

# CHAUCER AND HIS AGE

**Dr. Brian Gastle**  
CO 305  
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(ENGL 420)  
TR 11:00-12:15 CO 304  
<http://paws.wcu.edu/bgastle/420>

**Office Hours**  
R 9:00-10:00 and by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS


This course offers an in-depth analysis of selected works by Chaucer works (to be read in Middle English) in an historical context. Course work includes reading historical documents and excerpts from contemporary. Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course you should be able to

1. Read, pronounce, and understand Middle English at a basic level
2. Understand a significant portion of Chaucer's works in their socio-historic contexts
3. Demonstrate in writing and verbally a developed critical acuity of texts (i.e. you should be better readers of and writers/thinkers about literature in general) appropriate for the Junior/Senior level. This would include the use of appropriate academic style, grammatical/syntactical accuracy, integration of appropriate kind and number of secondary materials, and the ability to develop a defensible, cogent argument about a text (esp. a medieval text).


## REQUIRED TEXTS

- ◆ Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Third Edition. Boston: Houghton, 1987.
- ◆ Gower, John. *Confessio Amantis*. Eds. Russell A. Peck. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute 2006.  
<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/tmsmenu.htm#g>
- ◆ Boccaccio's *Decameron* (X.10) <http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/decameronNew/DecIndex.php>

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS



Midterm (First Hourly) Exam	20%	Research Essay	20%
Final Exam (Second Hourly)	20%	Group Project	20%
Quizzes & Response Papers	20%		



- ◆ **Quizzes:** Brief objective quizzes will be given most days at the very beginning of class. These quizzes will also serve as attendance records.
- ◆ **Attendance:** A course like this requires that you participate and engage with both me and with fellow students. Absence from class means that you miss material discussion as well as the opportunity to develop and exhibit your ability to talk about literature (Learning Outcome #4). Review the University Class Attendance Policy regulations ([http://catalog.wcu.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=143#clas\\_atte\\_poli](http://catalog.wcu.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=143#clas_atte_poli)). Every recorded absence after your second will result in a final grade reduction of one full letter (ex: A to B; B- to C-, etc.)
- ◆ **Participation:** You will be expected to participate in discussions and to read Middle English out loud. I may increase a final grade for students who exhibit exemplary participation (consistent thoughtful and focused discussion/analysis in class). I also expect students to behave professionally in class: refrain from the use of electronic devices (cell phones, texting, computers, PDAs, etc.) and be respectful of me and other students.
- ◆ **E-Mail:** You will be required to check your Catamount e-mail regularly for class issues.
- ◆ **Grading Scale:** A+ (99-100/4.0); A (92-98/4.0); A- (90-91/3.67); B+ (88-89/3.33); B (82-87/3.0); B- (80-81/2.67); C+ (78-79/2.33); C (72-77/2.0); C- (70-71/1.67); D+ (68-69/1.33); D (62-67/1.0); D- (60-61/0.67); F (<60; 0.00)

## Academic Integrity

All work submitted must be your own. Please review WCU policy regarding Plagiarism and the Academic Honesty Policy in the student handbook and in the Catalog (<http://catalog.wcu.edu>). You are expected to know proper citation techniques, including what needs to be cited when (see MLA Style Manual or MLA Handbook for rules, procedures, and format).

If I find a student cheating, fabricating, or plagiarizing another's work from any source (print, media, internet, database, etc.), that student will receive an "F" for the class, the transgression will be recorded on his or her WCU record and may lead to further institutional penalties including expulsion from WCU and the UNC system.

## Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Disability Services for more information at (828) 227-2716 or 144 Killian Annex.

## !!!Warning!!!

This class requires that students read works and discuss issues that some find offensive and/or volatile (e.g.: explicit sexual acts and sexuality, violence, racial issues, religious issues, etc.). All members of the class will be expected to respect each other and refrain from creating a hostile educational environment. As the WCU community creed states, every class member is expected to respect the dignity and rights of all persons.

