

Carleton University  
Fall 2024 Preliminary Course Outline  
Department of English

ENGL 2301A: Literatures and Cultures 500-1500

Prerequisite(s): Second-year standing or permission of the department.  
Precludes additional credit for ENGL 2300 (no longer offered).

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**NB: This is a preliminary syllabus. Texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term.**



Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle            hu gæstlic bið,  
þonne ealre þisse worulde weal        weste stondeð.

[The wise warrior will perceive how ghastly it will be when all this world's wealth stands waste.] "The Wanderer" (circa 10th century)

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Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanye,  
And of your herte up casteth the visage  
To thilke God that after his ymage  
Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire,  
This world that passeth soone as floures faire.  
Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* (circa 1380)

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O that this too too solid flesh would melt  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew.  
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (circa 1603)

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Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the  
gate of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.  
John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678)

**ENGL 2301** introduces students to the richness (and, frequently, the sheer strangeness) of the literatures of the Middle Ages. This section of 2301 emphasizes the linguistic "hybridity" of the period within which what we call English literature was born. Our reading list will range from works by internationally influential writers to anonymous texts whose origins and earliest reception histories are murky and, ultimately, unknowable. Charting a path up through the middle of this range, we will place increasing emphasis on texts that make visible some of the processes by which the multifaceted traditions of "English" literature are formed.

During the early weeks of the course, we will be reliant on modern English translations of works originally written in Latin, Old English, Middle Irish, Anglo-Norman (i.e., a dialect of Old Northern French), and Medieval Welsh. By the end of the term, we will be working directly with poetry written in “Middle English”: that is, reading a text that was written in a form of English that is beginning, but only beginning, to be recognizably ours.

Topics for discussion will include (without being limited to) the nature and boundaries of literature, manuscript culture, the uses and limitations of a “canon,” the relationship between the hero and his or her community, free will, gender, love, agency, authority, violence, and the relationship between the past and the present

**Learning Outcomes:** The English Department projects the following learning outcomes for its Majors:

Graduates who have majored in English at Carleton will be able to:

1. demonstrate cultural literacies that engage with the transnational, multilingual, and historical traditions of literary production in English
2. read and analyze texts accurately, contextually, and critically
3. conduct independent textual research
4. recognize and apply a range of methodological frameworks in a critical and self-reflective manner
5. write clearly and persuasively in a variety of genres, while advancing and supporting arguments
6. express ideas clearly, persuasively, and collegially in a variety of oral formats

ENGL 2301 works to develop these outcomes through study of texts written from 500-1500 CE.

**Texts:**

1. *Beowulf*, ed. and trans. R.M. Liuzza, second edition (Broadview). [9781554811137]
2. *The Táin [Táin Bó Cúailgne]*, trans. Thomas Kinsella (Oxford) [9780192803733]
3. *The Mabinogion*, ed. and trans. Sioned Davies (Oxford) [9780199218783].
4. *The Lais of Marie de France*, ed. and trans. Claire M. Waters (Broadview) [9781554810826]
5. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. J. Dean and H. Spiegel (Broadview). [9781554810055]

**Evaluation:**

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| 5%  | Early feedback quiz (multiple choice: online via Brightspace)                        |
| 30% | Paper 1 (6 pages including list of Works Consulted)                                  |
| 30% | Paper 2 (6 pages including list of Works Consulted)                                  |
| 35% | Final Exam (3 hours: it will be completed during the formally scheduled exam period) |