

English 350 Chaucer

Spring 2018

(Guidelines subject to change)

Instructor: John Black
Classroom: Zinzendorf 100
Class schedule: WF 11:45-12:55
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Office Hours: T 2:30-3:30, W 5:15-6:15,
F 10:30-11:30, and by appointment

Course Description, Objectives, and Format:

Welcome to English 350! This course is devoted to the study of the works of Chaucer, to an examination of their cultural contexts, and to an exploration of a range of critical approaches relevant to his works. English 350 is grounded in questions: Who was Chaucer? Why is he of such importance in the history of English literature and language? What did he write about and why? What influenced him and what is his legacy? What relevance does his work have for us today? As R. James Goldstein, a professor and scholar of Chaucerian studies, has noted, "Geoffrey Chaucer is a poet of remarkable contradictions. Although his habitual narrative persona was modest and self-effacing, he was also the first English poet who aspired to become a literary classic of lasting fame. Fully immersed in the aristocratic court culture of his day, he also maintained some distance in perspective on his social betters. Interested in serious philosophical issues like free will vs. determinism, he also enjoyed joking about lower bodily functions.... Most of his modern admirers see him as a typically orthodox late-medieval Christian; others insist he is the first modern (or even 'post-modern') English writer, who challenges the common religious and political pieties of his age. After 600 years his work has lost none of its power to charm and to challenge us." For our class, no previous knowledge of the language or the history of the Middle English period is assumed, so we will spend considerable time in the first few classes getting comfortable with the language and the cultural contexts for Chaucer's works.

In this course, you will learn to read the Middle English of Chaucer, study closely selections from Chaucer's works, and examine the contexts in which the works were produced. In doing so, you should further develop an interest in and appreciation for the medieval era and for its role in shaping many of the values we hold today. Through our study of Chaucer and related materials, this course will also allow you to continue establishing your own distinctive approach to literary scholarship. As literature is a representation of reality, understanding it requires you to read closely and to make well-supported interpretations; our discussions and written assignments will help you refine the critical reading, writing and research skills essential not only to reading literature, but also to critical assessment and understanding in general. And, along the way, you'll get to enjoy some great reading! While we'll occasionally use short lectures, audio-visual aids, Canvas postings, and presentations, our class will consist primarily of reading and discussion: *your preparation and participation are, therefore, essential to the success of the class and to your success in it.*

ENGL 350 and InFocus topics: Each year, through the InFocus program, the College community engages in study, analysis, reflection, and activism regarding one of four rotating interdisciplinary themes that have been identified as particularly significant challenges confronting us today individually, as a society, and on a global scale. These four rotating themes are Sustainability, Health Care, War and Peace, and Poverty and Inequality. Through grappling with these complex problems and by examining them from several different perspectives, the Program's goal is for Moravian's graduates to be better prepared to contribute to a just society and a vibrant democracy.

While, at first glance, each of these issues might seem an especially modern phenomenon, even brief reflection leads to the realization that each has deep roots in human history and experience. How does the durability of these issues manifest itself in the literature of the past? What can we embrace about the persistence in the past of people like ourselves in their efforts to resolve the problems associated with these issues or to reduce their impact? How can we learn or take inspiration from the past in order to redouble our own efforts to make even some small contribution?

To provide opportunities for students to consider these issues, selected readings and activities in the class will connect the InFocus theme for the year with the course subject matter. One of our readings at the beginning of the semester will introduce the connection and serve as a touchstone for the topic as we engage in subsequent readings and discussion during the semester. Please refer to the course syllabus for further details.

