**LIT371-03 Topics in Medieval Literature**

**Course Title: Medieval Women’s Lives from Before Birth to the Beyond**

Spring 2017 TuTh 7:20-8:35pm

Room: New Bldg 8.61

Instructor: Jennifer Alberghini

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Office hours: TTh 6:10pm-7:10pm

**Course Description**: Topics in Medieval Literature will examine select literary movements, authors, and ideas with an eye to the formal features of texts as well as the social, historical, and political contexts in which they appear. The course will approach the canon for this period not as a fixed entity but as a body of work consistently open to reevaluation and critique; alternative texts, voices, and subject positions relevant to the topic(s) will be included. As a means of understanding the literature of the period, the course may focus on a literary genre or convention (e.g., epic, romance) or an important theme (e.g., chivalric and warrior codes, heresy and devotion, impermanence, erotic love). Each semester individual instructors will anchor the course in specific sub-topics, primary texts, cultures, historical moments, etc., depending on their own areas of specialization.

**Sub-topic Description**: This course will examine a variety of medieval texts, canonical and non-canonical, to explore how medieval peoples imagined women’s lives. We’ll look at depictions of acceptable “norms” (virgins, wives, mothers) and also at women who deviate from these patterns. We will look at these literary works next to historical and critical sources to get a glimpse of the bigger picture of what medieval women experienced, and also to evaluate or conception of women’s lives then and now.

**Course Objectives:**

To incorporate close reading into formal and informal writing assignments to get a deeper understanding of medieval texts.

To discuss literature in its historical context.

To talk and write critically about literary texts.

To conduct original research, using primary and secondary sources.

**Note: We will read and, occasionally, view sensitive material. If you object to or are uncomfortable with depictions of sex, drugs, violence, profanities, and so on, you should drop the course. Your continued enrollment in this section indicates your comfort with and responsibility for reading and viewing these texts. Alternative assignments will not be given.**

**Texts:** Geoffrey Chaucer *The Canterbury Tales* edited by Jill Mann Penguin Classics Paperback ISBN 9780140422344 New $22

**Note: You MUST use this particular edition (No modern English translations allowed).**

(Optional) The King of Tars edited by John H. Chandler TEAMS ISBN 9781580442046 New $14.95

Other readings, unless otherwise stated, will be posted online.

**Grading Information:**

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| Participation  Middle English Online Commonplace Book  In-class Writing  In-class Presentation Paper Proposal  Annotated Bibliography Final Paper Draft Final Paper Presentation Final Paper | 20% 10% 15% 5% 10% 10% 5% 5% 20% |

**Participation:** In this class, participation is crucial. I expect you to come to class on time, prepared—with readings and/or homework complete—and ready to discuss. Aside from general class participation, daily assignments, workshop participation and in-class writing will count toward your participation grade and cannot be made up in the event of absence. Adherence to basic classroom etiquette will also factor into your participation grade: come to class on time, don’t sleep, put your iPod away and treat your classmates with respect.

**Note: Cell phones are a helpful learning tool in the digital classroom; however, please be respectful and make sure your phones are set to silent mode.**

**Writing Requirements:** This class requires blog posts as well as informal and formal writing assignments. You will write a blog post twice a week for the Online Common Place Book [see below]. Weekly writing assignments will be given in class and cannot be made up. You will also have smaller assignments that will lead up to a final 10-12-page paper. Your proposal and annotated bibliography will be due via email. First drafts will be shared in class for peer review (number of copies to be announced). You will present on your work in progress through a Power Point presentation during the last week of classes. Your final draft must be submitted through SafeAssign on Blackboard, as well as in a hard copy, due on the final exam day.

In-class Presentation: Each student will present on a specific reading. Through your own research, find a historical source relevant to the reading and explain how this source applies to the literary text. 5 minutes. A sign-up sheet will be passed out on the first day of class.

