

Reading Chaucer

OBJECTIVES

The course is meant to provide a comprehensive introduction into the study of Chaucer's writings. The issues in focus will be Chaucer's engagement with the literary tradition; narrative strategies and Chaucer's narrator persona(s); "earnest and game" - humour, irony, parody and their uses. The course also proposes to map Chaucer's poetic career in presenting selections of his earlier works alongside his best known piece, *The Canterbury Tales*, tracing developments as well as continuities in the predominant concerns in Chaucer's texts.

MATERIAL

Primary texts:

selection of lyrics

Parliament of Foules

The Canterbury Tales:

General Prologue

Wife of Bath's Prologue

The Merchant's Tale

The Franklin's Tale

selections from The Tale of Sir Thopas, The Tale of Melibee, The Nuns' Priest's Tale

Primary texts will be provided in original with glosses and in translation for convenience, but a willingness to look beyond the translation to the original is requisite for a fair treatment and discussion of the texts.

Secondary texts:

A selection of critical reading will be posted in Moodle.

Recommended reading:

Brown, P., ed. (2000) *A Companion to Chaucer*, Oxford: Blackwell

Cooper, H. (1989) *The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford Guides to Chaucer, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Edwards, R.R. (1989) *The Dream of Chaucer: Representation and Reflection in the Early Narratives*, Durham: Duke University

Hansen, T.E. (1992) *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender*, Berkeley: University of California Press

Mann, J. (1973) *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Patterson, L. (1991) *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press

PROCEDURE

The seminar will combine Moodle forum with class sessions.

The forum is designed to serve as a preparation for the class discussion. Students will take turns introducing the respective texts to their colleagues through a brief personalized summary – describing the interpretative problems they have encountered in reading. There will also be questions for discussion posted in the forum, which the students should consider and respond to briefly (picking one problem and commenting on it in the space of 1-2 sentences). Finally, students are encouraged to add their own questions to the forum.

The class session will expand on this initial embryonic debate, allowing all participants to interrogate, compare and combine their individual insights and conclusions.

Further details will be discussed during the first introductory session.

ASSESSMENT

Students are expected to give an oral presentation of no more than 15 min on one secondary text listed in the detailed schedule (accompanied by a slideshow or a handout) and submit a paper of 1,000 words for a credit (Z). An essay of 5,000 words should be submitted as a graded paper (Zk; SIS code AAALA034B). Active participation is of the essence (Moodle forum discussion – contributions in at least 6 sessions required; class meetings – the general allowance of 3 absences applies, with potential allowances for unpredicted developments; should this happen, individual arrangements will be made). Deadlines: seminar paper 31/8/2024, graded paper 31/8/2025. Later submissions will not be accepted.

DETAILED PROGRAMME

1. week 1: Introduction

2. week 2-3: Chaucer's Lyrics

Womanly Noblesse

The Complaint of Mars

To Rosemounde

The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse

Lenvoy de Chaucer a Scogan

Gentilesse

3. week 4-5: Chaucer's early dream visions

The Parliament of Foules

▪ Olsson, K. (1989) "Poetic Invention and Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*" *Modern Philology*. 87(1), pp.13-35

▪ Bertolet, Craig E. (1996) "'My wit is sharp; I love no taryinge': Urban Poetry and the *Parlement of Foules*" *Studies in Philology*. Vol. 93, pp.365-389

4. week 6-7: *The Canterbury Tales* – General Prologue

▪ Mann, J. (1973) *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press – pp. 1-16 + 187-202

▪ Patterson, L. (1991) *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press – pp. 36-32

5. week 8-10: *The Canterbury Tales* – men, women and marriage

w8: The Wife of Bath's Prologue

▪ Hansen, T.E. (1992) "The Wife of Bath and the Mark of Adam" in *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender*, Berkeley: University of California Press – pp. 26-57

w9: The Merchant's Tale

▪ Patterson, L. (1991) "Chaucerian Commerce: Bourgeois Ideology and Poetic Exchange in the *Merchant's and Shipman's Tales*" in *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press – pp. 322-349

w10: The Franklin's Tale

▪ Nowlin, S. (2006) "Between Precedent and Possibility: Liminality, Historicity, and Narrative in Chaucer's *The Franklin's Tale*" *Studies in Philology*. 103(1), pp. 47-67 /

▪ Percy, R.J. (2009) "Épreuves d'amour and Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*" *The Chaucer Review*. 44(2), pp.159-185

6. week 11-12: *The Canterbury Tales* – Chaucer's narrative personas

w11: The Prologue to the Tale of Sir Thopas, The Tale of Sir Thopas, The Tale of Melibee

▪ Patterson, L. (1989) "'What Man Artow?': Authorial Self-Definition in *The Tale of Sir Thopas* and *The Tale of Melibee*", *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 11, 117–75

w12: The Nun's Priest's Tale

▪ Travis, Peter W. (1984) "*The Nun's Priest's Tale* as Grammar-school Primer", *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*. Proceedings vol. 1 pp. 81-91

▪ Cooper, H (1989) *The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford Guides to Chaucer, Oxford: Clarendon Press (selection).

7. week 13: Conclusions

week 14 in reserve