

Carleton University
Winter 2021
Department of English

ENGL 4208: Studies in Medieval Literature

Winter 2021 Topic:

“For ther is so grete diversite”: Translation and Multilingualism in Late Medieval England

Tuesdays 8:35am-11:25pm

Location: TBD

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**Please Note This is a Preliminary Description; please check in December 2020 for a finalized version*

Course Description:

Translation and multilingualism loom large in contemporary discussions of global literatures and of transnationalism. These issues, however, also lie at the very heart of medieval English literature:

- What language do writers use at what point in their texts?
- How does translating a text change it, and in what ways?
- How might writers change texts to reflect the perspectives of their cultures?
- Do writers use different languages to speak to different groups of people?

These are all questions that confronted writers working in the multilingual world of late medieval England as they made choices to write, or not to write, in English, French, Welsh, and Latin. This course offers students the opportunity to consider how various writers navigated these linguistic choices and the occasionally fierce, sometimes life-threatening, repercussions of the choices made. The course will explore the deployment of multiple languages within texts and within manuscripts as well as the ways in which texts migrate from one language to another through translation and re-translation. It will also consider the ways in which authors make use of different languages to advance distinctive authorial visions, and to retell the same narrative in intriguing and potentially inflammatory ways.

The course will begin by considering some of the theoretical pronouncements on multilingualism and translation by modern and medieval writers. It will then proceed to consider each week a set of late medieval texts that navigate multilingualism in interesting ways. We will study some

tales of King Arthur and the forms they take in French, Welsh, and Middle English versions. We will also examine some macaronic poems (lyric poems written in multiple languages) and the ways they use different languages simultaneously to exclude or include certain audiences or evoke certain cultural associations. We will study the writings of some of the renowned, canonical writers of late medieval England (Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, and William Langland) to study their engagement of the multilingual culture they inhabited. The course will then turn to translations of holy texts and saintly bodies, considering the ways in which the movements of texts and bodies across borders are controlled and challenged. We will study in particular the ways in which women and heretics writing in English challenged the pervasive use of Latin by the medieval Christian Church by translating or retelling the Bible, and consequently found themselves involved in vehement and deadly cultural debates. In all cases, we will strive to answer the questions: What are the distinctive registers and resonances of different languages, how do different writers deploy them, and to what effect?

N.B. All texts not in English will be read in a modern English translation, a decision which will, of course, also be a subject of reflection and discussion.

Course Objectives:

In this course students will:

- Read a variety of texts and genres from late medieval England
- Learn to identify the multilingual registers within which many Middle English writers worked
- Explore ideas of translation, originality, authorship, authority, “source” and “derivative” texts, and the problems of such terms and categorizations
- Learn about the cultural politics associated with languages and translations in multilingual contexts both generally and in late medieval England
- Reflect upon the power of language selection and use, and the access to power that different languages either enable or thwart
- Develop an appreciation and understanding of the Middle English language as well as a facility with reading and quoting it
- Familiarize themselves with the characteristics of texts produced in a manuscript culture, and with the different ways in which such texts are presented today

Texts:

- Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*. Trans. William W. Kibler. Penguin Classics. London: Penguin, 1991. (Paperback) ISBN: 0-14-044521-8 / 9780140445213
- Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Jill Mann. Penguin Classics. Toronto: Penguin Books, 2005. (Paperback) ISBN: 0-14-02234-X / 9780140422344
- *The Mabinogion*. Trans. Sioned Davies. Oxford World’s Classics. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. (paperback). ISBN: 978-0-19-921878-3 / 9780199218783

- *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell. TEAMS. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995. (Paperback) ISBN: 1879288605 / 978-1879288607 (also available on-line at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams>)
- William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen H.A. Shepherd. Trans. E. Talbot Donaldson. Norton Critical Editions. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. ISBN: 978-0-393-97559-8

Some required readings not in these books are available through library reserves (ARES) or the TEAMS web resource for scholars.

Please note:

Right now I plan to arrange for book orders through the student-run Haven Books near campus (43 Seneca Street) so that you can obtain the books all together from one source. 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 books directly from the individual publishers or seek copies from your preferred online booksellers (e.g. [abebooks](http://abebooks.com) etc).

Evaluation:

Short Article Summary

5%

A brief (one-page single-spaced maximum) written summary of one scholarly article listed as a Recommended Secondary Reading for this course. The summary is to be posted on CULearn by 12noon the Monday before the class meeting under which it is listed.

Seminar Presentation

30%

A 30-minute presentation consisting of a 20-minute oral presentation of research and ideas about a topic associated with our reading for the day, followed by a 10-minute class discussion, which you will lead. Secondary research is required, as are a one-page outline of the presentation and a list of the sources used. Evaluation will be based on the presentation, outline, and list of sources, and will reflect the seminar's fulfillment of the length and format requirements, the quality of research, the quality of analysis of primary texts, the clarity of organization and expression, the effectiveness of organization and expression, the correctness and accuracy of any written materials displayed or distributed, and the ability to engage class members and manage discussion.

Term Paper

5-minute Draft Abstract Presentation

5%

Write a 250-word proposal for your essay in which you outline the topic, the primary texts to be studied, your planned thesis or argumentative claim, and the overarching structure of your essay. Read this aloud to the class and we will offer suggestions and insights for your research and essay.

12-15 page paper

30%

Secondary Research is required, as is use of MLA or Chicago Style for bibliographic references.

Reading Responses

20%

You are expected to post to CULearn 3 (three) questions for discussion or 1 (one) paragraph of reflection on the assigned readings for 8 (eight) class meetings. Each post is to be made to CULearn before 3pm on the Monday before that class meeting, and you are expected to come to class prepared to share your ideas as a kick-off to discussion as needed. Posts will be evaluated on thoughtfulness of analysis, clarity and correctness of prose communication of your ideas, timeliness of completion/posting, and engagement with the readings for that day.

