

**ENGLISH 37
MEDIEVAL POETRY AND ITS AFTERLIVES**

**AMHERST COLLEGE
FALL 2009**

PROFESSOR AMANDA WALLING

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OFFICE: 208 Webster Hall

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday 10-11 am and Thursday 2:00-3:00 pm, or by appointment

COURSE MEETINGS:

Monday and Wednesday 2:00-3:20 pm

Chapin Hall 204

COURSE WEBSITE: <http://blackboard.amherst.edu>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore the characteristic verse forms, imagery, and themes of late medieval and early Renaissance poetry and will examine how these characteristics have resonated throughout the work of later poets into the present day. We will consider the work of translators from Dryden to Pound and Heaney, trace the reinventions of alliterative poetry by such poets as Hopkins and Auden, and analyze the medievalism of poets from Spenser through Eliot. Throughout, we will explore the particular meaning these medieval devices carry for later poets and what they suggest about the changing role of the Middle Ages in the English poetic tradition.

COURSE TEXTS

- *Middle English Lyrics*. Ed. Luria and Hoffman. Norton Critical Editions, 1974. ISBN: 978-0393093384
- Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*. Ed. Kolve & Olson. Norton Critical Editions, 2005. ISBN: 978-0393925876 [or any **recent, annotated Middle English** edition, incl. those edited by Larry Benson, Boenig & Taylor, or Jill Mann]
- *Edmund Spenser's Poetry*. Ed. Maclean & Prescott. Norton Critical Editions, 1992. ISBN: 978-0393962994 [or any **recent, annotated** edition of *The Faerie Queene*, Book I, incl. Norton Anthology]
- *The Earliest English Poems*, trans. Michael Alexander. Penguin Classics, 1992. ISBN: 978-0140445947
- T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*. Ed. Frank Kermode. Penguin Classics, 2003. ISBN: 978-0142437315 [or any **recent, annotated** edition of *The Waste Land*, incl. Norton Anthology]
- John Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse*. Third edition. Yale University Press, 2001. ISBN: 978-0300088328
- Course reader (available in the Amherst English Department office, Johnson Chapel Room 1)

All published books are available at Amherst Books, located at 8 Main Street in Amherst center. Where indicated, you may use another annotated modern edition if you already have one (your Chaucer edition should not be a modern English translation!). You may choose to use books from the library, but be sure to bring the book (or a photocopy) to class with you. You should pick up the course reader from the English Department office as soon as possible; your account will automatically be charged (the fee for photocopying is about \$12; a separate copyright fee will be charged later in the semester).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

It is essential that you read the assignments carefully and contribute to class discussions. Your grade will also be based on three papers and on the response papers you post to the Blackboard site.

<i>In-Class Participation</i>	15%
<i>Blackboard Response Papers</i>	15%
<i>First Paper</i>	15%
<i>Second Paper</i>	22.5%
<i>Final Paper</i>	32.5%

Our course website, <http://blackboard.amherst.edu>, includes an online grade book. When you log into Blackboard, you will be able to see your score for each assignment and your cumulative grade for the course work you have completed thus far. If you have concerns about your grade at any point during the semester, please speak to me as early as possible.

Attendance and Participation

Your grade will reflect not only your presence in class but your active participation in discussions. If you expect to miss class due to unavoidable conflicts or if you are ill, please let me know as far in advance as possible so that we can discuss how you can best catch up on what you may miss in class. Repeated absences will affect your grade. *If you are ill with flu symptoms*, please visit Health Services (x2266) as soon as possible; if you are advised to stay home from classes, we will make other arrangements for the duration of your illness.

Since class discussions are the core of the class, it is essential that you read carefully and come prepared to ask questions and offer your thoughts about the material. Most of our readings are not lengthy, especially in cases where the language may require more careful attention, so you should generally be able to read the texts more than once and formulate your thoughts about them in advance. Please note or mark page numbers of passages that strike you as especially important, so that you can call our attention to them in class. When reading poems for each class, you should note formal features such as meter and rhyme, significant imagery or metaphorical language, and have a sense of what questions the poem raises or what problems it poses.

