

COURSE SYLLABUS (SPRING SEMESTER 2018)
ENGL 5377: Studies in Early and Middle English Literature (3 Hours)
Thursdays, 6:00–8:50, TWC 340

Dr. Kimberly Bell
E-mail: kbell@shsu.edu
Telephone: 936-294-1437

Offices: EV 310; ABIV, 201 (Main Campus)
Office Hours: TR 12:00–1:00 (ABIV, 201),
& by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

One of the most popular structural patterns found in medieval literary texts is the frame narrative. While authors employed this Chinese box-like structure for different reasons, this course will focus on how select medieval authors used the form to address the art of fiction. We will examine the purpose and function of frame narratives with special attention made to those narratives that are framed as literary games with their readers. Central to our discussions will be the role of the (sometimes unreliable) narrator, who often initiates the reading game. Other, related topics will naturally emerge. Students will write a thesis-driven critical or theoretical paper on a chosen aspect of medieval literature and will circulate proposals of their papers to their peers for critical feedback. Students will also critique their peers' proposals, review a scholarly work in the field, recite 20 lines in Middle English, and write a final cumulative exam. Unannounced translation quizzes may (with great reluctance) be given. This will be an intense class, but I guarantee, you will not be disappointed.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To learn and understand literary and theoretical terminology appropriate to graduate school
- To become aware of and participate in scholarly discussions about medieval literary texts
- To develop graduate-level critical and analytical skills through oral communication (in-class discussions and presentations) and written assignments
- To explore the historical and cultural contexts of medieval literary texts and thereby gain a deeper appreciation of these literary works

ASSIGNED TEXTS

You may use only the following editions (with the exception of Chaucer's works):

1. "Dream of the Rood." Trans. Roy Liuzza (posted to Bb)
2. Geoffrey of Monmouth. *History of the Kings of Britain*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. Penguin. ISBN: 0140441700
3. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Ed. Paul Battles. Broadview. ISBN: 0921149921
4. "Somer Soneday." Ed. Thorlac Turville-Petre (handout).
5. *Assembly of Ladies*. Ed. Derek Pearsall. TEAMS. ISBN: 978-0918720436
6. Geoffrey Chaucer. *Book of the Duchess. Dream Visions and Other Poems*. Ed. Kathryn Lynch. Norton. ISBN: 978-0393925883

ADDITIONAL READINGS (handouts or posted to Bb)

1. Judith Davidoff. "Framing Fictions" (from *Beginning Well*)
2. Boethius. Book II. *Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. H. R. James. (posted to Bb)
3. Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman. "Defining Games" (from *Rules of Play*)
4. Laura Kendrick. "The Shifting Semantics of 'Play' and 'Game' in English" (from "Games Medievalists Play")
5. Brian Edwards. "Play: The Reader as Trickster" (from *Theories of Play*)
6. Serena Patterson. "Setting Up the Board" (from *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*)

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Students are expected to meet the demands of this rigorous course. Your full participation and completion of all assignments is the minimum requirement to possibly pass the class. Class participation and attendance is expected (more than two absences or being ill-prepared for classes will result in a 5% final grade penalty: I reserve the right to give unannounced translation quizzes if it is evident that students are not up on the readings. These grades will go toward attendance: i.e. you pass, you are recorded as present; you fail, you are recorded as absent). You are also expected to have completed all readings by the assigned dates and to submit assignments on time (and in hard copy). Your grade will be based on the following:

ASSIGNMENTS	PERCENTAGES	DUE DATES
Scholarly Review (3–4 pages):	20%	February 22
Middle English Recitation (20 lines):	15%	Sign Up
Proposal (3–4 pages with ann bib):	15%	March 29
Proposal Critiques/Assessment:	5%	April 5
Paper (12–15 pages):	25%	May 3
Final Exam (10–12 pages, take home):	20%	May 10

