English 4305: Chaucer

English 4305
Chaucer
CRN 20240
Spring 2008
TTH, 9:40-11:07
L 162

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Office hours: MW 11:45-12:45; TTH 11:15-12:15
and by appointment

Chaucer Links

Vocabulary Words

Course Description

English 4305 affords us a rare opportunity to study the work of the greatest writer of Middle English and the so-called father of English poetry, Geoffrey Chaucer. Most of the semester will be spent on The Canterbury Tales, both the frequently anthologized pieces thereof and the too easily dismissed ones. We’ll read these in the original Middle English so we can experience, first hand, Chaucer’s philosophic and linguistic subtleties (and his dirty jokes). This will be demanding, and so a big part of your life over the next semester must become Chaucer studies. I will be available to help you through, as will scholars on the web, such as Larry Benson, whose Chaucer site is unmatched and to which I’ll refer you frequently. We’ll go slowly at first, as you become accustomed to Chaucer’s language. It will be worth it, though; the guy’s hilarious!

Course Objectives

- To gain factual knowledge about Chaucer, his world, his poetry
- To gain an appreciation of medieval language and literature by studying Chaucer’s work in the original Middle English
- To learn some of the fundamental principles, theories, and generic commonplaces of medieval literature
• To develop skills in verbal analysis, critical thinking, and detection of subtlety through reading, discussing, and writing about some tricky literature

• To hone and utilize research and writing skills to conceive and implement a research project of considerable magnitude

Required Materials


Grade Breakdown

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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We will use the optional plus minus system for grades. Letter grades correspond to numerical values in accordance with the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-90</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>67-62</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>61-60</td>
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<td>&lt; 60</td>
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Please note: I will not allow you to go Credit/No Credit after census day (3-11); Also, I will not sign a withdrawal form after week 10.

Explanation of Course Content

*Exams:* There will be two exams in this class. One is scheduled for April 3rd; the other, a comprehensive final, will be held during finals week on May 27th. You will be expected to have read the assigned material in the original language, so material on the tests will be in Middle English, at least insofar as *The Canterbury Tales* are concerned. Exams may consist of any combination of identification questions, short-answer questions, and essays. I will not give make-up exams.

*Presentation:* In the second or third week of class I will ask for groups of three to sign-up for oral presentations to the class. Each group must present for fifteen minutes on a given pilgrim and tale. The presentation may be dramatic, didactic, interpretive, and/or interactive. Each
group member, however, must recite at least 10-20 lines of Chaucer’s Middle English to the class, and each group member must hand in 1) a one-page assessment and analysis of the presentation and 2) a one-page annotated bibliography consisting of three-five sources. See the link below for more information.

**Oral Report and Write-up**

**Schedule of Presentations**

*Projects:* One of the goals of this course is that you improve your skills in critical analysis by articulating your original insights and by organizing and polishing formal presentations of them. To meet this goal, you must either prepare two distinct projects for this class or one long project. If you choose to do two shorter projects, one must be equivalent in scope and grunt-work to a four-page essay; the second project must approximate a minimum seven-page manuscript. If you choose one longer project, you must submit your notes and your work-in-progress on the due date for assignment 1. The project approach allows you to create and package your scholarship in either traditional or new and creative ways. For more information, click on the links below.

**Project 1**

**Project 2**

*Quizzes:* I will frequently quiz you or ask for brief bits of in-class writing; these will receive numerical grades. I may quiz you on vocabulary, on the tale due on any given day, or on reading you were asked to do for class. These quizzes cannot be made-up, but I will give you opportunities to earn extra quiz points during the semester.

*Class Participation:* An average participation grade indicates that you are present, prompt, and prepared for class. A superior grade in this area indicates that you offer constructive, thoughtful feedback and respect others and their opinions. Serious participation in group and class projects, effort, and classroom demeanor also play a part in your participation grade. Note that an above average grade in this area is not automatic; you must earn a good participation grade through honest effort and serious input. If you are shy or otherwise unwilling or unable to offer feedback in class, explain your difficulties to me and offer feedback during my office hours.

Closely tied to the concept of class participation is *classroom decorum:* what is appropriate behavior in a college classroom? For starters, each student must be completely prepared with all assigned reading and must undertake an active, responsible role in all classroom activities. The score you receive for class participation is not awarded simply for attendance. Each student must earn it by contributing to the exchange of ideas upon which every successful course depends. Here are some behavioral guidelines: don’t talk disruptively, especially when others are talking. Have your textbook with you every class, and have it on your desk and opened to the relevant pages. Don’t read the paper or do work for other courses in class. Falling asleep in class is the height of rudeness. Don’t behave as if I’m on television and I can’t see or hear you. Also, turn off and put away all cell phones and PDAs before class begins. I don’t
want you texting or fooling with any sort of technology during class time. This includes laptops.

Rules and Regulations

Attendance and Tardiness: You should attend every class meeting. I will take attendance during the first five minutes of class each day. Anyone not present during roll will be marked absent. If you are late and miss roll, it is up to you to see that I correct the roll that same day; failure to do so means the absence is permanent. If tardiness becomes excessive, I reserve the right to treat a tardy as an absence. Each student is allowed two absences without penalty. For each subsequent absence, 2 percentage points will be deducted from your final semester grade. Further, you are responsible for keeping up with the syllabus during any absence. Finally, if your absences exceed 8, you will fail this course. I value your presence in class, so please come.

