

**Carleton University  
Winter 2020  
Department of English**

**ENGL 4208, Section A: *Studies in Medieval Literature*  
2020 Topic:**

*A Christian, A Muslim, and A Jew Walked into a Book:  
Imagining Religions and Their Differences in Late Medieval English Texts*

**Prerequisites:** fourth-year standing or permission of the department

**Preclusions:** None

**Wednesdays / 11:35am-2:25pm**

**Location:** *Please confirm location on Carleton Central*

**Professor: Dr. S. Bly Calkin**

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**Office: 1809 DT**

**Phone: (613) 520-2600x2337**

**Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:45-4pm; Fridays 10:15-11am; or by appointment**

**Course Description:**

Although it may seem surprising today, in the later Middle Ages writings about religion and religious difference were some of the most innovative and revolutionary literary texts produced. These texts unflinchingly examine debates about group identity, race, political corruption, gender relations and constructs, war, censorship, cross-cultural connections and conflicts, and the force of institutional structures. They can also include startling episodes of institutional corruption, cannibalism, skin colour change, monstrous birth, and supernatural visitation. ENGL 4208 introduces students to a range of such thought-provoking texts produced in late medieval England and explores the ways in which writings about various religions and religious issues engage some of the hot-button topics of their, and our, day. Specifically, we will study the depictions of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in these texts as we seek to understand the ways in which religious identity and cross-cultural interactions were envisioned by medieval English authors as they worked to imagine new social structures and new world orders while offering some thought- (and action-) provoking reflections on the status quo. We will also study the ways in which constructs of religion and race, and of masculinity and femininity, are held up for examination and used to promote social reflection and reform in these texts.

**Course Objectives:**

Students in this course will:

- Read a variety of texts and genres from late medieval England (romances, dream visions, saints' lives, (auto)biography, sermons, blood libel tales)

- Develop an appreciation and understanding of the Middle English language as well as a facility with reading and quoting it
- Explore some of the ways in which medieval English texts engage questions of religion, race, gender, violence, history, otherness, and community formation
- Develop a historical and historicized understanding of the depictions of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in late medieval England and some of the ends to which these representations were put
- Become familiar with current critical discussion about medieval western depictions of religions and their differences

### Reading List:

- Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Jill Mann. Penguin Classics. Toronto: Penguin Books, 2005. (Paperback) ISBN: 0-140-42234-X or 9-780140-422344
- Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Staley. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University—TEAMS, 1996. (Paperback) ISBN: 1-879288-72-9
- *The King of Tars*, ed. John H. Chandler. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University—TEAMS, 2015. (Paperback). ISBN 9-781580-442046
- 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. (Paperback). ISBN 978-0-393-97559-8
- *Richard Coer de Lyon*, ed. Peter Larkin. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University—TEAMS, 2015. (Paperback). ISBN 978-1-58044-201-5
- *Siege of Jerusalem*, ed. Michael Livingston. Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University—TEAMS, 2004. (Paperback). ISBN 1-58044-090-8

Short excerpts from other texts will be placed on reserve at the library, including:

- Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, trans. Richards (Aldershot, 2002)
- Fityan Al Shaghuri, “The Letter R,” ed. Ahmad Al Jundi in *The Anthology of Fityan Al Shaghuri 530-610 AH [1136-1218 CE]*, (Al Hashimya, 1976), trans. and typeset Hisham Al Khatib (Ottawa, 2019)
- Meir b. Elijah of Norwich, “Put a curse on my enemy,” and trans. Susan L. Einbinder in “Meir b. Elijah of Norwich: persecution and poetry among medieval English Jews,” *Journal of Medieval History* 26.2 (2000): 145–62.

- *The Chronicle of the Third Crusade: The Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, trans. Helen J. Nicholson (Aldershot, 1997)

**Books will be available at Haven Books, 43 Seneca Street, tel: 613-730-9888; e-mail: havenbooks@cusaonline.ca; www.havenbooks.ca**

Some supplementary readings will be put on reserve at the library to help with specific assignments.

