**Exam Info**

The lecture series on medieval and Renaissance English literature concludes with an oral exam. Please register on Neptun for an exam date. The oral exam will consist of two tasks: (1) the presentation of a topic from the lecture syllabus and (2) a text recognition task.

Part 1: Presentation of a topic

Each lecture topic corresponds to a topic of the exam:

1. Overview of the Medieval English World, Old English Prose
2. Old English Religious and Heroic Poetry
3. Middle English Poetry: Short Lyrics and Romances
4. Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales*
5. Introduction to the Literature of the 16th-17th Centuries
6. The Sonnet
7. Renaissance Narrative Poetry
8. Theatre and Shakespeare’s History Plays
9. Shakespeare’s Tragedies
10. Shakespeare’s Comedies (+problem plays and romances)
11. Medieval Drama and Theatre

You will have to prepare for all of the above eleven topics and pick one randomly at the beginning of the exam. (Those who will have attended the lectures regularly with a maximum of two absences will pick two for the start.) For each topic, you will have to read the corresponding literary text(s) indicated in the course description. All the works listed in the course descriptions are obligatory unless options are indicated (as in the case of Shakespeare’s tragedies and comedies).

Your presentation of the topic should rely on the lecture discussions, but it should not be an automatic reproduction of the lecture. Provide a brief context or theoretical summary for the literary works that belong to the respective topics and focus on a few selected texts. The presentation should preferably involve an in-depth analysis of a work in focus; or, if the topic asks you to focus on one single and larger piece, such as Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* or a Shakespearean play or Milton’s *Paradise Lost,* you are encouraged to discuss a specific detail or aspect of the work. For example, if you have to talk about *The Canterbury Tales*, you may discuss the relationship of the storytellers and their tales, the characteristics of the narrator and narration, the theme of marriage in *The Tales,* motivic links between the tales or the generic characteristics of chosen tales.

After receiving your topic, you will have ca. 10 minutes for preparation. Following your presentation you will receive additional questions asking you to elaborate on certain details.

Part 2: Text recognition task

Following the presentation of a topic, you will receive an excerpt of a few verses/lines from one of the obligatory readings of the exam. While the excerpts do not contain names of characters or places, they contain some other characteristics (motifs, key words, verse form and metre, a unique turn in the plot) that permit you to easily find out the containing work. But the task is more complex than simply finding out the source of the excerpt: you will have to explain which characteristics led you to your answer. You will also have to explain and interpret certain expressions and motifs in the passage.

Here is a sample text recognition task to help you envisage this part of the exam:

“A rood was I raised up; I bore aloft the mighty King,

The Lord of Heaven. I dared not stoop.

They drove dark nails into me…”

This is a passage in which a rood, i.e. a cross, speaks about itself in the first person singular. The rood mentions that it bore a mighty King, who is the Lord of Heaven. The metaphor of the king (the modern editorial capitalization of “King” helps you to guess that this is not any king, but the “King of Kings, that is Jesus) is identified with God (“Lord of Heaven”). This scene can only be the Crucifixion, when Christ was nailed to the cross. The third line of the passage also identifies this event, referring to certain persons (“they”) driving nails into the cross. The passage illustrates the total identification of the cross with Christ’s suffering.

The passage is probably a translation, as its language is neither Old/Middle English nor early modern. While you receive early modern (Renaissance) passages in the original language, you will read medieval texts only in translation. So, this is most probably a medieval passage in verse form. There are no rhymes, but the presence of alliteration is noteworthy – a suggestion that the modern English translator may have wished to imitate the Old English alliterative metre.

To conclude: in your list of obligatory readings, there is only one poem, in which the cross appears as an animate speaking object and tells about its own life as a parallel of Christ’s life. The passage cannot be other than the Old English poem “The Dream of the Rood.”

Possible follow-up questions:

- How does this passage illustrate variation in Old English poetry?

- What does “stoop” mean?

- Outside this passage, which other parallels between the cross and Christ are referred to in the poem?

- Mention other medieval or Renaissance literary works which elaborate on the Crucifixion. Point out major differences between the treatment of Christ’s death in this poem and the other work.

Obligatory readings

The obligatory readings are the literary works whose titles are listed for each lecture in the course description. For Shakespeare’s comedies and tragedies you have a choice between several options. You are not required to read secondary literature (literary histories or scholarly studies), but if you cannot attend the lectures, you should consult one of the recommended secondary works for the medieval and the Renaissance period each.