Assignments and Exams:

*****For English majors: In preparation for creating an English Major Portfolio in your senior capstone seminar, please save both digital and hard copies of your work for this class, including drafts with peer and instructor comments.**

English 350 is an upper-level, major elective course; your work for the class should reflect deliberation and sophistication in thinking and writing. As assignments for the course, you will draft and revise one 12-15 page paper, make oral presentations on your paper and on other course materials, and complete several translation quizzes and other shorter assignments. There will also be mid-term and final exams. Specific requirements for the assignments and exams will be discussed in advance of each. I encourage and expect you to consult with me as you plan and work on your assignments. A library research session, draft workshops, and individual conferences will help you strengthen your writing process. **I do not accept papers that have not been reviewed in the draft workshop process.** Drafts and papers are due in class on the due dates noted on the syllabus. **In addition to the final version of a paper, all preliminary drafts, notes, etc. are to be handed in; otherwise, the assignment is incomplete and will not be accepted. I do not accept or read late papers, except under very unusual circumstances, and then only under penalty.**

Extra Credit: Learning takes place both in and outside the classroom. To encourage further exploration of the connections in learning between English 350 and the community, students may earn extra credit through confirmed participation (usually in the form of a brief write-up) in various activities related to language, literature, and writing. Up to a total of three points of extra credit can be added at the end of the semester to a student's lowest assignment grade. One hundred points is the maximum total for the course. Some examples of eligible activities are: attending a College or area theater production or poetry/fiction reading, submitting creative work to *The Manuscript*, or a meeting with a Writing Center tutor. Other, similar activities may also be eligible; please confer with me. In April, Moravian hosts its annual Student Scholarship and Creative Endeavors Day (SSCED); a student who presents a paper at SSCED will earn three points. A student who assists with or attends SSCED will earn one point.

Attendance and Participation:

Be here: You are expected to attend each class. **Be prompt:** Class begins at am 11:45am sharp. **Be prepared:** Your first responsibility is to read carefully, re-read, and be prepared to discuss, both orally and in writing, all assignments. You should expect to devote several hours to preparing for each class. (A good rule of thumb for college courses is 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in class.) **Participate:** Classes become more meaningful the more you engage yourself in them. You are expected to read aloud and to make comments or ask questions on the readings and topics each day. Class time allotted for group work, group discussion, draft feedback, etc. is instructional time, not 'break' time; you are expected to remain focused on the assigned activity for all of the allotted time.

If you know you will be absent from class, please talk to me beforehand. If you are sick, please notify me as soon as possible. *Your absence from more than three classes may affect your final grade. Missing more than five classes may result in your failing the course. If you are tardy or absent, it is wholly your responsibility to determine what was covered in class and what revisions, if any, were made to the syllabus in your absence.*

Other notes:

- One of the qualities I expect and appreciate most in students is **personal integrity**. Students who exhibit this quality are ethical and honest, are engaged in class, turn in thoughtful assignments, are responsive to the world beyond themselves, meet deadlines, and keep me informed of any difficulties or successes they have while in my class.
- *Please arrange to go to the restroom before or after class.*
- *Please silence and put away all cell phones, etc. before coming into the classroom.*

- *Using your laptop or smartphone during class for purposes not related to the course is unacceptable: it seriously undermines your credibility as a student and it distracts others from their focus.*

Writing-Enriched Curriculum Research Project: Students in this course are automatically part of the Writing-Enriched Curriculum research project. The purpose of this research is to collect and analyze student-produced writing in this discipline in order to better understand and articulate disciplinary writing conventions. Student names will be redacted from all work; the goal of this research is instructional and educational, and your writing will be treated respectfully. If you decide that you would like your work to be excluded from this research project, you can withdraw your consent by emailing Dr. Crystal Fodrey, Dir. of Writing (fodreyc@moravian.edu). Opting out of this process will not affect your course grade in any way.

Office Hours: Students are always welcome in my office. My office hours are times that I have set aside specifically to talk with you – not only about class and assignments, but also about life at Moravian, about something fun and exciting you've done, or whatever. Make use of them. I realize that for some schedules my posted office hours just won't work, so I'm also available by appointment: jblack@moravian.edu.

