**BBNAN 13200 Close Reading Literary Texts**

**Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales:* Tales about Difference and Otherness**

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Classes: Wed 8:30-10:00, Z 506

Office hours: Mon and Wed 11:50-12:30

*Welcome to this course!*

In this course we will read and discuss selected tales from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* mostly in modern English translation, but we will also attempt to familiarize with Chaucer’s language in the original. I will invite you to explore some of the less known tales in which the representation of cultural (ethnic/religious) difference or of non-normative behaviours are central. Discussions will also raise questions concerning the nature of the literary text in the manuscript culture of the Middle Ages, author and readership in the medieval context and the relationship of the “original” and translated versions.

**Methods**

Class work will be based on home readings and individually assigned week-to-week exercises. Everyone has to volunteer for two week-to-week assignments.

**Obligatory readings**

Passages of *The Canterbury Tales* from these editions:

(1) *The Canterbury Tales: A Complete Modernization,* transl. by A. S. Kline. *Poetry in Translation.* <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/Canthome.php>

(2) “Interlinear Translations of Some of *The Canterbury Tales*”, *The Harvard Geoffrey Chaucer Page* <https://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/tr-index.htm>

**Recommended readings**

Boitani, Piero and Jill Mann, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer.* Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Brown, Peter, ed. *A Companion to Chaucer.* Blackwell Publishers, 2002.

[Chaucer, Geoffrey], *The Riverside Chaucer,* ed. by. F. N. Robinson. Oxford University Press, 2008.

\_\_\_, *The Canterbury Tales: Nine Tales and the General Prologue,* ed. by V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson. A Norton Critical edition. Norton, 1989.

Horobin, Simon. *Chaucer’s Language.* Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007.

Phillips, Helen. *An Introduction to the* Canterbury Tales: *Reading, Fiction, Context.* Macmillan, 2000.

Saunders, Corinne, ed. *A Concise Companion to Chaucer.* Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

**Requirements**

* Regular attendance (no more than 2 absences)
* Preparing the home readings
* Two week-to-week assignments. One of the assignments has to be submitted in printed format, revised after feedback and re-submitted after revision. Deadline of submitting the revised assignment: 4 December
* Seminar paper of 4–5 pages analysing a passage from *The Canterbury Tales*. A guide for this task will be provided separately. Deadline: 11 December

**Assessment**

The final mark will be the weighted average of the graded tasks:

Revised assignment 40%

Seminar paper 60%

**Syllabus**

18 Sep – Introduction of course contents and requirements. Contextualizing *The Canterbury Tales:* author, readers, and manuscripts

25 Sep – “The General Prologue”, ll. 1–42 and 715–858 (Harvard Interlinear)

2 Oct – “The General Prologue”, Description of the following pilgrims: Squire (ll. 79–100), Prioress (ll. 118–62), Sergeant of the Law (ll. 309–30), and Wife of Bath (ll. 445–76) (Harvard Interlinear)

9 Oct – The non-Christian other: Jews in “The Prioress’s Tale” (Kline)

16 Oct – “The Prioress’s Tale” cont.

23 Oct – **Holiday**

30 Oct – **Autumn break**

6 Nov – The non-Christian other 2: Muslims in “The Man of Law’s Tale” (Kline)

13 Nov – “The Man of Law’s Tale” cont.

20 Nov – The non-Christian other 3: The virtuous pagan in “The Squire’s Tale” (Kline)

27 Nov – The perfect other: dissident and woman – “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue”, ll. 1–192 (Harvard Interlinear)

4 Dec – “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue”, ll. 193–856 (Harvard Interlinear)

11 Dec – “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” (Kline)

***Academic ethics and plagiarism***

Academic research and its presentation are embedded in a large dialogue. In the process of thinking and arguing we are necessarily influenced by others: we borrow ideas from other writings and integrate them into our own. You can use others’ ideas or words in form of literal quotes or paraphrases, but you must indicate the source of quotes, paraphrased passages, and all sorts of factual information in all cases. The failure of keeping a correct record of borrowed material, either due to ignorance or to deliberate theft of ideas, is plagiarism. Assignments showing evident signs of plagiarism will fail.