

Engl 3304 Chaucer- Hybrid Sect 11999

Semester: **Spring 2014**

Time/Day: 10:00-11:30, Tuesday; Room TBA

Instructor: **Dr. Lorraine Stock** winner of the 2008 UH Teaching Excellence Award for Innovative use of Technology in Teaching, for developing the Chaucer Hybrid course; Winner of Southeastern Medieval Association Teaching Excellence Award, 2009.

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Course Methodology and Content:

This course is a “hybrid” or “blended” course that meets face-to-face only one day a week, Tuesday. The other 50% or more of course work is presented and performed online in a Blackboard site for the course. The course is focused on a close reading of Chaucer’s 14th-century masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*, a story collection told by 29 pilgrims--each representing a late medieval social group or occupation--journeying from London to Canterbury Cathedral to make a pilgrimage at the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket. The course is organized as a recreation of the pilgrimage to Canterbury, following the map between London and the shrine, in which each town or station on the route corresponds to one week of the course. The text of the *Canterbury Tales* will be read in the original 14th-century Middle English. Chaucer’s story collection includes a cornucopia of the prominent medieval literary genres: Arthurian romance, secular romance, epic, fabliau or bawdy tale, hagiographical romance, saint’s life, allegory, Breton lay, beast fable, etc. Class members not only will study the typical medieval tales told by Chaucer’s Christian pilgrims, but also will research the concept of comparative world pilgrimage practiced by other non-Christian religions (Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism) as well as secular pilgrimages to modern “shrines” of secular “saints” (Elvis, Princess Diana, Jim Morrison, The Beatles, John Lennon) and other places of memorialization, Ground Zero, the Vietnam Memorial, etc.

Structure of the Course:

Students will be responsible for reading the assigned tales in Middle English each week, listening to the instructor’s podcast lectures about the text, watching or listening to the assigned videos, web pages, or sound files illustrating aspects of the tales or facets of late medieval history, culture, or daily life on Blackboard, and then taking an online quiz based on that week’s materials by midnight of the day before the face-to-face class day. Each quiz is worth 1% of the final grade. Guides to the weekly study modules will outline the homework activities for each week and present questions for discussion at the face-to-face class meeting.

Writing and Research Projects:

1. All class members will adopt the persona of one of the pilgrims or another medieval figure as an avatar, in whose voice they will respond to prompts on a message board periodically during the semester, the first being “Tell me about yourself.”
2. Each student will research another pilgrimage (in multimedia materials found on Blackboard or through independent research) and report about the experience of making that pilgrimage in his/her avatar’s voice, posted to the message board.
3. Each student will write in the voice of his/her avatar an op-ed piece or letter to the editor, requiring extra research, on a topic of concern in 14th-century England, for a mock medieval magazine or newspaper.
4. A “close reading” critical paper (4-5 pp.) on a passage from the text.
5. A comprehensive final exam (essay).

Required Texts:

1. *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Robert Boenig and Andrew Taylor 2nd edition (Broadview, 2012) ISBN 13- 978-1-55481-106-9 (If you own another Middle English edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, or the 2008 ed. Of Boenig & Taylor, please consult with me about its acceptability).
2. Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales* 2nd ed. (Oxford UP, 1996) ISBN 0-19-871155-7. You may use any edition of this book; it is expensive, but the best accompaniment out there. Be looking for a bargain online well before the course starts.