

### **Course Description**

Traditionally hailed as the father of English poetry, Chaucer populates his fictional universe with an extraordinary gallery of female characters: unruly wives, long-suffering ones, courtly damsels, nuns, counselors, orators, leaders, victims, and many others. Their stories often coincide with passages that explore such issues as literary authority, interpretive validity, the uses and abuses of speech, the possibility of expressing the ineffable, or the limits of parody and satire. Is this connection accidental—did Chaucer just happen to be “wemenis frend [*a friend to women*],” as one fifteenth-century poet was to call him, as well as an intensely reflexive writer? Or does the presence of a heroine somehow facilitate or even trigger metapoetic experimentation? This seminar will explore the link between what might loosely be termed “gender and genre” in the *Canterbury Tales*. Students who successfully fulfill its requirements will, in addition to becoming versed in Chaucer’s language and poetics, be better equipped to analyze literary representations of women and constructions of womanhood in other works.

NOTE: Though no prior knowledge of Middle English is required, all primary sources written in this language will be studied in the original, and you will quickly be expected to become proficient in the grammar, core vocabulary, and pronunciation of its London dialect, the basis of the early modern literary standard. In view of this particular challenge, students who are still developing their proficiency in reading pre-1700 texts are encouraged to sign up for a different seminar or first take an advanced course on Renaissance culture.

### **Prerequisites**

To be eligible to enroll, you must first pass the following courses:

- Introduction to British Culture I (0626-1278) OR the old Introduction to British Culture (0626-1280);
- Writing Proseminar (0626-2064).

### **Reading Material**

In advance of the course, all students must purchase the standard edition of Chaucer’s works, which comes equipped with glosses, footnotes, and explanatory notes that are designed to help you read and understand his poetry in the original:

- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. 3rd ed. Gen. ed. Larry D. Benson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN13: 9780199552092.

No other editions or translations of Chaucer are permitted. You will not be able to participate in class discussion or write your papers for this seminar unless

you own a copy of this book, which you may use in future courses on Chaucer or sell to other students who are taking them. This book is not available at Dyonun and must be ordered from abroad or bought second hand. I have found [The Book Depository](#) to be an affordable and reliable option, but you may choose to look for other bargains [here](#).

All other required texts will be made available on Moodle.

### **Evaluation**

1. Full attendance (10%);
2. A midterm paper of about 1,500 words, to be submitted via the course Moodle by the date and hour there specified (20%);
3. Additional short assignments or quizzes may be given from time to time in accordance with the needs of the course. The grade for these will be factored into the midterm-paper component;
4. Students who intend to write a seminar paper must first hand in a complete research proposal by the last class of the semester, in accordance with the criteria posted on the course Moodle;
5. A seminar paper or *referat* (70%), to be submitted via the course Moodle by the final date specified in the University regulations.

To pass this course, you must attend the required number of classes, hand in all papers on time, and get a passing grade for each.

### **Course Rules**

1. Carefully prepare the assigned primary and secondary sources in advance of the class on which they will be discussed. This is a reading-intensive course: plan to spend up to three hours studying for each session.
2. Read all Middle English texts in the original, using the glosses, footnotes, and explanatory notes in the assigned editions—as well as the lexical resources posted on Moodle—to clarify difficult words and grammatical structures. If you need additional help, you are welcome to meet with the lecturer during his office hours.
3. Detailed instructions for writing your midterm and seminar paper or *referat* will be posted on the course Moodle. Study them carefully to make sure you know what is expected of you and how to meet these expectations with the best results. In some cases, papers that do not adhere to the guidelines will not be graded. These include failure to address the assigned topic, use the required sources, follow the rules of citation, or work exclusively with the editions listed on the syllabus and course website.

4. Your seminar paper must focus on the intersection of gender and genre in Chaucer's poetry. Before you begin to write it, you must first wait until your research proposal has been approved. Any subsequent changes to the proposal must be brought to the lecturer's attention well before the submission deadline and are likewise subject to his approval. It is highly recommended that you finish this process during the semester.
5. No extensions will be given to any deadline except under extraordinary circumstances (e.g., childbirth, prolonged hospitalization, or veteran service). Midterm papers and short assignments handed in any time after the day and hour on which they are due will be penalized five points a day starting with the first twenty-four hour period. Seminar papers and *referats* submitted after the deadline without prior consent from the University authorities will not be graded.
6. Full attendance is mandatory. All absences must be coordinated with the lecturer in advance of the affected class or, in case of an unforeseen emergency, as soon as possible thereafter. A doctor's note is needed to justify health-related absences. Such notes must be issued no later than 72 hours following the first day of your absence. Students who miss six or more classes without valid justification will not be allowed to pass the course. Only illness, childbirth, veteran service, and certain religious holidays (listed at [www.tau.ac.il/calendar](http://www.tau.ac.il/calendar)) count as permissible grounds for absence. If you encounter another problem that you believe might call for special consideration, notify the lecturer the moment it arises and be prepared to follow his instructions. Such cases will not be negotiated at a later date.
7. Please maintain a productive learning atmosphere: come and leave on time or notify the lecturer before class if you are not able to do so on a one-time basis; do not wander in and out of the classroom; use electronic devices for class purposes only; avoid side conversations; do not consume strong-smelling, crispy, or crunchy food or carbonated drinks; show respect to other students.