having read the assigned materials, but also being prepared to talk about them in detail. 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. To that end, you should bring the assigned texts to class on the day they are being discussed. You should also bring any notes you took while reading, and you should take notes during class discussions. If I get the sense that the class as a whole is not doing the reading, quizzes or other forms of graded work will be assigned.
- *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 Essay* (20%): 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 in more detail. In other words, you will be deeply engaged with the questions of what makes your particular topic both important and “medieval” as well as how we “moderns” might find meaning in the past. An effective visual aid should accompany these presentations.
- *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. 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 effect 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 one-third 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 by one-third. 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. 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/>).

### ***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. 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.

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

Please carefully review the following Common Language for all university course syllabi: [http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common\\_Language\\_for\\_Course\\_Syllabi.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf). It contains important material pertaining to university policies and responsibilities. Because these statements are updated as federal, state, university and accreditation standards change, 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 Bedford/St. Martin student site: [http://bes.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting2e/#t\\_526483](http://bes.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 project. 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 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 we'll 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 don't panic if you don't hear from me right away, especially if you send your email at, say, midnight. If, however, I haven't 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).

***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 the Cambridge companion are marked as such.

**Week One: Introductions**

Aug. 24	Historical overview: defining medieval. Course overview: establishing expectations.
Aug. 26	<b><i>Top three choices for Getting Medieval topics due.</i></b> Anglo-Saxon Britain and Old English. <i>Readings:</i> “The Medieval Period” (xxxiii-xlvi—stop at “After the Norman Conquest”—and lxx—start at “Language and Prosody”—to end ); Bede, from <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> ; Exeter Book Elegies; and select Exeter Book Riddles (1-3, 26, 44-45, 95). <b><i>Drop period with refund ends</i></b>

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

Aug. 31	Christian eternity. <i>Readings:</i> “The Dream of the Rood”; “The Cotton Maxims”; “Judith”; and “Exodus”
Sept. 2	Heroic immortality. <i>Readings:</i> “The Battle of Maldon”; “Battle of Brunanburg”; “The Story of

	Cynewulf and Cyneheard” (“B” from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle)
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**Week Three: Britain’s Continental Past**

Sept. 7	No class: Labor Day.
Sept. 9	<b>Getting Medieval: Pagan and Christian worldviews</b> <i>Readings:</i> <i>Beowulf</i> (to page 98—stop before section 32); O'Brien O'Keefe, “Values and Ethics in Heroic Literature” (e-reserve)

**Week Four: From Anglo-Saxon to Anglo-Norman (or the French Arrive!)**

Sept. 14	Giving Latin a run for its money. <i>Readings:</i> Finish <i>Beowulf</i> ; Alfred's “Preface” to <i>Pastoral Care</i>
Sept. 16	Anglo-Norman England. <i>Readings:</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> ; Wace, <i>Roman de Brut</i> (e-reserve); Layamon, <i>Brut</i> (e-reserve); Thomas of England, <i>Le Roman de Tristan</i> (e-reserve); Marie de France, “Bisclavret,” “Lanval,” and “Chevrefoil”

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

Sept. 21	Adapting and translating French. <i>Readings:</i> “Sir Orfeo”; Scase, “Re-inventing the vernacular: Middle English language and its literature” (Cambridge, pp. 11-23)
Sept. 23	The Matter of England. <i>Readings:</i> <i>King Horn</i> , Introduction and lines 1-764 (see links under required texts above).

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

Sept. 28	Formulaic style and thematic variety. <i>Readings:</i> Finish <i>King Horn</i> ; Chism, “Romance” (Cambridge, pp 57-69)
Sept. 30	<b>Getting Medieval: Differing Approaches to Romance</b> <i>Readings:</i> “The Medieval Period” lx-lxiii (stop at “Fifteenth-Century Transitions”); <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>

