Instructor: Nancy Warren  
Course: 313  
Title: Heroes and Villains in Medieval Literature  

Description: This course provides a survey of English medieval literature covering texts originally written in, or translated into, Old and Middle English. Our organizing theme will be the constructions of heroes and villains in medieval literary works from a range of genres. We will explore how the categories of “hero” and “villain” are shaped by generic expectations, by gender, and by other ideological forces. We will examine how heroes and villains make meaning in different medieval cultures, interrogating the social desires and anxieties they manifest. Our study of literature will attend closely to the texts’ historical, cultural, and political environments.

Proposed Readings: Beowulf  
The Wanderer  
The Seafarer  
The Dream of the Rood  
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight  
Excerpts from The Canterbury Tales  
Saints’ Lives  
The Book of Margery Kempe  
The Showings of Julian of Norwich  
The Chester Noah Play  
The Second Shepherd’s Play  
Middle English lyrics  
Excerpts from Guide for Anchoresses