Other Resources:

- With your work on written assignments, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the help available through appointment at the Writing Center (2nd fl, Zinzendorf). For more information, visit its website at: <https://www.moravian.edu/writing/writing-center> The Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you have mobility impairments and need the services of the Writing Center, please call 610-625-7820.
- Similarly, the librarians in Reeves are very resourceful. Make it a habit of consulting with them when research questions arise. The library webpage (<http://home.moravian.edu/public/reeves>) is an excellent resource, offering live online help and research guides <http://moravian.libguides.com/generalresearch>.
- The Academic & Accessibility Support Center (lower level of Monocacy Hall, 610-861-1401) provides many services to help you achieve academic success: <https://www.moravian.edu/academic-support>
- Another important resource that provides help with the demands of college life is The Counseling Center (1307 Main St., 610-861-1510): <https://www.moravian.edu/counseling>
- Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic & Accessibility Support Center (lower level of Monocacy Hall, 610-861-1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Support Center.

Academic Code of Conduct:

Plagiarism, representing someone else's work as your own, is a serious breach of personal integrity and a violation of the College's Academic Code of Conduct: consult the *Student Handbook* <https://www.moravian.edu/handbook/academic-life/code-of-conduct> **Read this policy in its entirety.** I take the provisions of the Academic Code of Conduct very seriously and am obliged to report any suspected cases of plagiarism, the consequences of which may be failure, suspension, or dismissal from the College. If you plagiarize, you will receive a 'zero' on the plagiarized assignment, which will very likely result in your failure for the course. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism will not be accepted as an excuse. If at any time you have any questions about documenting sources properly (MLA style) or as to whether or not the aid you are receiving is authorized, don't hesitate to ask me. The Reeves Library online research tutorial also addresses the issue: <http://moravian.libguides.com/generalresearch> Related to academic honesty is the issue of copyright; please protect yourself by being familiar with and following copyright laws.

Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy:

Moravian College faculty are committed to providing a learning environment free from gender discrimination and sexual violence. Should a student disclose a concern of this nature, the faculty member

is obligated to inform the Title IX Coordinator, who will assist the student in determining resources for support and resolution. Fully confidential reporting options include the [Counseling Center](#), [Health Center](#), and [Religious Life](#) (chaplain). Survivors are encouraged to seek immediate assistance by contacting the [Advocates](#) at [\(484\) 764-9242](#). For more information, please visit www.moravian.edu/titleix.

Evaluation:

(The instructor will apply both quantitative and qualitative assessments in determining grades for assignments and for the course. Final grades calculated on 10-pt. scale: 90=A-, 80=B-, etc.)

Quizzes.....15%	Presentation on Critical Theory.....10%
Mid-term exam.....15%	<u>InFocus-related Assignment.....10%</u>
Research Paper.....20%	Informal Writing and Class Participation.....10%
Final exam.....20%	Individual Oral Reading..... pass/fail

You must complete all these requirements in order to be eligible to pass the course.

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Resources

Required texts:

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Ed. V. A. Kolve and G. Olson. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 2005. Print. ('CT' on syllabus.)

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Dream Visions and Other Poems*. Ed. Kathryn L. Lynch. New York: Norton, 2007. Print. ('DV' on syllabus.)

InFocus reading (one of two; to be provided):

A. Clark, "Social Welfare and Mutual Aid in the Medieval Countryside"

B. Pearson, "Nutrition and the Early Medieval Diet"

Several selected readings and other supplemental materials, as provided.