INCOMPLETES: University policy dictates that any student who seeks an incomplete for a course must have passed a minimum of 50% of the course requirements and have extenuating circumstances (e.g., documented health problems) that prevent the student from completing the course. Incompletes cannot be given to keep a student from receiving an F.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM & EVALUATIONS: Students who wish to bring visitors to class must discuss it with the professor well in advance. Visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students will be asked to complete a course evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT: Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cell phones must be turned off and iPods put away before classes begin. Students are prohibited from making offensive remarks, sleeping, texting, talking at inappropriate times, doing work for other classes, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Such inappropriate behavior in the classroom will result in the immediate dismissal from class and an absence; those students who are especially disruptive will also be reported to the Dean of Students for immediate disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: Any student who has a disability that may adversely affect his or her work in this class is encouraged to register with the Counseling Center and to talk with the professor about any necessary accommodations. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. Note: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center. Contact the Chair of the Committee for Continuing Assistance for Disabled Students and Director of the Counseling Center, Lee Drain Annex, or call 936-294-1720.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experience both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action, including a final grade of F in the class. The university and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. Put simply, plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else's ideas or words without giving that person credit; plagiarism is also the purchasing or borrowing of a paper or assignment or recycling the student's own paper from another class. Students should review their handbooks as they are responsible for knowing this information.

UNIVERSITY POLICY REGARDING STUDENT ABSENCES FOR RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS: Any student who is absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day must make up any coursework (exam, assignments, *et cetera*) within a reasonable amount of time, to be determined by the professor. Students have until the twelfth day of classes to inform the professor of any absences for religious holy days.

Course Schedule: The following is a tentative plan; deviation may be necessary. (L) denotes lecture.

Week One: January 18: Course Overview & the Middle Ages

Introductions; Political History of the English Middle Ages (ca. 500–1485)

Week Two: January 25: Dream Frames

Davidoff, “Framing Fictions”; “Dream of the Rood”; Paper Assignments (L)

Week Three: February 1: Metafictional Frames

Geoffrey of Monmouth: *History of the Kings of Britain* (HRB, ca. 1135) (Introduction, Dedication, Part 1, Parts 4–7)

Week Four: February 8: Cultural & Literary Game Theories

HRB; Middle English; Salen & Zimmerman, “Defining Games”; Kendrick, “Shifting Semantics”; Edwards, “Play: The Reader as Trickster” (esp. “game”); (start reading “Assembly of Ladies”)

Week Five: February 15: Framed Games—Mazes

“Assembly of Ladies” (AL, ca. 1470)

Week Six: February 22: Framed Games—Fortuna

AL; Boethius: *Consolation* (Book 2); Patterson, “Setting Up the Board”; Chaucer: *Book of the Duchess* (BD, ca. 1370)

Scholarly Reviews Due

Week Seven: March 1

BD

Middle English Recitations

Week Eight: SPRING BREAK

Week Nine: CLASS DOES NOT MEET (LET’S TALK Honors Fundraiser)

Week Ten: March 29

BD; “Somer Soneday” (SS, ca. 1350–90)

Paper Proposals Due

Middle English Recitations

Week Eleven: April 5

SS

Proposal Critiques Due

Middle English Recitations

Week Twelve: April 12: Framed Games—Being Played (again)

SS; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Fitts 1–2 (SGGK, ca. 1375–1400)

Week Thirteen: April 26

SGGK, Fitt 3

Middle English Recitations

Week Fourteen: May 3

SGGK, Fitt 4

Final Exam Posted to Bb

Final Papers Due (hard copy)

Week Fifteen: May 10

Final Exams Due (e-mail)

Nota Bene: “It was customary for the ancients, in the books which they wrote . . . to express themselves very obscurely so that those in later generations, who had to learn them, could provide a gloss for the text and put the finishing touches to their meaning. Learned people understood this, and their experience taught them that the more time they spent studying texts, the more subtle would be their understanding of them...”

—Marie de France. “Prologue,” *Lais*. 12th c)