Late Work: For the purposes of this class, late means late. All work is due at the beginning of class on the due date. Missing class or coming late on the day an assignment is due in no way excuses you from submitting work on time. I will not accept late work without having given prior permission. Please make every attempt to contact me if something goes wrong, and the sooner the better—preferably, I’d like to know about any problems a day in advance.

Academic Honesty: You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is and avoiding it. This, and any other form of cheating, such as downloading or buying papers off the internet, having someone else write a paper for you, having Gertrude, who happens to be your mother-in-law and a graduate student at UC Davis, “edit” your essay for you, etc., can’t be tolerated in college. Copying from another person’s test paper or other forms of cheating on in-class written assignments is just as egregious. Your integrity, as well as that of the entire academic community, is at stake. Please make sure all work is original, individual, and done specifically for this class. The English Department’s policy on plagiarism is as follows:

Academic honesty is an important principle to ensure that all authors, including students, are acknowledged for their original expressions of ideas.

Instructors have a responsibility to demonstrate to students in their courses the difference in acceptable and unacceptable use of others’ work. Students have a responsibility to ask their instructor for guidance whenever they are uncertain about fair use of someone else’s work.

Students, in submitting work, certify that the work is their own original work except that all information garnered from others whether quoted, summarized, or paraphrased has been appropriately cited. Dishonesty by failing to acknowledge the work of others constitutes plagiarism and is a serious offense. Normally, the penalty for plagiarism is failure in the course. More serious penalties may also be invoked.*

In cases of plagiarism instructors should also submit the Student Discipline: Academic Dishonesty Incident Report Form to the Coordinator of Student Discipline for tracking or for disciplinary investigation. http://www.csustan.edu/english/dept/AcademicDishonestyIncident.pdf
Click on the URL below to read the text of the above policy:
http://www.csustan.edu/english/dept/plagiarism.html in their syllabi.

*Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Section 41301 notes that students may be “expelled, suspended, placed on probation, or given a lesser sanction for one or more of the following causes which must be campus related: 1. Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus. . . .” (see Appendix F of the current CSU, Stanislaus catalog).

Failure of the course will be the penalty for first time offenders. You may be subject to expulsion from the university for repeated offenses. 

Students with special needs: Students who require extra help, space, or time to complete assignments should speak to me as soon as possible.

Schedule of Reading and Assignments (subject to change as the semester’s obligations develop—note that the instructor reserves the sole right to modify any of the terms or conditions of this syllabus):

**February**

H, 2-14: First day of class: introductions; historical background

T, 2-19: Introduction to Middle English; log-on to Benson’s Chaucer page and read the introduction to the section titled “Teach Yourself Chaucer”; complete lessons 1-5; “The Complaint of Mars” (643-47); you may also use the helpful electronic edition prepared by Charles Parsons by clicking here

H, 2-21: The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales (23-36); You may also use Edwin Duncan’s excellent electronic edition of the General Prologue

T, 2-26: The Knight’s Tale, parts I and II (37-50)

H, 2-28: The Knight’s Tale, parts III and IV (50-66)

**March**

T, 3-4: The Miller’s Tale (66-77); Lee Patterson’s lecture at Yale University

H, 3-6: The Reeve’s Tale; The Cook’s Tale (77-86)

T, 3-11: Census Day; The Man of Law’s Tale (87-104)

H, 3-13: The Wife of Bath’s Tale (105-122); “The Wife of Bath and the Painting of Lions”

T, 3-18: The Wife of Bath’s Tale (continued); The Friar’s Tale (122-128)
H, 3-20: *The Summoner’s Tale* (128-136); **Project 1 due**

T, 3-25: **Spring Break**

H, 3-27: **Spring Break**

April

T, 4-1: *The Clerk’s Tale* (137-153)

H, 4-3: **Mid-Term Exam**

T, 4-8: **Presentations**

H, 4-10: *The Merchant’s Tale* (153-168)

T, 4-15: *The Franklin’s Tale* (178-189); *The Physician’s Tale* (190-193); George Lyman Kittredge on *Marriage in The Canterbury Tales*

H, 4-17: *The Pardoner’s Tale* (193-202); “*Chaucer’s Pardoner: His Sexuality and Modern Critics*”

T, 4-22: *The Prioress* (209-212); *Sir Thopas* (212-217)

H, 4-24: *Prologue of the Monk’s Tale* (240-241); *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale* (252-261)

T, 4-29: *The Second Nun’s Tale* (262-269); *The Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale* (270-281)

May

H, 5-1: *The Manciple’s Tale* (282-286); Chaucer’s Retraction (328)

T, 5-6: **Presentations**

H, 5-8: *Troilus and Criseyde*

T, 5-13: *Troilus and Criseyde*

H, 5-15: *Troilus and Criseyde*

T, 5-20: Last Day of Class; **Remaining Presentations**; review for final exam; **Project 2 due**

T, 5-27: **Final Exam**, 8:30-10:30