

Fall 2020 Course Description

Instructor: Jennifer Wollock

Course: ENGL 313.200/500

Title: Medieval English Literature

Description: An introduction to Old and Middle English literature (exclusive of Chaucer,) including such authors and works as Beowulf, The Dream of the Rood, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Piers Plowman, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Malory, the mystery plays, lyrics, and ballads (including the Little Geste of Robin Hood.) Prerequisite: 3 credits of literature at the 200 level or above.

This semester the course will focus on Old and Middle English literature in their historical and cultural context, traveling through time all the way from the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain to the rise of the Tudor dynasty, and exploring genres from the earliest English epic to riddles, plays and ballads, romances of chivalry and love lyrics. We will pay attention to the media – professional and amateur oral performance, manuscripts, and the earliest English printed books.

The course grade will be based on a midterm, a final examination, and a short research or analysis paper (30% each), as well as class participation (10%, to include Middle English quiz and pronunciation/memorization exercise – 18 lines of Old or Middle English to be learned and recited to me from memory in my office.) The two examinations will test reading comprehension of Middle English and factual knowledge (through identification of important passages from the assigned reading) and ability to discuss the reading intelligently (in an essay or essays.) The exams will be graded numerically (90-100 =A, 80-89=B and so on.)

Unit 1: Old English: (Readings in Crossley-Holland)

Unit 2: The Rise of Middle English (All remaining readings in Garbáty)

Unit 3: The Age of Chaucer: 1340-1400

Unit 4: The Age of Malory: 1400-1500

Proposed Readings: Texts: Kevin Crossley-Holland, The Anglo-Saxon World (OUP) paperback Thomas Garbáty, ed. Medieval English Literature