**Week Seven: The Layperson Speaks**

Oct. 5	Male voices. <i>Readings:</i> Langland, <i>Piers Plowman</i> Prologue and Passus 18; Gower, lines 1-332 from Book 1 of <i>Confessio Amantis</i> (e-reserve: “Vol 1 Gower Contexts” supplement, pp. 8-12; read introduction to Gower pp. 1-3 too); Kruger, “The uses of Middle English debate/dialogue and dream” (Cambridge, pp. 78-82 of “Dialogue, debate, and dream vision”)
Oct. 7	<b>Analytical Essay due by midnight tonight.</b> Female voices. <i>Readings:</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)

**Week Eight: Traveling in England**

Oct. 12	<b>Getting Medieval: social interaction/social order</b> <i>Readings:</i> General Prologue to <i>Canterbury Tales</i> ; Scanlon, “Geoffrey Chaucer” (Cambridge, pp.172-78—starting with “Chaucer began work...”)
Oct. 14	Father of English literature? <i>Readings:</i> Chaucer, Miller's Prologue and Tale; excerpt from <i>The Testimony of</i>

	<i>William Thorpe</i> (e-reserve: “Vol 1 Chaucer Contexts” supplement, pp.1-4) <b>Drop period with “W” ends</b>
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**Week Nine: Traveling in England, Cont'd**

Oct. 19	<b>Getting Medieval: misogyny and the feminine voice</b> <i>Readings:</i> Chaucer, The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale
Oct. 21	Unfinished or unfinishable? <i>Readings:</i> Chaucer, The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale and “Retraction”; “Pardoners and Indulgences” and “An Exemplum” (“Vol 1 Chaucer Contexts” supplement, pp. 15-17—stop before Boccaccio)

**Week Ten: Traveling Beyond England**

Oct. 26	Crossing the borders of time and space <i>Readings:</i> <i>The Travels of John Mandeville</i> ; Davenport, “Voyages and otherworld journeys” (e-reserve)
Oct. 28	<b>Getting Medieval: encountering non-British people and places</b> <i>Readings:</i> <i>The Voyage of Saint Brendan</i> (e-reserve); Margery Kempe in Jerusalem (e-reserve); <i>The Vision of Tundale</i> , 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> )

**Week Eleven: Celtic Borderlands**

Nov. 2	Welsh perspectives. <i>Readings:</i> “Medieval Period” (liv-lv—stop at “The Thirteenth Century”); <i>Y Goddoddin</i> ; First and Second Branches of the <i>Mabinogi</i> ; Dumville, “Celtic Visions of England” (e-reserve)
Nov. 4	Irish and Scottish perspectives. <i>Readings:</i> Early Irish Lyrics; “Cúchulainn's Boyhood Deeds” (e-reserve); Henryson, “Prolog,” “Taill of the Cok and the Jasp” and “Taill of the Lyoun and the Mous” from <i>Morall Fabillis</i> (e-reserve: “Robert Henryson” supplement, pp. 1-15); James I, <i>Kingis Quair</i> (e-reserve: “Scottish Makars” supplement,” pp. 1-5)

**Week Twelve: Performing Community**

Nov. 9	Dramatizing belief. <i>Readings:</i> <i>Mankind</i> ; Beckwith, “Drama” (Cambridge pp. 83-92, skip “Chester Plays”)
Nov. 11	<b>Getting Medieval: the sacred and the profane</b> <i>Readings:</i> York “The Crucifixion”; Wakefield <i>Second Shepherds' Play</i> and Bible source material <b>Last day to complete Middle English recitations</b>

**Week Thirteen: End of an Era?**

Nov. 16	Civil war and political nostalgia. <i>Readings:</i> “The Medieval Period” lxiii-lxv—stop at “Language and Prosody”; Malory, <i>Morte Darthur</i> (Book 8); Caxton's Preface ( <i>Morte</i> in Context)
Nov. 18	<b>Proposals and Annotated Bibliographies due</b> Workshop on integrating sources.

**Week Fourteen: Break**

Nov. 23	No class: Thanksgiving Recess.
Nov. 25	No class: Thanksgiving Recess.

**Week Fifteen: Conclusions**

Nov. 30	Workshop organization/revision of term papers.
Dec. 2	Final Exam Review. <i>Term papers due by noon on Friday, December 4th</i>

**Final Exam: Wednesday, December 9, 8-10:30 a.m.**