Participation

10%

Because this is a seminar, much of the discussion will be shaped and initiated by you, the students. I expect you to arrive with 1-3 questions or passages earmarked for discussion, and to participate in lively and civil discussion. I also expect you to engage with other students' seminar presentations. Please see separate sheet distributed at the first class for a more explicit outline of grading criteria.

Please note: Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations, lectures, hand-outs, assignments, etc) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Course Delivery Winter 2021:

Online or In-Person Delivery of Winter term classes has not been decided as of now. If this course goes online, then I will use Big Blue Button to present the course synchronously (which allows for seminars and discussion). Courses will be recorded, however, to accommodate individual scheduling challenges, and a pre-recorded seminar and online discussion option can be arranged.

Tentative Schedule of Classes and Readings:

**Week 1 Introduction to Course
 Historical Contexts**

Week 2 Theoretical Pronouncements: Multilingualism, Translation, and the Vernacular

Required Readings:

Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator," trans. Steven Rendall, in *TTR: Traduction, terminologie, redaction* 10.2 (1997): 151-65.

John of Trevisa, "Dialogue between the Lord and the Clerk on Translation; Epistle on Translation," pp. 131-8 in *Idea of the Vernacular*

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, "The Politics of Translation," pp. 179-200 in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*

Optional Reading:

Dante Alighieri, *Il convivio*, Treatise 1, chapters 5-13, pp. 42-66 in *Dante's Convivio*, trans. W. W. Jackson

Week 3 French and Welsh: Migration, Translation, Multilingualism

Required Readings:

Chrétien de Troyes, *Story of the Grail (Perceval)* in *Arthurian Romances*
Peredur son of Efrog, in *The Mabinogion*

Week 4 Welsh and French: Migration, Translation, Multilingualism II

Required Readings:

The Lady of the Well in *The Mabinogion*
Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain (Le chevalier au lion)* in *Arthurian Romances*

Week 5 French and Middle English: Translation, Context, Literary Value

Required Readings:

Sir Perceval of Galles (TEAMS)
Ywain and Gawain (TEAMS)

Week 6 The Multilingualism of Manuscripts and Lyrics: Revelations and Agendas

Required Readings:

Items 53, 54, 55, 69, and 114 in *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, ed. Susanna
Fein, David Raybin and Jan Ziolkowski, vols. 2 and 3, TEAMS

John Gower, *Balades* 25, 35, 41-46 from the *Cinkante Balades* in *The French Balades*,
ed. R. F. Yeager, TEAMS

“Abuse of Women,” in *The Trials and Joys of Marriage*, ed. Eve Salisbury, TEAMS

“Thou that sellest the word of God” and “Freers, Freers, Wo Ye Be,” in *Medieval
English Political Writings*, ed. James Dean, TEAMS

Optional Reading:

Items 5, 57, 58, 82, 83 in *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, ed. Karen Saupe, TEAMS

Week 7 Chaucer: French and Latin Worlds

Required Readings:

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale*, in *The Canterbury Tales (CT)*
French Sources of *NPT*, in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Correale
and Hamel, vol. 1, pp. 449-55 and 474-87 **(RSV)**

Optional Reading:

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Summoner's Prologue and Tale*, in *CT*

Week 8 Chaucer, Italian Multilingualism, and the Politics of Translation

Required Readings:

Chaucer, *The Clerk's Prologue and Tale*, in *CT*
Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, Day 10, Story 10 in any English translation **(RSV)**
Francesco Petrarco, *Epistolae Seniles XVII.3*, in *Sources and Analogues of the
Canterbury Tales*, ed. Correale and Hamel, vol. 1, pp.108-29 **(RSV)**

Week 9 Clerical Cultures I: Latin and English

Required Readings:

William Langland, "Prologue" in *Piers Plowman* [B-version] (*PP*)
— . Passus XV in *PP*

Week 10 Clerical Cultures II: Translating Bodies

Required Readings:

Osbern Bokenham, "Vita Sanctae Margarete Virginis et Martiris," in *Legendys of Hooly
Wummen*, pp. 7-38. **(RSV)**
"Exaltatio crucis" in *Legends of the Holy Rood . . .*, pp. 49-61 (Vernon MS, right-hand
side) and pp. 161-69 (Caxton's Version) **(RSV)**

Optional Reading:

"Inventio crucis" in *Legends of the Holy Rood . . .*, pp. 18-47 (Vernon Manuscript
version, right-hand side) and pp.154-60 (Caxton's version) **(RSV)**

Week 11 Clerical Cultures III: Translating the Bible

Required Readings:

Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible, Chapter 15, pp. 67-72 in *Selections from English
Wycliffite Writings*, ed. Anne Hudson **(RSV)**; text also available online in
Medieval English Political Writings, ed. J. Dean, TEAMS
Margery Kempe, Book 1, Chapters 79-81, lines 4441-4696, in *The Book of Margery*

Kempe, ed. Lynn Staley, TEAMS (available on-line)
Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England:
Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's
Constitutions of 1409 *Speculum* 70. 4 (1995): 822-864. **(RSV)**

Optional Reading:

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson. (N.B Any translation will do), Book 2, Chapters 4-6 and 10-16; Book 4, Chapter 20 (pp. 36-38, 43-53, 146-52 in Robertson). **(RSV)**

Week 12

Draft Paper Presentations/Discussions

Please come with a 5-minute presentation from your paper, either an outline including the thesis and line of argument or the first page or two of a draft. You will distribute copies of these to the class along with your bibliography. You will then read/present them orally. An informal discussion and advice session will follow.