[Suggested sources: Matthew Goldie Middle English Literature: A Historical Sourcebook, Conor McCarthy Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages: A Sourcebook]

**Middle English Commonplace Book:**

“For [each] class meeting [per week] …choose one passage ([three (for prose) or five (of poetry)] lines) from the assigned reading and copy it into [a blog post (with proper citations)] … each commonplace book entry should include a few sentences about why the passage was selected and what questions it raises about the assigned text or about the course material more broadly.”[1]

In the blog post, highlight each word (exceptions small common words like "and" or "is") and click the comment function. Go to the OED and pick the definition that best fits that word in this context, making sure that the date is plausible for the time period. Put the definition and the citation in the comment box and save.

**Note: If a word appears multiple times, you only have to define the first appearance unless it seems to be used in a different way.**

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will NOT be tolerated. A student who has plagiarized will automatically fail the paper and possibly the class. The student will also be listed on a departmental record that will be maintained for the duration of the student’s enrollment at the College and reported to the academic integrity officer, who may decide to take further action.

See the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity (http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info- central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf) for further information.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

Copying and pasting work from the Internet, even if some words are changed around, and presenting it as your own

Using someone else’s ideas, even if in your own words, without proper credit to your source

Having someone else write your paper for you

Using someone else’s quotations in the same order with your own analysis occasionally mixed in

Submitting a paper that is mainly composed of large quotations and little of your own original work/analysis (patchwriting)

Quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing sources without giving proper credit (in-text citations, Works Cited)

Giving information that is not common knowledge without citing your source

**Note: References from outside sources must be cited in ALL assignments, including blog posts. There are no exceptions. An assignment missing any reference, even inadvertently, will NOT be accepted for credit.**

As this course primarily practices close reading, use of sources outside of the literary works we’ll be reading will be very limited.

**Writing Center:** Located in Room 01.68 NB, tutors there are trained to help you revise your writing at various stages. If you believe you need additional help with your writing, or if I ask you to set up a regular meeting with a tutor, you should make an appointment at least one week prior to when an assignment is due. Contact them at 212.237.8569 to set up an appointment.

**Special Assistance:** If you have a learning, sensory, or physical reason for special accommodation in this class, contact the Office of Special Services in at and please inform me.

**CUNY CLEAR**

http://www.law.cuny.edu/academics/clinics/immigration/clear.html

The CLEAR (Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility) project primarily aims to address the unmet legal needs of Muslim, Arab, South Asian, and other communities in the New York City area that are particularly affected by national security and counter-terrorism policies and practices.

CLEAR is rooted in CUNY School of Law's relationship with community-based organizations whose members wish to shape and respond to national security and counter-terrorism policies and practices affecting them. It is a cross-clinical project that began as a collaboration between the Immigrant & Non-Citizen Rights Clinic, and the Defenders Clinic. Today, CLEAR is staffed by law students from across the clinical program, including the Immigrant & Non-Citizen Rights Clinic, the Defenders Clinic, the International Women's and Human Rights Clinic, and the Economic Justice Project.

**Calendar:** This calendar is subject to change. You are responsible for keeping up with the changes. Reading assignments are listed for the day they are due.

**Week 1 Introduction, Conception**

1/31 Introductions, syllabus

2/2 Geoffrey of Monmouth, selections from History of the Kings of Britain, in-class reading: excerpts from “Sir Gowther” and Malory

Michael J. Curley, “Conjuring History: Mother, Nun, and Incubus in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae”

**Week 2 Conception and Childbirth**

2/7 Luke 1:26-38 (for commonplace book: excerpt from N-Town Play 11 Parliament of Heaven, Salutation and Conception)

Emma Maggie Solberg "Madonna, whore: Mary's sexuality in the N-Town plays."

2/9 Snow, John Jay is closed, no class.

**Week 3 Childbirth and Inheritance**

2/14 Marie de France “Le Fresne” (for commonplace book: excerpt from ME version)

“Bisclavret”

Dollian Margaret Hurtig “‘I Do, I Do’: Medieval Models of Marriage and Choice of Partners in Marie de France’s “Le Fraisne’”

Susan Crane “Wolf, Man, and Wolf-Man”

2/16 The King of Tars

Lynn Ramey “Medieval Miscegenation: Hybridity and the Anxiety of Inheritance”

**Week 4 Choosing to Marry**

2/21 John Gower “Tale of Rosiphilee”