### **Evaluation:**

Short Article Summary (**Due: your selected day**) 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 (**Due: your selected day**) 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 (the Recommended Secondary Readings List is the best starting point for this research). Also required are a one-page outline of the presentation and a list of the sources used. This outline and list of sources should be distributed to the class at the presentation or posted on CULearn before class. Please make sure to discuss your seminar with me at least 1 week before your presentation so that I may organize the class so as to avoid overlap. 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**

Paper Abstract Presentation (**Due: April 1, 2020**) 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 (**Due: April 7, 2020**) 30%

*A paper of 12-15 pages (typed, double-spaced) on a medieval text or issue studied in class is due April 7, 2020. MLA format is required for your essay, as is secondary research. Your essay should display a fourth-year-level mastery of spelling, grammar, syntax, paragraphing, and argumentation. I strongly encourage you to come and discuss your ideas and essay outlines with me during my office hours.*

*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. 4 (four) posts are to be completed for class meetings before the Reading Week and 4 (four) for class meetings after the Reading Week. Each post is to be made to CULearn before 9am on the day of 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.*

## Attendance and Participation

10%

*Because this is a seminar, much of the discussion will be shaped and initiated by you, the students. I expect you to come to all classes 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. Attendance will be taken at each class, including the first meeting. Please note that surfing the web, e-mailing, texting, facebooking, doing homework for other courses, etc. while in class does not constitute either attendance or participation and will substantially lower your grade for this portion of the course. Please see separate sheet distributed at the first class for a more explicit outline of grading criteria.*

**Please Note: If one of your assignments is lost, misplaced, or not received by the instructor, you are responsible for having a backup copy that can be submitted immediately upon request.**

**Please note:** Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations, hand-outs, assignments, lectures, quizzes, drafts, and exams) 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).

**PLAGIARISM**

The University Senate defines **plagiarism** as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, suspension from a program, suspension from the university, or even expulsion from the university. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### **REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

#### **Pregnancy obligation**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/contact/form-pregnancy-accommodation/>

#### **Religious obligation**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>

#### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the Paul Menton Centre Website: [carleton.ca/pmc](http://carleton.ca/pmc)

#### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/sexual-violence-prevention-survivor-support/>

#### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of

class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

<https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

### **Schedule of Classes and Readings:**

Check Class Location in Carleton Central. Readings are to be completed for class by the date under which they are listed. Please note that I reserve the right to adjust this syllabus to meet the needs of the class; however, major changes will be announced in advance.

**(RSV): available through Library Reserves**

**(on-line): available on-line through Library Catalogue**

W. Jan. 8 Introduction to Course  
Historical Contexts and Key Terms

### **I. Christians Depicting Christians: Spiritual Seeking and Corruption**

W. Jan. 15 Geoffrey Chaucer, *General Prologue*, in *The Canterbury Tales* (CT)  
— . *The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale*, in CT

W. Jan. 22 William Langland, "Prologue" in *Piers Plowman* [B-version] (PP)  
— . Passus 15

W. Jan. 29. William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, Passus 16-18

### **II. Christians Depicting Muslims: Desire, Crusade, and Religion-as-Race**

W. Feb. 5 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale*, in CT  
*The King of Tars*

W. Feb. 12 Muslim Voices:

Fityan Al Shaghuri, "The Letter R," ed. Ahmad Al Jundi in *The Anthology of Fityan Al Shaghuri 530-610 AH [1136-1218 CE]*, (Al Hashimya, 1976), trans. and typeset Hisham Al Khatib (Ottawa, 2019) **(available as PDF on CULearn)**

Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, trans. Richards (Aldershot, 2002), 146-88 **(RSV or from prof)**

*The Chronicle of the Third Crusade: The Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, trans. Helen J. Nicholson (Aldershot, 1997), 201-61 **(RSV or from prof)**

W. Feb. 19    **No Class; Reading Week**

W. Feb. 26    *Richard Coer de Lyon*, lines 1-3758 (Focus particularly on ll. 1-250, 1243-1678, 2607-3758)

### **III. Christians Depicting Jews: Blood Libels and Entanglement**

W. Mar. 4    Jewish Voices: Susan L. Einbinder, “Meir b. Elijah of Norwich: persecution and poetry among medieval English Jews,” *Journal of Medieval History* 26.2 (2000): 145–62. **(on-line through library)**  
Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Prioress’s Prologue and Tale*, in *CT*

W. Mar. 11    *The Siege of Jerusalem*

### **IV. Christians Depicting Christian Women: Saints and Wives**

W. Mar. 18    Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Second Nun’s Prologue and Tale*, in *CT*  
— . *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, in *CT*

W. Mar. 25    Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*

W. Apr. 1    **Paper Abstract Presentations**  
Finish Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* if needed  
Closing Discussion

T. Apr. 7    **No Class; Term Papers Due**