Blackboard Posts

We will use our course website, <http://blackboard.amherst.edu>, to submit and share assignments, to distribute course documents, to record grades, and to continue our discussions outside of class. In most weeks when no other assignment is due, you will be asked to post a short analysis to the Blackboard discussion forum before Wednesday's class (they should be posted no later than **midnight on Tuesday**). These posts should be about **250-300 words** (a healthy paragraph), and will usually involve the close analysis of a line of verse (of your choice) or the close comparison of a line with its translation. You should try to read as many of the other posts as possible, and are encouraged to comment on them as well. I recommend writing and saving your post in your word processing program and cutting and pasting it into Blackboard; occasionally posts have been eaten in the submission process. Mac users have sometimes reported problems using Safari with Blackboard, so double-check that your post has gone through after you submit it.

Graded Assignments

The assignments for this course are designed to prompt you to engage with the material from various perspectives, and to work both individually and in collaboration with others. You will be asked to complete:

- 8 short analyses in response to the readings, to be posted to the Blackboard forum
- A 3-4 page close reading paper, due Wed., September 30
- A 5-6 page analysis of "medievalizing" devices in a later work of poetry, due Wed., November 11
- A 10-12 page final paper on a topic to be developed in consultation with me, due Sun., December 20

For your two longer papers, I will ask you to submit a short prospectus outlining your topic, approach, and preliminary argument in advance of the due date (for the first paper, you need only let me know what passage you have chosen to discuss); this will allow me to offer comments and suggestions early in the writing process. All your written work will be submitted electronically to the course website, although only the short assignments will be shared with other members of the course. Please be careful to post your work by the stated deadline; extensions will be granted only in compelling and unavoidable circumstances. Papers submitted late will be penalized, and may not be accepted. If special circumstances do arise that you fear may prevent you from completing your work on time, please speak to me in advance of the deadline.

Writing Assistance

A successful paper requires advance preparation and careful revision; build plenty of time into your writing process for rethinking, rewriting, and consultation with other readers. You should use my comments on your prospectuses to help you formulate your argument, and are encouraged to see me in person to discuss any difficulties you're having as you work through your written assignments. If you would like me to comment on a draft, please send it to me at least a week before the due date. Students at all levels of writing ability and confidence are encouraged to take advantage of the mentoring services and workshops available at the Writing Center in Charles Pratt Hall: see their website at www.amherst.edu/academiclife/support/writingcenter (and be sure to check the very helpful collection of online resources for writers listed there).

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Integrity

Although the goal of this course is to share ideas and benefit from our collective inspiration and expertise, any work you submit as part of an assignment, online discussion, or examination must be wholly your own and must be composed exclusively for this course. You may not submit work you have done for another class, either at Amherst or at another institution, nor may you present ideas, language, or arguments from any uncredited source. The written assignments for the course are meant to emphasize your own close reading and analysis, but if you do consult any outside source (in print, online, or in conversation with another person) that substantively influences your writing, it is essential that you acknowledge it correctly. If you have any questions about whether a source needs to be cited, or about correct citation procedures, please see me. You can also consult the Writing Center's guide to using sources at www.amherst.edu/academiclife/support/writingcenter/resourcesforwriters/sources.

Academic Accommodations

If you require accommodation for a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability, you should consult with Charri Boykin-East, Senior Associate Dean of Students, (x2529 or cjboykineast@amherst.edu) in order to determine what arrangements are most appropriate for each of your courses.

Contacting Me

The best way to reach me outside of class is by e-mail at awalling@amherst.edu. I make every effort to respond to messages within 24 hours. I am available for face-to-face consultations during my office hours, Tuesday 10-11 and Thursday 2:00-3:00 (Webster Hall 208). If these times are not convenient, I am happy to meet at other times as well; please contact me by e-mail or see me after class to make an appointment.