## Reading Schedule

(Subject to Change)

**Re-read portraits in GP for all tale tellers on the day of their tales. Read Intro to each tale (pages 1-22) as well as the introductory section in the Explanatory Notes (pages 795+) for each tale.**

Date	Topic	Read (	Due (PR=presentation)
8/25	Intro to the Class and brief Synopsis of ME	"The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse"	
8/27	Introduction to Chaucer and the Middle Ages	Intro(xv-xxix); "Chaucer's Wordes unto Adam" (650)	
9/1	Practicing ME	<i>Book of the Duchess</i> (lines 1-804)	
9/3	Psychological Realism and the Medieval Mind	<i>Book of the Duchess</i> (finish it)	
	Mon 9/7 Labor Day Holiday		
9/8	Moral Gower	Confessio Amantis Prologue;	PR: John Gower
9/10	The Dream and the Frame	Confessio Amantis Book I (lines 1-388).	PR: Richard II
9/15	Introduction to <i>The Canterbury Tales</i>	General Prologue (at least ll. 1-117)	
9/17	Medieval Physiognomy	General Prologue (finish it)	PR: Guilds
9/22	Medieval Romance and the Genre of Nationalism	Knight's Prologue & Tale (at least Parts I & II to p.50)	PR: Crusades
9/24	The Knight as an "Ideal" Pilgrim ?	Finish Knight's Prologue & Tale;	PR: 100 Year War
9/29	Characterization: Cliché or not Cliché?	Miller's Prologue & Tale	PR: Peasant's Revolt
10/1	Medieval Fabliau and Artistic Nostalgia	Reeve's Prologue & Tale; Cook's Prologue & Tale	
10/6	Professional Antipathy and Continued Requitals	Friar's Prologue and Tale; Summoner's Prologue and Tale	PR: Wycliff
10/8	Fall Break 10/8-10/13 NO CLASSES	NO CLASS	
10/13	Fall Break 10/8-10/13 NO CLASSES	NO CLASS	
10/15	Hagiography and Moral Chaucer	Man of Law's Tale	PR: Jews & Muslims
10/20	Narrative Requit: Chaucer and Gower	Gower's Tale of Constance (CA Book 2 588-1610)	
10/22	FIRST HOURLY EXAM	EXAM	EXAM
10/27	The Marriage of Myths	Merchant's Prologue and Tale	PR: Marriage
10/29	Scoring Tails: Marriage Debt	Shipman's Prologue and Tale	PR: Satute of Laborers
11/3	Scoring Tales: Narrative Debt	Clerk's Prol. and Tale; Boccaccio's <i>Decameron</i> (Tale of Griselda X.10)	
11/5	What do men most desire?	Gower's Tale of Florent (CA 1 ll. 1342-1882)	
11/10	Experience vs Authority	Wife of Bath's Prologue (pp. 105-116)	PR: Kempe
11/12	What do women most desire?	Wife of Bath's Tale (pp. 116-122)	
11/17	The Best of Marriages?	Franklin's Prologue and Tale	
11/19	The Worst of Pilgrims?	The Pardoner's Prologue & Tale; Parson's Prologue	PR: Black Death
11/24	Research Paper Conferences – No class	NO CLASS	
11/26	Thanksgiving 11/25-11/27 NO CLASSES	NO CLASS	
12/1	Chaucer and the Romance Tradition	<i>Troilus &amp; Criseyde</i> Books I & II	
12/3	Consuming the Consummation	<i>T &amp; C</i> Book III (24pgs - focus on Proem, 652-1414)	RESEARCH ESSAY
12/8	Tragic History I: Chaucer Ancient and Modern	<i>T &amp; C</i> Book IV (22 pages - focus on 946-1082, and 1415-1701); Book V (25 pages - focus on 729-826, 1639-end)	
12/10	Last Day of Class		
T 12/15	12:00-2:30 – Final Exam		EXAM