

E460 : Geoffrey Chaucer

Colorado State University, Spring 2015

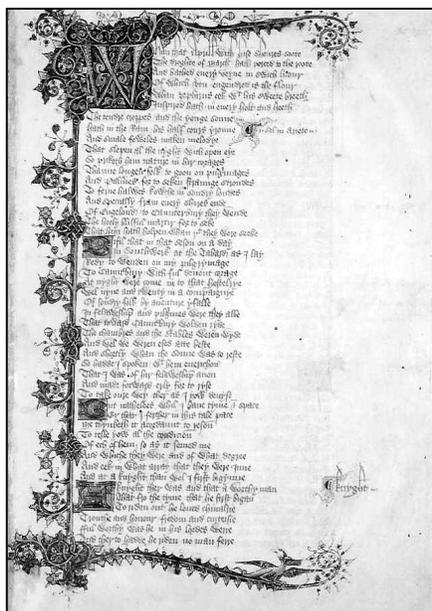
Engineering B101, TR 9:30-10:45

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Office hours TR 2-3 & by appointment

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§1 Hardly a work in the English language has had such a venerable history of publication as have *The Canterbury Tales* of the London poet Geoffrey Chaucer. Readers' original impression of the poet's sagacity and wit has held for over 600 years. It was his poetry that impressed, as if to read in Chaucer was to drink from a well of "English undefiled" (Spenser). Or it was his irony and vision that made him a perpetual font of "good sense" (so Dryden). But the fact is that Chaucer's craft in diverse generic forms and the enduring topicality of his themes go far to account for the longevity of his appeal as a master of English letters. Add to these qualities a searching perspicacity in observation, a vivid dramatic imagination, and a worldly outlook that was broadened by travel and personal reading—all of it leavened with good humor—and there we may also find an artist ill-at-ease with the imperatives of medieval doctrinism, while nonetheless anxious about the dangers of secularity. In any event, after Chaucer, English poetry would never be the same again.



E460 shall address a representative part of the Chaucerian oeuvre. We will be examining the poet as a reader of Latin, French, and Italian poetry and prose, and consider how he used his reading and writing to engage his readers with such issues as gender and violence, militarist and mercantile ideologies, and institutional conflicts in religious culture—issues no less topical today than they were in the late-fourteenth century.

The course goals may be defined as your acquiring literacy in the medieval language, themes, and narrative strategies of this first canonical writer of English literature. You will need to research and write criticism informed by (1) close reading of the original Middle English text, (2) an understanding of distinct genre characteristics, and (3) familiarity with problems and issues relating to the historical context of Chaucer's writing and its modern interpretation. You will also own a bit of the *Canterbury Tales* by reciting from memory the induction to the *General Prologue*. (*The illustration shows the very passage from the Ellesmere Manuscript, Huntington Library.*)

§2 Texts : The following texts are required for this course:

DV : Geoffrey Chaucer. *Dream Visions and Other Poems*. Ed. Kathryn L. Lynch. New York, 2007. (ISBN 978-0-393-92588-3)

CT : Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Canterbury Tales : Fifteen Tales and the General Prologue*. 2nd ed. V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson, New York, 2005. (ISBN 0-393-92587-0)

§3 Course Grade : Your final course grade will be determined from a combination of an exam (20%), recitation from memory (20%), and 2 essays (30% each). Grading shall be plus-minus.

NOTE : This is a resident-instruction course whose meetings you must attend in order to meet the learning goals. Excessive absences not only impede your comprehension of what we are doing; they annoy your peers and abuse the trust that must prevail for a good learning relationship. More than 5 ab-

sences shall give cause to override the above-cited percentages and to put your overall course grade entirely at the mercy of my professional discretion of your performance in the course.

§4 Expectations vis à vis writing : You are expected to know the techniques of thesis argumentation and understand the revision process so that you practice it. You are expected to proofread your work before submitting it for evaluation. Come to me for any learning help you need whatsoever.

§5 Course Policies : The work you submit for this course must include the CSU Honor Pledge, attended by your signature. The wording for this pledge is “I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance.” What it means is that your work completely adheres to CSU standards of academic integrity, and that all outside intellectual property in your writing has been credited with citation, and authorized by the assignment. See <http://tilt.colostate.edu/integrity/honorpledge/> for further explanation.

Penalties for late work on research assignments will be determined at my discretion on a case-by-case basis. Failure to complete all assignments shall warrant an F for the course. Intentional plagiarism shall warrant an F for the course. As for failing to attend class, see §3, NOTE.

If you should have an accommodation issue or think there is something I should know about regarding yourself, please let me know soon in the beginning of the term. If you anticipate multiple absences, please notify me in advance.



Chaucer's pilgrim portrait at the initial to the *Tale of Melibee*.

§6 Reading and Lecture Schedule. Please prepare the readings in advance of the day for which they are scheduled for discussion. “DV” refers to your edition of Chaucer’s *Dream Visions*. “CT” means your edition of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. “Robot” means RamCT or the current mechano-incarnation thereof.

Week 1	T 20	Introduction	
	R 22	Chaucer & his language	CT 473-92; DV 122-128 (Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, vv. 1-278)
Week 2	T 27	<i>The House of Fame</i> , book 1	DV 43; see also Cicero DV 258 and Macrobius DV 265. Cf. also Virgil DV 231 and Ovid DV 245.
	R 29	<i>The House of Fame</i> , book 2	
Week 3	T 3	<i>The House of Fame</i> , book 3	
	R 5	<i>The Parlement of Fouls</i>	DV 97-116
T 10			
Week 4	R 12	<i>The Canterbury Tales</i> : <i>Intro to the General Prologue</i>	CT 3; see also St Augustine CT 326, Thorpe CT 327, Wimbledon CT 333.
	T 17		
Week 5	R 19	<i>The Knight's Tale</i> , part 1	CT 23
	T 24		
Week 6	R 26	<i>The Knight's Tale</i> , part 2	CT 34
	T 3	<i>The Knight's Tale</i> , part 3	CT 45
Week 7	R 5	<i>The Knight's Tale</i> , part 4	CT 58
	T 10	<i>Knigh't's Tale</i> , conclusion	
Week 8	R 12	SPRING BREAK !	
	T24	<i>The Miller's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 71
R26			
Week 9	T 31	<i>The Reeve's Prologue & Tale</i> <i>The Cook's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 88 CT 99
	R 2	<i>The Wife of Bath's Prologue</i>	CT 102; cf. also de Meun CT 348, St Jerome CT 359, St Paul CT 380.
T 7			
Week 10	R 9	<i>The Wife of Bath's Tale</i>	CT 121
	T 14	<i>The Friar's Prologue & Tale</i> <i>The Summoner's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 131 CT 140
Week 11	R 16	<i>The Clerk's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 154
	T 21	<i>The Merchant's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 185
Week 12	R 23	<i>The Franklin's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 212
	T 38	<i>The Pardoner's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 233
Week 13	R 30	<i>The Prioress's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 248
	T 5	<i>The Nun's Priest Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 269
Week 14	R 7	<i>The Parson's Prologue & Tale</i>	CT 293
		The Retraction	CT 306
FINAL EXAM WEEK			