Some useful websites for Chaucer studies:

Pronunciation: <http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/pronunciation/>

Audio files of readings of selections from Chaucer's works: see list of links on handout (also on Canvas, under "Course Handouts")

Harvard Chaucer Website: <http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/>

Chaucer Metapage: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/chaucer/>

Some of Chaucer's works in ME (and some with MnE translations): <http://www.librarius.com/>

Modern English translations of Chaucer's dream visions (by A.S. Klein):

The Book of the Duchess <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/Duchess.php>

The House of Fame <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/Fame.php>

The Parliament of Fowls <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/Fowls.php>

Syllabus

Jan.	24	W	Introduction; policies; syllabus; overview of resources for the study of Chaucer; <u>introduce link to InFocus theme (Health Care) and related readings and activity; provide access to InFocus readings</u>
	26	F	Chaucer's life; canon and chronology of Chaucer's works; Middle English language, pronunciation, and versification (Riverside handout xv-xlv)
	31	W	Introduction (DV xvii-xx); <i>The Book of the Duchess</i> (DV 3-37) (primarily for comprehension); <u>preferences for InFocus reading due</u>
Feb.	2	F	<i>The House of Fame</i> (DV 39-92) [audio – excerpt online] (primarily for comprehension)
	7	W	<i>The Parliament of Fowls</i> (DV 93-116) [audio – excerpt online] (primarily for comprehension); contexts – Ackerman: "Social and Religious Backgrounds" (to be provided)
	9	F	Conclude discussion of dream visions; contexts – Ackerman: "Popular Christian Doctrine" (to be provided)
	14	W	<u>Presentations on reading on health care and 14thC; introduce theory presentation assignment</u>
	16	F	Introduction (CT xv-xix); <i>The Canterbury Tales –The General Prologue</i> (CT 3-22) [audio – excerpts online]; practice for translation, pronunciation; review Riverside xxix-xxxviii (to be provided); <u>preferences for theory presentation due</u>
Feb.	21	W	<i>The Canterbury Tales –The General Prologue</i> (CT 3-22) – continued; [audio – excerpts online]; practice for translation, pronunciation; review Riverside xxxviii-xliv (to be

provided); contexts - Ackerman: "The World View of the Middle Ages" (to be provided); **introduce research paper assignment**

Feb.	23	F	<i>Knight's Tale</i> (CT 23-70) [audio – excerpt online]; quiz ; in-class worktime on theory presentations (time permitting); discuss mid-term exam
	28	W	<i>Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 102-130) [audio – excerpts online]; quiz
Mar.	2	F	Critical essays on <i>Wife of Bath</i> (to be provided); presentations on critical theory
	7	W	No class – Spring Break
	9	F	No class – Spring Break
	14	W	<i>Miller's Prologue & Tale</i> (CT 71-87) [audio – online]; <i>Reeve's Prol. & Tale</i> (CT 88-98); quiz
	16	F	Mid-term exam
	21	W	<i>Clerk's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 154-184) [audio – excerpt online]; <i>Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue</i> (CT 185-211); quiz ; paper topic due
	23	F	Library research session (meet in Reeves)
	28	W	<i>Franklin's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 212-32); <i>Manciple's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 285-292); quiz
	30	F	No class – Easter Break
Apr.	4	W	Contexts - Ackerman: "Chaucer, the Church, and Religion" (to be provided); paper proposal due
	6	F	<i>Friar's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 131-139); <i>Summoner's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 140-154); quiz
	11	W	<i>Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale</i> (CT 233-247) [audio – excerpt online]; <i>Prioress' Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 248-254); quiz
	13	F	<i>Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 269-284) [audio – excerpts online]; quiz
	17	T	Student Scholarship and Creative Endeavors Day – opportunity for extra credit
	18	W	Draft workshop for paper (bring 2 copies of draft to class) ; review assignment handout and writing rubric; read sample paper in advance of class (to be provided); bring copy to class and critique in class
	20	F	From <i>Parson's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 293-305); <i>Chaucer's 'Retraction'</i> (CT 306); quiz ; review oral presentation skills
	25	W	No class , in lieu of conferences; individual oral reading (TBA)
	27	F	<i>Cook's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT 99-101); quiz ; introduce and work on 'Bethlehem Tales'
May	2	W	Oral presentations on papers ; work on 'Bethlehem Tales'; discuss final exam
	4	F	Paper due ; presentation of 'Bethlehem Tales' ; course review and evaluation

The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, May 9 from 10:15am-12:15pm. Plan accordingly.