**BBNAN 13300 Close Reading Seminar**

**Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales –* Back to the original**

Lecturer: Tamás Karáth PhD (tamas.karath@gmail.com)

Classes: Thu 12:30-14:00, Amb 114

*Welcome to this course!*

In this course we will read and discuss a few tales from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* partly in the original Middle English and partly in modernized translations. Discussions will 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 the individually assigned week-to-week exercises. Everyone has to volunteer for two week-to-week exercises during term. As we will not be able to cover the entire *Canterbury Tales,* the purpose of the seminar will be to get acquainted with various approaches (and editorial practices) to the text. In the course, we will rely mainly on the following editions of *The Canterbury Tales:*

*The Canterbury Tales,* transl. by Neville Coghill. Penguin Books.

*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.

*The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. by Sinan Kökbugur. *Librarius.* <http://www.librarius.com/cantales.htm>

**Requirements**

* Regular attendance (no more than 3 absences)
* Preparing the home readings
* Two week-to-week exercises (graded)
* Presentation of one of the critical perspectives of “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” (21 April) (graded)
* Linguistic and stylistic analysis of a passage from *The Canterbury Tales* (graded) Deadline: 5 May. Further details to be discussed in the first class.

**Assessment**

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

Two week-to-week exercises 30%

Presentation 20%

Case study 50%

**Syllabus**

Feb 11 – Introduction of course contents and requirements. The challenges of reading Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales:* manuscript versions and language.

Feb 18 – The text(s) of *The Canterbury Tales:* Manuscripts and modern editorial reconstructions.

Reading: “The General Prologue” in MoE (Coghill)

Feb 25 – Chaucer’s English

Reading: “The General Prologue,” ll. 1-42 and 715-858 in ME (Kolve and Kökbugur)

March 3 – The pilgrims’ portraits

Reading: “The General Prologue,” ll. 43-714 in MoE (Coghill) and selected fragments in ME (Kolve and Kökbugur)

March 10 – “The Reeve’s Prologue and Tale” in MoE (Coghill)

March 17 – “The Reeve’s Prologue and Tale,” ll. 1-212 in ME (Kolve and Kökbugur)

March 24 – **Easter holidays**

March 31 – **Easter holidays**

April 7 – “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue” in MoE (Coghill)

April 14 – “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” in MoE (Coghill)

April 21 – **Presentations** of five critical approaches to “The Wife of Bath” (on the basis of Peter G. Beidler, *The Wife of Bath: Complete, authoritative text with biographical and historical contexts, critical history, and essays from five contemporary critical perspectives.* Bedford Books, 1996)

April 28 – “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” in MoE (Coghill)

May 5 – “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale,” ll. 116-203 in ME (Kolve, Kökbugur)

May 12 – Chaucer’s “Retractions” in ME (Riverside, Kökbugur)

**Recommended readings from the Faculty Library (Bibliotheca)**

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

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

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

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

***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.