Jenny Rebecca Rytting “In Search of the Perfect Spouse: John Gower’s Confessio Amantis as a Marriage Manual”

2/23 John Gower “Tale of Jephthah’s Daughter”

R.F. Yeager "Gower and Chaucer on Pain and Suffering: Jephte's Daughter in the Bible, the 'Physician's Tale,' and the Confessio Amantis"

**Week 5 Marriage**

2/28 Geoffrey Chaucer, “Wife of Bath’s Prologue” (Wife of Bath's "General Prologue" portrait)

Ben Parsons, “Beaten for a Book: Domestic and Pedagogic Violence in The Wife of Bath’s Prologue”

3/2 Geoffrey Chaucer, “Wife of Bath’s Tale”

Wim Tigges "'Lat the Womman Telle Hire Tale' A Reading of the Wife of Bath's Tale"

**Week 6 Marriage Continued**

3/7Geoffrey Chaucer, “Clerk’s Tale”(Clerk's "General Prologue" portrait)

Richard Firth Green "Why Marquis Walter Treats His Wife So Badly"

3/9 Geoffrey Chaucer, “Franklin’s Tale” (Franklin's "General Prologue" portrait)

Emma Lipton “Married Friendship: An Ideology for the Franklin”

**Week 7 Chaste Marriage**

3/14 Chaucer “Second Nun’s Tale” (Second Nun's "General Prologue" portrait)

Susan K. Hagen “Feminist Theology and 'The Second Nun's Tale': Or, St. Cecilia Laughs at the Judge”

3/16 *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1.1, 1.11, 1.20, 1.28, 1.35-6, 1.60, 1.76, 1.79)

Ji-Soo Kang "Lollard Repression, Affective Piety and Margery Kempe"

**Week 8 Adultery**

3/21 Sir Thomas Malory “Lancelot and Guinevere” section

Cory Olsen “Adulterated Love: The Tragedy of Malory’s Lancelot and Guinevere”

3/23 Geoffrey Chaucer “The Merchant’s Tale”(Merchant's "General Prologue" portrait)

Conor McCarthy “Love, Marriage, and Law: Three Canterbury Tales”

**Week 9 Mothers and Mothers-in-Law**

3/28 Geoffrey Chaucer, “Introduction to Man of Law’s Tale,” “Man of Law’s Tale” Part I(Man of Law's "General Prologue" portrait)

Sue Niebrzydowski Monstrous (M)othering: The Representation of the Sowdanesse in Chaucer’s Man of Law’s Tale

3/30 Geoffrey Chaucer, “Man of Law’s Tale” Parts II and III

Yvette Kisor “Moments of Silence, Acts of Speech: Uncovering the Incest Motif in the ‘Man of Law’s Tale’”

**Week 10 Animal/Monstrous Mothers**

4/4 “The Swan Knight”

Peggy McCracken“Nursing Animals and Cross-Species Intimacy”

4/6 Excerpts from Melusine

Angela Florschuetz “Monstrous Maternity and the Mother-Mark: Melusine as Genealogical Phantom”

April 10-18 Spring Recess

4/20 Monday Schedule, no class.

**Week 12 Death and the Afterlife**

4/25 Paper Proposal due. “Debate Between the Body and the Worms”

Elizabeth Robertson “Kissing the Worm”

4/27 Sir Orfeo

Ellen M. Caldwell “The Heroism of Heurodis: self-mutilation and restoration in Sir Orfeo”

**Week 13 Death and the Afterlife, Manuscripts**

5/2 “The Awntyrs off Arthure”

Carl Grey Martin “The Awntyrs off Arthure, an Economy of Pain”

5/4 In-class viewing of manuscripts

Excerpts from Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham Introduction to Manuscript Studies

**Week 14 The Post-Medieval, Peer Review**

5/9 Screen film versions of some of the texts we’ve read this semester

5/11 Peer Review

**Week 15 Works in Progress**

5/16 Works in Progress Presentations

5/18 Works in Progress Presentations

Final exam week (date TBA): Final paper due

[1] Lisa Gardis. “Online Commonplace Book.” The Pocket Instructor Literature: 101 exercises for the College Classroom. Eds. Diana Fuss and William A. Gleason. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.