Readings for medieval English literature

Here we shall give you a separate list of readings for medieval English literature to make sure that you read reliable and unabridged modern English translations. Since our Faculty Library remains in Piliscsaba, it will become much more challenging for you to get an access to printed editions of medieval English literature (in modern English translation). This is why the following list contains only web sources that are accessible to everyone:

Old English Prose

The story of Cædmon and “Cædmon’s Hymn” from Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*

☞Bede (Beda Venerabilis), *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation,* Book IV, Chapter 24: “There was in the same monastery a brother, on whom the gift of writing verses was bestowed by heaven. [A. D. 680]”

<http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/bede-book4.asp>

King Alfred’s Preface to the translation of Gregory’s *Pastoral Care*

☞<http://www.bible-researcher.com/alfred.html>

Wulfstan’s “Sermon to the English People”

☞<https://thewildpeak.wordpress.com/2014/02/17/the-sermon-of-the-wolf-to-the-english/>

Old English Poetry

*Beowulf*

☞No good available online modern English edition. Please consult either the Penguin Classics edition of Michael Alexander’s verse translation or the Hungarian translation by Szegő György. Alternatively, any of the following modern English verse translations are acceptable: by Burton Raffel, R. M. Liuzza, Seamus Heaney or J. R. R. Tolkien.

“The Seafarer”

Feel free to compare several modern English translations:

☞By Kevin Crossley-Holland: <http://www.cichw1.net/1965KCH.html>

☞By Kemp Malone: <http://www.cichw1.net/1941KM.htm>

☞By W. S. Mackie: <http://www.cichw1.net/1933WSM.html>

☞And many other verse and prose translations at:

<http://www.cichw1.net/comm3.html>

“The Wanderer”

☞Any translation from *The Wanderer Project* at:

<http://research.uvu.edu/mcdonald/wanderweb/index.htm>

“The Dream of the Rood”

☞By Jonathan Glenn: <http://lightspill.com/poetry/oe/rood.html>

Middle English Religious Writing

“Fowls in the Frith”

☞<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/medlyric/fowles.php>

“The Cuckoo Song”

☞<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/medlyric/cuckou.php>

“Sunset on Calvary”

☞<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/lyrics2.htm>

“I Sing of a Maiden”

☞<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/medlyric/maiden.php>

“The Corpus Christi Carol”

☞<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/medlyric/corpuschristi.php>

“Western Wind”

☞<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/medlyric/westron.php>

Romances

*Sir Orfeo*

☞Translation by J. R. R. Tolkien: <https://allpoetry.com/Sir-Orfeo>

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

☞<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/GawainAndTheGreenKnight.htm>

Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales*

☞<https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/text-and-translations>

Read only the following parts:

“General Prologue”

“The Miller’s Tale”

“The Pardoner’s Prologue, Tale and Epilogue”

“The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale”

“The Nun’s Priest’s Tale”

“The Franklin’s Tale”

Chaucer’s Retractions

Medieval Drama

“The York Play of the Crucifixion”

☞<http://posp.org.uk/alt/REED/York35.html>

“The Second Shepherd’s Pageant” from the *Wakefield Mystery Cycle*

☞<http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/PikliNatalia/AGuthrieSecondShP.pdf>

*Everyman*

☞<http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/everyman.asp>

Recommended readings

Primary readings for medieval English literature

*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, The entry of 1066

*The Book of Margery Kempe* (Penguin edition)

Chaucer: *Troilus and Criseyde* (Nevil Coghill’s translation, Penguin Classics edition)

Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales* (the entire work, Penguin Classics edition)

Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (*Shewings of Divine Love*)

“Noah’s Flood” from the *Chester Mystery Cycle*

*Pearl* (Brian Stone’s translation in *Medieval English Verse*, Penguin Classics, or any other verse translation by J.R.R. Tolkien or Marie Boroff)

***Useful Secondary Sources for Medieval Literature***

Introductions to the pieces in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature,* vol. 1

Fulk, R. D. *A History of Old English Literature*. Blackwell, 2003

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. 2nd ed. OUP, 2000

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

Volumes of the Cambridge Companion series

***Useful Secondary Sources for Renaissance Literature***

*A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway. Blackwell, 2003

*A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan. Blackwell, 1999

Géher István. *Shakespeare olvasókönyv*. *Tükörképünk 37 darabban*. Cserépfalvi és Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadók, 1991 (or any later edition of the book)

Tucker Brooke, Matthias and A. Shaaber. *The* *Renaissance 1500-1660.* A Literary History of England, vol. 2., ed. Alfred C. Baugh. Routledge, 1993