Major English Writers I (ENGL 340-01)
Professor Ingrid Nelson
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T/Th 10-11:20, Fall 2011
Office: Johnson Chapel 14
Office Hours: Tues., 11:30 am-12:30 pm; Weds., 1-2 pm; and by appointment.

Course Description
[before 1800] Readings in the literature of the British Isles from the medieval and
early modern periods. We will read masterpieces of English literature by Chaucer,
Shakespeare, and Milton alongside lesser-known works by anonymous authors,
chroniclers, and women. Our focus will be on the emergence of a distinctly “English”
literature, defined by shifting ideas of language, nation, and world from the seventh
through seventeenth centuries.

Assignments
Test on Middle English: Oct. 6.
Critical Papers (2): Topics to be announced. 6-8 pages each. Due Oct. 20 and Nov.
17.
Reading Quizzes (unannounced)
Final Project: An essai, excursus, poem, collage, performance, or other meditation
on the past as you have come to understand it through this course. What has
medieval and/or renaissance literature, culture, or history, come to mean to you?
What points of intersection have you found with your own life, with our culture or
society today? Where does this past influence and inform our present? Projects will
be judged on creativity, effort, and insight. Due Dec. 13.

Required Textbooks
The Canterbury Tales: A Selection, by Geoffrey Chaucer. Broadview, 2009: 978-
1551119755
The Blazing World and Other Writings by Margaret Cavendish. Penguin, 1994: 978-
0140433722
You must also get a coursepack from the English department office in Johnson
Chapel 1. You will be billed for this on your term bill.

On Reserve
Middle English Lyrics (Norton Critical Edition), ed. Maxwell S. Luria and Richard L.
Hoffman (Norton, 1974)
Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509-1659, ed. H.R. Woudhuysen (Penguin,
1992)
Policy on Turning in Papers and Extensions
All papers must be submitted in class in hard copy. No extensions will be granted except in case of documented emergencies.

Special Accommodations
Students needing special accommodations for test-taking or other assignments should provide a doctor's note and arrange to meet with me in the first two weeks of class to discuss their individual needs. I am committed to making this course accessible for all students; please do not hesitate to make an appointment with me to discuss any concerns.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments
Tu. 9/6: Introduction and Welcome; Bede and Caedmon's Hymn (handout)
Th. 9/8: Beowulf

Tu. 9/13: No class
Th. 9/15: Beowulf

Tu. 9/20: Beowulf
Th. 9/22: Marie de France, selected Lais (coursepack)

Tu. 9/27: Introduction to Middle English
Th. 9/29: The Canterbury Tales, General Prologue

Tu. 10/4: The Canterbury Tales, The Knight’s Tale, Miller’s Tale, Reeve’s Tale
Th. 10/6: Test: Middle English The Canterbury Tales, The Wife of Bath’s Tale, Pardoner’s Tale

Tu. 10/11: Fall break; No class
Th. 10/13: The Canterbury Tales, The Nun’s Priest’s Tale; Chaucer’s Retraction

Tu. 10/18: The Second Shepherd’s Play (coursepack)
Th. 10/20: Paper 1 due: themes. Middle English Lyrics (coursepack; first lines given)

Sumer is icumen in
Fowls in the Frith
Now springes the spray
Bitwene Mersh and Averil
My deth I love, my lif ich hate
Kyrie so kyrie
When I see blosmes spring
I sing of a maiden
Stond wel moder under rode
Tu. 10/25: 16th century lyrics (coursepack; first lines given)
   John Skelton, “The Rose both white and Rede”
   Elizabeth I, “The dowbt off future foes exiles my present joye”
   Mary Sidney, “Even now that Care which on thy Crowne attends”
   Anonymous, “Westron wynde when wylle thow blow”
   Thomas Wyatt, “They fle from me that sometyme did me seke”; “Whoso list
to hount”
   Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, “The soote season, that bud and blome furth
bringes”
Th. 10/27: Shakespeare, Richard III, Act 1

Tu. 11/1: Richard III, Act 2-3
Th. 11/3: Richard III, Act 4-5

Tu. 11/8: Milton, Paradise Lost, Books 1-3
Th. 11/10: Milton, Paradise Lost, Books 4-6

Tu. 11/15: Milton, Paradise Lost, Books 7-9
Th. 11/17: Paper 2 due: genre. Milton, Paradise Lost, Books 10-12

*****Thanksgiving Break*****

Tu. 11/29: 17th c. lyrics: Love poems (coursepack)
   William Shakespeare, Sonnets 19 and 20
   John Donne, A Valediction Forbidding Mourning
   Robert Herrick, Delight in Disorder
   Andrew Marvell, To His Coy Mistress
   Katherine Philips, To my Excellent Lucasia, on our Friendship
Th. 12/1: 17th c. lyrics: Not Love poems (coursepack)
   Donne, Nocturne Upon St. Lucy’s Day
   Marvell, The Garden
   Aemilia Lanyer, from Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum
   Ben Jonson, An Ode to Himself

Tu. 12/6: Margaret Cavendish, The Blazing World, pp. 120-202 (“To The Reader”
   and “The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World”)
Th. 12/8: Cavendish, The Blazing World, pp. 203-end (“The Second Part of the
Description of the New Blazing World” and “The Epilogue to the Reader”)

Tu. 12/13: Final project due; Wrap-up and review