

Chaucer: Dream Visions and *Troilus and Criseyde*
BA Seminar (2019–2020) / Dr. Jonathan Stavsky

Best known today as the author of the *Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer began his career by writing experimental dream visions that probe the nature of love, loss, poetic fame, and worldly mutability. As his voice gained maturity, he embarked on his first major project: *Troilus and Criseyde*, the story of a tragic love affair that unfolds against the background of the Trojan War, among the most complex and rewarding long narrative poems in the English language. A few years later, he produced the *Legend of Good Women*, an unfinished collection of stories proposing—or purporting—to vindicate women from misogynist stereotypes.

This course is an opportunity to read these works from cover to cover, together with several of their sources and selected critical articles illustrating some of the main approaches that scholars have brought to bear on them. No prior knowledge of Middle English is required. However, all texts 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.

Prerequisites

- Introduction to British Culture I;
- Poetry Analysis;
- Narrative Analysis;
- Writing Proseminar.

Additional courses on pre-1700 literature are recommended but not required.

NOTE: This seminar may be taken as an advanced course (121). Students who were enrolled in “Chaucer: Early Works and *Troilus and Criseyde*” (0626292401) in 2017–2018 are not allowed to sign up for it because the reading material for both courses overlaps.

Required Edition of Chaucer

In advance of the semester, you must get hold of 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 Middle English:

- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Edited by Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2008 (ISBN: 9780199552092).

No other editions of Chaucer are permitted. You will not be able to participate in class discussion or write your papers unless you have access to this book. Several copies are available at the Central Library, but not enough for everyone. The most convenient option is to order one from abroad or buy it second-hand. I have found Blackwells.co.uk to be an affordable and reliable option, but you may choose to look for other bargains here: <https://www.bookfinder.com/search/?isbn=9780199552092&st=xl&ac=qr>.

All other required texts will be made available on the course website.

Evaluation

- Regular attendance during the entire course, including make-up classes (10%);
- A midterm paper of about 1,500 words, to be submitted via the course Moodle by the date and hour there specified (20%);
- A seminar paper or a *referat* based on your approved research proposal (70%), to be submitted via Moodle by the deadline specified in the departmental prospectus.

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

Basic Course Rules

Full attendance in all classes for the entire duration of the lesson is necessary in order for you to achieve the goals of this course. No less important is your commitment to preparing the required texts before they are taught, following the discussion attentively, and doing your best to participate. Should you fall behind on your studies even for a week or two, you will find it very difficult to catch up later. Since this is a reading-intensive course, plan to spend around three hours studying for each lesson. If you have any time left, start getting ready for the next one.

Please show consideration to other students as well as the lecturer by refraining from side conversations, using electronic devices for non-course-related purposes, wandering in and out of the classroom, bringing in visitors, consuming strong-smelling, crispy, or crunchy food or carbonated drinks, and other distractions. Disrespectful or confrontational behavior will not be tolerated.

Attendance Policy

- Attendance in all classes from the first day of the semester is obligatory. There will be a penalty of two points for every unexcused absence. Students who accrue six or more absences in total for whatever reason will not be allowed to pass the course.

- All absences must be coordinated with the lecturer in advance of the affected class or, in case of an emergency, as soon as possible thereafter. Those due to late registration, documented illness, childbirth, veteran service, and certain religious holidays (listed at www.tau.ac.il/calendar) will not incur a two-point penalty but will still be counted.
- If you signed up for this course during the change period, please ask the Department Office to send the lecturer an email confirming the date and hour of your enrollment. You will only be excused from the classes you missed before joining the course.
- An official doctor's note is needed to justify absences on account of ill health. Such notes must be issued no later than 72 hours following the first day of your absence.
- If you encounter another problem that you believe may call for special consideration, contact the lecturer the moment it arises and be prepared to follow his instructions. Such cases will not be negotiated at a later date.
- Students who repeatedly come in late or leave early will be marked as absent when such behavior occurs. If you have a particular reason for doing so on a one-time basis, please notify the lecturer before the beginning of class.
- Students who for any reason have failed to sign the attendance sheet will also be counted as absent. Please wait patiently until it reaches you or add your name at the end of the lesson.

Policy on Assignments

- Your final project must focus on one or more of Chaucer's works taught in this course. Comparative studies are permitted as long as they meet this criterion. Before you start writing your paper, you must wait until your research proposal has been approved. Any subsequent changes to your topic must be brought to the lecturer's attention well in advance the submission deadline and are likewise subject to his approval. It is highly recommended that you finish this process during the semester.
- Detailed guidelines for writing your papers will be posted on the course website. 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 follow the lecturer's instructions will receive an automatic failing grade. These include failure to address the assigned or approved topic, use the required sources, observe the rules of documentation and citation, work exclusively with the permitted editions, and rely solely on peer-reviewed scholarship.
- No extensions will be given to any deadline except in extraordinary circumstances (such as childbirth, prolonged hospitalization, or veteran service).
- Midterm papers handed in any time after the day and hour on which they are due will be penalized five points for each twenty-four-hour period.
- Seminar papers and *referats* submitted after the deadline without prior consent from the University authorities will not be graded.