

English 4590.01H  
The Middle Ages  
Autumn 2013

Prof. Lisa J. Kiser  
561 Denney Hall  
T R 2:30-3:30; or by app't  
[kiser.1@osu.edu](mailto:kiser.1@osu.edu)

## Syllabus

Course goals: This course is designed to give students an advanced survey of the major works of medieval English literature from the Old English period (950-1100 a.d.) through the Middle English one (1100-1500 a.d.). We will be reading selections from the best-known writers (the Beowulf-poet, Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and the Gawain-poet) as well as selections from those who aren't as well known. Genres to be sampled include drama, lyric, narrative poetry, prose fiction, and treatise.

Required texts: The Middle Ages (Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. A, 9<sup>th</sup> ed.); Four Middle English Romances, ed. Harriet Hudson, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (TEAMS series, Medieval Institute Publications)

- Week 1 Aug. 22 Introduction
- Week 2 Aug. 27 Beowulf (pp. 36-108)  
Aug. 29 Beowulf, cont. (pp. 36-108)
- Week 3 Sept. 3 Beowulf, cont. (pp. 36-108)  
Sept. 5 Beowulf, cont.; Wanderer and Wife's Lament (pp. 117-22)
- Week 4 Sept. 10 Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Fitts 1 and 2 (pp. 183-209)  
Sept. 12 Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Fitts 3 and 4 (pp. 209-238)
- Week 5 Sept. 17 Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Fitts 3 and 4, cont. (pp. 209-38)  
Sept. 19 Sir Thomas Malory, Morte d'Arthur (pp. 480-500)
- Week 6 Sept. 24 Sir Orfeo (pp. 169-182)  
Sept. 26 Middle English Lyrics (pp. 408-11 and 477-80)
- Week 7 Oct. 1 **MIDTERM EXAM**  
Oct. 3 No class: Reading Day
- Week 8 Oct. 8 Geoffrey Chaucer, Intro to Canterbury Tales (pp. 238-43)  
Oct. 10 Geoffrey Chaucer, The Miller's Prologue and Tale (pp. 264-80)
- Week 9 Oct. 15 Geoffrey Chaucer, The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, (pp. 282-310)  
Oct. 17 Geoffrey Chaucer, The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, cont. (pp. 282-310)
- Week 10 Oct. 22 Geoffrey Chaucer, The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale (pp. 310-25)  
Oct. 24 William Langland, Piers Plowman (pp. 370-408)

- Week 11    Oct. 29    William Langland, Piers Plowman (pp. 370-408)  
               Oct. 31    Ancrene Wisse (Guide for Anchoresses) (pp. 137-140)  
                               Julian of Norwich, A Book of Showings (pp. 412-424)
- Week 12    Nov. 5    The Book of Margery Kempe (pp. 424-438)  
               Nov. 7    Sir Isumbras (in TEAMS edition)
- Week 13    Nov. 12    No class: Reading/Writing Day  
               Nov. 14    **PAPER DUE**
- Week 14    Nov. 19    Octavian (in TEAMS edition)  
               Nov. 21    The Second Shepherds' Play (pp. 449-477)
- Week 15    Nov. 26    The York Crucifixion Play (pp. 439-447)  
               Nov. 28    Thanksgiving Day: No class
- Week 16    Dec. 3    Conclusion

Final Exam: Take-Home Exam, due Tuesday, December 10, by 5:00 p.m., in my mailbox in 421 Denney Hall.

Course requirements: Attendance; weekly reading responses; class leadership assignment; midterm exam; one seminar paper of 7-10 pp; final take-home exam; class participation. The exams and the paper will be averaged equally at 30% each in the determination of a student's overall grade for the course, and the quality of the weekly reading responses, class leadership, and class participation will together count 10% toward the final grade.

Weekly reading responses are due every Tuesday and will cover the work (or portion of the work) assigned for that day; in this assignment, students should record 3 to 5 observations that emerge from their reading of the text(s). I will collect these at the beginning of each Tuesday's class. Class leadership assignment: students will help lead discussion on an assigned work, so they will be more thoroughly prepared than usual.

N.B. The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307.

For further information about Middle English manuscripts and for a guide to the Middle English language, see the website "METRO: Middle English Teaching Resources Online" at <http://metro.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>.

"The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there."  
 ---Leslie Hartley