COURSE CALENDAR

Assignments and due dates may be altered as needed during the semester; when in doubt ask me or check the most recent syllabus on the course website.

Week 1 Tues. 8 Sept.	Course Introduction The Venerable Bede, "The Story of Cædmon," Paul Muldoon, "Caedmon's Hymn," Seamus Heaney, "Whitby-sur-Moyola" (handouts)
Wed. 9 Sept.	Getting Acquainted With Middle English Poetry - <i>Short Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, Reading Middle English</i> - "Chaucer's Language," pp. xv-xix in <i>Canterbury Tales</i> (also recommended: web resources linked on Blackboard site) - Course reader: "Chaucer's Words to Adam, His Own Scribe," "Merciless Beauty," "To Rosemounde," "Truth," "Envoy to Bukton," "Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse"; <i>Troilus and Criseyde</i> , 3.23-49, 5.1786-1799 - <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> , lines 1-18 of General Prologue (p. 3 in our edition) - Recommended: Start reading Hollander, <i>Rhyme's Reason</i> , as early as possible (due Wed. 9/23)
Week 2 Mon. 14 Sept.	Medieval Lyrics 1 - <i>Middle English Lyrics</i> 1-3, 5-6, 77, 83, 86, 138 - Using the audio files linked on Blackboard, practice reciting a short Chaucer poem several times until you feel comfortable reading it aloud in class on Monday (you don't need to memorize).
Wed. 16 Sept.	Medieval Lyrics 2: The Harley Lyrics - <i>Middle English Lyrics</i> 4, 13, 26-28, 35, 105 - Blackboard post: close reading of a single line (by midnight Tues.)
Week 3 Mon. 21 Sept.	Chaucer Traditions and Translations - Chaucer, <i>The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale</i> (<i>Canterbury Tales</i> , pp. 269-285)
Wed. 23 Sept.	- John Dryden, "The Cock and the Fox," selections from Preface to <i>Fables Ancient and Modern</i> (in reader) - John Hollander, <i>Rhyme's Reason</i> : try to read pp. 1-70, pay special attention to 4-30 (verse systems), 47-50 (rhetorical schemes) Blackboard post: comment on a short passage from Chaucer and its translation in Dryden (by midnight Tues.) Prospectus due for first paper, by e-mail before midnight Wed.
Week 4 Mon. 28 Sept.	Chaucer, <i>The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT, pp. 102-130)
Tues. 29 Sept.	Recommended: Lecture by Chaucer scholar Amanda Holton (Oxford University) at Smith, 4:30 pm
Wed. 30 Sept.	Alexander Pope, "The Wife of Bath," "Imitation of Chaucer" (in reader) FIRST PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT WEDNESDAY
Week 5 Mon. 5 Oct.	Chaucer, <i>The Prioress's Prologue and Tale</i> (CT, pp. 248-254)
Wed. 7 Oct.	- William Wordsworth, "The Prioress's Tale" (in reader) - Matthew Arnold, selections from Introduction to <i>The English Poets</i> (in reader) Blackboard post: comment on a short passage from Chaucer and its translation in Wordsworth (by midnight Tues.)
Week 6 Mon. 12 Oct.	NO CLASS MEETING: MID-SEMESTER BREAK
Wed. 14 Oct.	Chivalry, Myth, History - <i>Stanzaic Morte Arthur</i> , lines 1-48, 3160-3989 - <i>Alliterative Morte Arthure</i> , lines 1-139, 4060-4346
Week 7 Mon. 19 Oct.	- Edmund Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i> , Book 1: Author's Letter, Cantos 1-5 (<i>Edmund Spenser's Poetry</i> , pp. 1-55) - Sir Philip Sidney, selections from <i>Defence of Poesy</i> (in reader)
Wed. 21 Oct.	Spenser, <i>Faerie Queene</i> , Book 1: Cantos 6-8 (ESP, pp. 55-106) Blackboard post: analyze a short passage from Spenser (by midnight Tues.)
Week 8 Mon. 26 Oct.	Spenser, <i>Faerie Queene</i> , Book 1: Cantos 9-12 (ESP, pp. 106-161)
Wed. 28 Oct.	- Arthur, Lord Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott," "The Passing of Arthur" (in reader) - William Morris, "The Defence of Guenevere" (in reader)

