



ENGLISH 440A – Medieval English Literature
Spring Semester 2009, UNLV
11:30-12:45 AM Tuesdays & Thursdays, BEH 110

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Text: *Medieval English Literature*, Thomas Garbaty (1984)

Additional texts may be distributed or posted on webcampus.

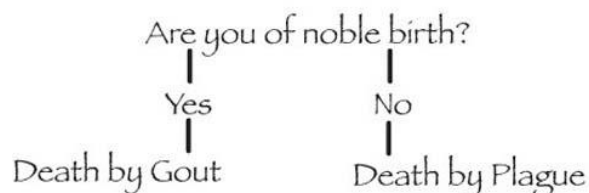
Course Description: English language and literature from 1100 to 1485, exclusive of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Prerequisites: ENG 101 and ENG 102. 3 credits.

Introduction

In the life of our world one of the gloomiest epochs was the Dark Age of ignorance and barbarism that closed in after the fall of the western Roman Empire. Libraries were destroyed. Schools and universities diminished or disappeared. The sciences were forgotten... The population fell away, becoming less numerous and more gross. Illiteracy and superstition flourished in a world made up of warring tribes, lonely settlements, and hopeless "displaced persons." – Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (1962)

Until quite recently, this "bring out your dead" attitude about the middle ages was the norm in universities and popular culture. An academic tendency in the humanities to see the classical period as the height of civilization and the medieval period as a wasteland has given us these unfair and unpleasant connotations.

Medieval Flowchart



One of the purposes of this course is to demonstrate that this stereotype isn't true. The middle ages, and in particular the period we're studying, the high middle ages after the Norman conquest of England (1066), were a rich and vibrant period of new political, cultural, technological, and intellectual innovations, and much of the literature is full of humor, interesting characters, and deep emotions.



Course Readings

We'll begin with a look back at the beginnings of English and at Anglo-Saxon England, and then we'll look at numerous key texts from the period 1100-1485, including romances, parodies, folk tales, devotional stories, and drama. UNLV offers a course in Chaucer and so this course largely stays away from the *Canterbury Tales*, but because Chaucer is so important and central to Middle English literature we will cheat and look at a few of his chief works as well.

All course readings will be in unmodernized middle English, and so one of the main skills you'll develop is the ability to read and understand the language. Test quotations will be in middle English.

Grading: The familiar A-F grading scale will be used. Course evaluation is as follows:

In-class translation assignments	20%
Midterm exam, March 5	20%
Paper 1, due March 19	20%
Paper 2, due April 23	20%
Final exam, May 7	20%

I won't normally take attendance as you're (hopefully) all adults, but you will be responsible for material and assignments covered in class. Calculated according to UNLV's 2009 cost schedule, each missed class is at minimum \$15 thrown away. It's your money.

Class Conduct: You are expected to behave courteously in your interactions with your peers as well as with me. The classroom is not the place for drifting in and out late, conversing with friends, or playing with cell phones. Interrupting people, bad language, and general rudeness toward others or myself won't be tolerated. Laptops are fine if they're for work and not being used for Grand Theft Auto.

Writing Center: One-on-one assistance with writing is available free to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC 301, next to the grass field. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. Bring two copies of your work with you.

Plagiarism: UNLV takes plagiarism seriously. According to university policy, penalties for plagiarism may include but are not limited to a failing grade for the assignment or for the class. See the UNLV Student Conduct Code at <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>. You should be aware of policies and laws regarding fair use of secondary sources.

Special Accommodations: UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, contact the DRC and visit <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability>.

**UNLV English 440A – Spring 2009
Tentative Daily Plan**

Week 1	Jan 13	Introduction to Class. Review syllabus.
	Jan 15	Medieval England : History and Middle English.
Week 2	Jan 20	Excerpts from Beowulf (handout).
	Jan 22	The Bestiary (Whale & Siren).
Week 3	Jan 27	<i>Lyrics</i> . Alysoun. Lord Randall. When the Nightingale Sings. The Smiths.
	Jan 29	<i>Romance</i> . Havelock the Dane.
Week 4	Feb 3	Havelock the Dane.
	Feb 5	Havelock the Dane.
Week 5	Feb 10	Sir Gawain & the Green Knight.
	Feb 12	Sir Gawain & the Green Knight.
Week 6	Feb 17	Sir Gawain & the Green Knight.
	Feb 19	Sir Gawain & the Green Knight.
Week 7	Feb 24	<i>Breton Lai & Decline of Heroism</i> . Sir Launfal. Robin Hood & the Butcher.
	Feb 26	Parody & Fableaux. Wedding of Sir Gawain & Dame Ragnall.
Week 8	Mar 3	Tournament of Tottenham. Jack the Nimble Holy-Water Clerk. Jolly Jankyn.
	Mar 5	Dame Sirith. Paper 1 due.
Week 9	Mar 10	Midterm Exam.
	Mar 12	Chaucer. Sir Thopas.
Week 9	Mar 17	Miller's Tale
	Mar 19	Miller's Tale
Week 11	Mar 24	Parliament of Fowls (handout).
Week 11	Mar 26	<i>Debate & Devotional</i> . Piers Plowman
Week 12	Mar 31	Piers Plowman
	Apr 2	Missed Class
Spring Break		
Week 13	Apr 14	Piers Plowman
	Apr 16	Piers Plowman. Debate of the Body & Soul.
Week 14	Apr 21	Pearl.
	Apr 23	Pearl. Paper 2 due.
Week 15	Apr 28	Second Shepherd's Play.
	Apr 30	Everyman.
Week 16	May 7	Take-Home Exam