

## LITERATURES IN ENGLISH BEFORE 1500

English 140A

**Chaucer: Canterbury Tales**

Prof. Allen

Introductory study of Chaucer's language, versification, and historical and literary background, including analysis and discussion of his long major poem, *Canterbury Tales*.

English 142

**Medieval Poets and Their Lesser Works: the Uneven  
Manuscript Contexts of Medieval Masterpieces**  
Medieval English Story Collections

Prof. Fisher

The unwieldy anthologies assigned in introductory literature classes have a long history. Most medieval texts are found in manuscripts that are, in some senses, anthologies. These manuscripts contain many texts, written in the many languages of medieval England. As curated content, these medieval texts are complexly entangled. This class will read representative texts from several medieval manuscripts that gather a variety of texts together. We will begin with selections from the Auchinleck Manuscript, an early collection of Middle English romance, saints' lives, and other items. We will then turn to the poems of the so-called Gawain-poet, the anonymous author of not only *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, but 3 other poems in the same manuscript. Lastly, we will read a number of romances (ranging in subject from the Arthurian to the Crusades) copied and collected by Robert Thornton in two manuscripts in the fifteenth century. There will be two papers required, in addition to several short quizzes. All readings will be in Middle English.

English 145

**Bandits, Vagrants, Virgins and Matrons: "Dissencioun"  
in Word and Deed in Late Medieval Literature**  
Medieval Literatures of Devotion and Dissent

Prof. Thomas

This course will introduce you to a range of literary texts in which dissent or "dissencioun" is conveyed not only as difference of opinion but also, in light of its medieval usage, as physical division or strife. We will explore this two-fold sense of dissent across medieval genres that include the legend, romance, saint's life, treatise, sermon, story, and meditation. We will investigate the verbal and physical forms of expression "dissencion" takes, the institutions against which it is directed, and its end(s). Throughout the course, our focus will be on the interplay between dissent as verbal (written/spoken) articulation and dissent as physical action. Our primary texts include the legends of Robin Hood, *The Romance of Eustace the Monk*, *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Lollard sermons, Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and excerpts from *Piers Plowman*. We will also look at trial records and other relevant legal documents within which dissent was framed.

English 146

**The Matter of Britain: King Arthur,  
the Once and Future King**  
Medieval Story Cycles and Collections

Prof. Smith

King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table often constitute a modern person's first exposure to "medieval" culture; however, contemporary renderings of King Arthur are far different from their medieval predecessors. In this class, we will explore the origins of the Arthurian legend and the many political and artistic Arthurs invented by historians and poets in the Middle Ages. Our reading will begin in the 12th c. with Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudo-historical rendering of King Arthur in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* and end in the 15th c. with Sir Thomas Malory's romantic rendering of the king in his *Le Morte D'Arthur*. In between, we will be reading selections from or the entirety of every major Arthurian work written in medieval England, including Layamon's *Brut*, Wace's *Roman de Brut*, the *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Readings will include texts in Middle English and in translation. Major assignments include a Midterm, Final Exam, and Final Paper or Project. Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion.