

**Carleton University
Fall 2020
Department of English**

ENGL 2301 A: Literatures and Cultures 500-1500 C.E.

Prerequisites: second-year standing or permission of the department.
Preclusions: Precludes additional credit for ENGL 2300 (no longer offered)

Location: *Online*

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Preliminary Course Description
Please check back in September 2020 for the final syllabus

Course Description:

ENGL 2301A introduces students to the multilingual and multicultural literatures of the English-speaking world during the period 500-1500 C.E., situating these literatures within the larger global and transmarine influences that shaped them. The English-speaking world in 500-1500 C.E. means a very small part of one of the British Isles. It would be a mistake, therefore, to think that the British Isles were a monolingual, English-speaking society during this period. As a multicultural, oft-invaded and oft-conquered geographic area, the British Isles between 500 and 1500 C.E. were a space within which people read and wrote in Latin, French, Irish, Welsh and Hebrew as well as, or often instead of, English. English then did not have the position of cultural power and influence it holds today either in the world or in Britain itself. Blending the tongues of invading and invaded peoples, the Englishes written during this period were multiple, and differ significantly from the Englishes used today. This course will introduce you to the variety and hybridity of English and British languages and literatures during the medieval period. It will also indicate the multicultural, transmarine flows of peoples, texts, and literary forms into and out of the British Isles during this period, from areas such as continental Europe, Africa and the Middle East

In ENGL 2301A you will study literature from the Old English (c. 500-1100 C.E.) and Middle English (c. 1000-1500 C.E.) periods in English alongside contemporaneous writings in Latin, Welsh, Irish, French, and Hebrew (studied in translation). We will situate all these texts within the historical and cultural contexts of their day and learn what they look like today as well as (as far as we can reconstruct) what they sounded like when they were first copied down.

Lectures will also indicate some of the literary influences that made their way to medieval Britain from other parts of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. As we study all these texts, we will discuss their portraits of heroism, gender, love, violence, magic, monstrosity, religion, authorship, conquest, and group identity. We will also explore the different ways in which different writers handled such topics. Medieval literary conventions, genres, forms, and aesthetics (ideas about what is considered beautiful) will also be discussed.

Some specific texts we will read include *Beowulf*, *Judith*, Taliesin's "Urien Yrechwydd" and "Battle of Argoed Llwyfain," Marie de France's *Lanval*, Meir b. Elijah's "Put a Curse on My Enemy" and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as well as excerpts from writings by Augustine of Hippo, Bede, Geoffrey Chaucer and Margery Kempe. We will also read some medieval plays, saints' lives, and lyrics from a variety of language traditions. All texts originally written in Old English, Latin, French, Welsh, Hebrew, and/or Irish will be read in a modern English translation.

A Sense of my Teaching Philosophy for Online Courses Fall 2020:

Based on feedback received from students, I am committed to offering students a course where they can, if they choose, meet with me for a lecture and discussion experience at a set time as they read through these texts. Medieval texts are very different from what most people have read before, and students often find them thought-provoking and sometimes confusing. The best way for me to help guide you through the texts and their challenges is to organize my lectures so that there is space for me to address your questions and observations as they arise in live time.

To that end, I have decided that I will present this course online as a video conference meeting, likely via Big Blue Button (similar to Zoom, but integrated into Carleton's online learning platform and better secured). All classes will be recorded so that students who cannot meet at the set times (or who need to miss some classes) can access the course at their preferred time, but I plan to run the class meetings as live, spoken sets of mini-lectures with PowerPoint slides and set spaces for breaks, discussion and/or writing together online as a class during the designated class meeting times most weeks (we may not meet live on test days depending on how we are progressing through the course material and on class concerns/preferences).

Big Blue Button allows you the opportunity, during the live session, to virtually raise a hand or type in a chat question to ask me to clarify or expand on something I've said, or simply to ask about some part of the reading that made no sense to you before we begin. It also allows me to ask questions to gauge your understanding of the materials. I have been told by my students that they liked this feeling of in-person contact and dynamism on Big Blue Button last term, and that they desired the opportunity to attend class on a regular schedule to help structure their days during social isolation. For students who do not desire such an experience or cannot make the set class time, recordings of each class will be available for listening on their own time.

If you have any questions about my online approach, or about the course description generally, please e-mail me at siobhain.calkin@carleton.ca.

Course Objectives:

Students in this course will:

- Read a variety of medieval texts from different literary and linguistic traditions
- Identify ways in which the English language has changed over time and is a product of conquest and cultural hybridization
- Become more aware of the dynamic multicultural and transmarine flows of the medieval world and the ways these washed up on the shores of medieval Britain and shaped its multilingual literatures between 500 and 1500 C.E.
- Explore the ways in which literatures from pre-modern periods articulate and explore central cultural concerns of their day while also relating to our day
- Consider ideas about heroism, gender, religion, love, violence, conquest, magic, monstrosity, authorship, and aesthetics that appear in literature from the medieval period, and the ways in which ideas about these issues change between 500 and 1500 C.E.
- Become familiar with some of medieval British literature's primary conventions and genres, and with the ways these vary over time
- Develop and extend their knowledge of key technical and literary terms and critical concepts for studying literature
- Acquire and improve the skills used to analyze and write about texts from early literary periods and various genres

Required Text:

- *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Medieval Period* (Volume 1). Ed. Joseph Black et al. 3rd ed. Peterborough: Broadview, 2015. ISBN: 9781554812028 / 155481202X

Other required readings will be available from online sources or ARES (the library's electronic reserves system)

Please note:

I will place an order for our paperback anthology through the student-run Haven Books near campus (43 Seneca Street), which sells used and new books. During Covid-19 Haven has moved to an online model of selling books in which they offer shipping across North America and free curbside pickup (tel: 613-730-9888 /e-mail: havenbooks@cusaonline.ca; www.havenbooks.ca). You may also order the book directly from Broadview (which has an e-book version available) or seek a copy from your preferred online booksellers (e.g. [abebooks](http://abebooks.com) etc).

****Please make sure to order your book in August so that you have received it and can start the readings promptly in September when classes start****

Evaluation:

Term Paper (6-7 pages)

35%

(MLA format is required for this paper. A detailed list of topics and of my expectations will be distributed during term.)

Test 1

10%

Test 2

10%

(2 tests; each will include short answer questions, passage identification and analysis, and mix-and-match questions; each test is usually 35-40 minutes long)

Final Examination

35%

(3-hour examination; will include essay and short answer questions, as well as in-depth passage identification and analysis; will be scheduled during official examination period)

Participation

10%

(This percentage of your grade will be determined by your contribution to discussions either at our BBB meetings or on the discussion forum in CULearn, by your completion of occasional homework mini-exercises online, and by your completion of assignments.)