	Blackboard post: analyze poetic style of Tennyson or Morris in a short passage (by midnight Tues.)
Week 9 Mon. 2 Nov.	Eccentricity and Invention William Langland, <i>The Vision of Piers Plowman</i> , Prologue, Passus I (lines 1-39), Passus VI (in reader) Prospectus due for second paper, by e-mail before midnight Mon.
Wed. 4 Nov.	- John Skelton, "Phyllyp Sparowe" (in reader) - W. H. Auden, "John Skelton" (handout) Blackboard post: analysis of Skelton's poetic style in a short passage (by midnight Tues.)
Week 10 Mon. 9 Nov.	- William Dunbar, "Lament for the Makaris" (in reader) - Ezra Pound, "Ballad of the Goodly Fere," "Ancient Music" (handout)
Wed. 11 Nov.	Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Author's Preface," "Wreck of the Deutschland," "God's Grandeur," "As kingfishers catch fire," "The Windhover," "Pied Beauty," "Duns Scotus's Oxford," "Felix Randal," "To what serves Mortal Beauty," "Carrion Comfort," "Harry Ploughman" (in reader) SECOND PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT WEDNESDAY
Week 11 Mon. 16 Nov.	T. S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i> (read entire poem, Kermode ed. pp. 55-69)
Wed. 18 Nov.	Eliot, <i>Waste Land</i> continued, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (handout) Blackboard post: analysis of Eliot's poetic style in a short passage (by midnight Tues.)
Mon. 23 Nov.	NO CLASS MEETING: THANKSGIVING BREAK
Wed. 25 Nov.	NO CLASS MEETING: THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 12 Mon. 30 Nov.	Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Saxonism <i>Introduction to Old English Poetry</i> - Peter S. Baker, "The Anglo-Saxons and Their Language," "Pronunciation," "Poetic Style" - Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, "Metre" - Old English poems in <i>The Earliest English Poems</i> : "The Wife's Complaint" (pp 81-82), "Riddles" (91-102), "The Dream of the Rood" (103-09) - Look at the Old English versions of these poems on Blackboard and try reading them aloud; see also the Blackboard resources for audio recordings of Old English
Wed. 2 Dec.	- Old English poems in <i>EEP</i> : "The Ruin" (29-31), "The Wanderer" (70-73), "The Seafarer" (74-77) - Course reader: Edwin Morgan, "The Ruin," "The Seafarer," "The Wanderer," "Four Riddles" - Handout: Ezra Pound, "The Seafarer" Blackboard post: analysis of different translations of a single short passage (by midnight Tues.) Prospectus due for final paper, by e-mail before midnight Wed.
Week 13 Mon. 7 Dec.	W. H. Auden, opening of "Paid on Both Sides," "The Wanderer," Part I of "The Age of Anxiety" (in reader)
Wed. 9 Dec.	- <i>Beowulf</i> , "The Funeral of Scyld Shefing," in <i>EEP</i> (p. 49) - Course reader: Seamus Heaney, <i>Beowulf</i> , excerpt from Introduction and lines 1-52; "Digging," "The Wanderer," "Bone Dreams," "The Grauballe Man," "The Names of the Hare," "Traditions," "The Border Campaign," "The Fragment," "On His Work In The English Tongue"
Week 14 Mon. 14 Dec.	Geoffrey Hill, <i>Mercian Hymns</i> (course reader) Conclusion and Review
Exam Week Sun. 20 Dec.	FINAL PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT SUNDAY