ENGL310A Chaucer I
The Dream Visions and *Troilus and Criseyde*
Spring Term 2009
Prof. Sarah Tolmie

CONTACT INFORMATION:
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Course Description
This course is an introduction to the poetic work of Geoffrey Chaucer, the fourteenth-century poet often hailed as the father of the English literary tradition. All texts will be read in Middle English, and ongoing instruction in the language will be provided. The course will examine Chaucer’s earlier literary works, a series of dream vision poems based on French and Italian models, and his longest single work, the romance *Troilus and Criseyde*, a virtuoso performance in the most prestigious genre of his day. We will examine his professional life as a poet, and its attendant problems, largely those of generic entrapment, leading up to the great experiment of writing the *Canterbury Tales*.

PLEASE NOTE: Middle English is almost a foreign language to modern readers. Regular attendance in class and work at home on translation during the first weeks of the course will be necessary to achieve comfortable reading proficiency. Without this initial investment, you will not be able to keep up with the scheduled readings.

Required Textbook
*The Riverside Chaucer*

Assignments
Midterm (translation) 20%
Oral presentation 10%
Research essay 30% (5% for proposal)
Exam 30%
Participation 10%

Midterm test
This will consist of two passages of Middle English, approximately 10 lines each, to be translated into modern English prose paragraphs. It will take the full class time, and cannot be rescheduled unless a doctor’s note is provided.

Oral presentation
These will be ten minutes in length, with time limits strictly enforced. They can be on any topic related to Chaucer, either on a subject pertinent to the day’s reading, or not. Ideas first presented here can be further developed into essay topics, if desired. They should involve secondary scholarship — a class handout with a bibliography is advisable, but
not required — but can also be an independent close reading of a section of text. Content of the presentation should be primarily analytical. Missed presentations cannot be rescheduled without a doctor’s note and will be given a grade of zero.

Research essay
Essays must be 2500-3000 words, formatted throughout in MLA style, and include a bibliography of at least five items, only two of which can be from the internet. Topics must be developed by students individually in consultation with the instructor. One meeting in office hours or a conversation by e-mail is required as part of this process and students are responsible for scheduling this. At this meeting, the student must submit a paragraph-length essay proposal and a preliminary bibliography of three items. This proposal and bibliography is worth 5% of the course grade. Essays will be marked for grammar and formatting as well as intellectual content. Plagiarized essays will be given a grade of zero and may result in a grade of zero for the course. Late essays will be marked down 10% (one letter grade) and will not be accepted after seven days beyond the final deadline. Essays must be submitted in class or to the English department drop box the day before the due date for date-stamping. It is also possible for students to devise creative assignments in lieu of essays for this course. These must involve both a creative and a methodological component and require the same process of consultation with the instructor, and a detailed written proposal. Students may submit essays/assignments on a choice of two deadlines, early or late, but the choice is binding: once you have signed up for one deadline, you are committed to it.

Exam
This will be during the scheduled examination period. It will involve all of the material on the course, and will be in essay format. There will be no translation on the exam.

Participation
Regular attendance in class, competence in in-class reading and translating, and considered responses to the text are critical to success in the course.

Academic Offenses and Grievance
Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/] to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm. Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other
than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm. When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Students Registered with the Disabilities Office
Please inform me if you are registered with the office and have specific requirements, or will be taking tests and exams under their supervision.

Schedule of classes

| Week 1   | Mon 4 May  | Introduction to Chaucer; introduction to Middle English |
|          | Wed 6 May  | Reading Practice: *Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse*, Adam Scriveyn |

| Week 2   | Mon 11 May | *The Book of the Duchess* |
|          | Wed 13 May | *The Book of the Duchess* |

| Week 3   | Mon 18 May | *The Book of the Duchess* |
|          | Wed 20 May | *The Book of the Duchess* |

| Week 4   | Mon 25 May | *The Book of the Duchess* |
|          | Wed 27 May | *The House of Fame* |

| Week 5   | Mon 1 June | *The House of Fame* |
|          | Wed 3 June | *The House of Fame* |

| Week 6   | Mon 8 June | *The House of Fame* |
|          | Wed 10 June | *The House of Fame* |

| Week 7   | Mon 15 June | MIDTERM TRANSLATION TEST |
|          | Wed 17 June | *Troilus and Criseyde* Book I |

| Week 8   | Mon 22 June | *Troilus* Book I |
|          | Wed 24 June | *Troilus* Book II |

| Week 9   | Mon 29 June | *Troilus* Book II ***EARLY DUE DATE FOR ESSAYS*** |
|          | Wed 1 July | CANADA DAY – NO CLASS |

| Week 10  | Mon 6 July | *Troilus* Book III |
Wed 8 July  Troilus Book III-IV

Week 11  Mon 13 July  Troilus, Book IV  
          Wed 15 July  Troilus Book V  

Week 12  Mon 20 July  Troilus Book V  
          Wed 22 July  Troilus, the whole text and exam review ***FINAL DUE DATE FOR ESSAYS***
Chaucers Wordes Unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn

Adam Scriveyn, if it ever thee bifalle
Boece or Troylus for to written newe,
Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scalle,
But after my makyng thow wryte more trewe;
So ofte aday I mot thy werke renewe,
It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,
And all is thorough thy negligence and rape.

The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse

To yow, my purse, and to noon other wight
Complayne I, for ye be my lady dere.
I am so sorry, now that ye been lyght;
For certes but yf ye make me hevy chere,
Me were as leef be layd upon my bere;
For which unto your mercy thus I crye,
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye.

Now voucheth sauf this day or hhit be nyght
That I of yow the blissful soum may here
Or see your color lyl the sonne bryght
That of yeelownesse hadde never perve.
Ye ben my lyfe, ye be myn hertes stere.
Quene of comfort and of good companye,
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moot I dye.

Now purse that ben to me my lyves lyght
And saveour as doun in this world here,
Syn that ye wole nat ben my tresorere;
For I am shave as nye as any freere.
But yet I pray unto your curtesye,
Beth hevy agen, or elles moot I dye.

Lenvoy de Chaucer

O conquerour of Brutes Albyon,
Which that by lyne and free eleccion
Been verray kyng, this song to yow I sende,
And ye, that mowen all oure harmes amende,
Have mynde upon my supplicacion.
The following is a sample translation passage. You will need to complete two of these on your midterm test.

The Book of the Duchess  
ll. 616-31

... Allas, how myghte I fare werre?  
My boldnesse ys turned to shame,  
For fals Fortune hath playd a game  
Atte ches with me, allas the while!  
The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,  
That al behoteth and nothing halt,  
She goth upryght and yet she halt,  
That baggeth foule and loketh faire,  
The dispitous debonaire  
That skorneth many a creature!  
An ydole of fals portrayture  
Is she, for she wol sone wriene;  
She is the monstres hed ywriene,  
As fylthe over-ystrawed with floures.  
Her moste worshippe and hir flour is  
To lyen, for that is her nature. ...

Vocabulary: behoteth, promises wriene, turn or change ywriene, hidden

Samples from the History of English

Old English: Beowulf, ll. 1-25 (8th-10th c.)

Hwæt, we Gar-Dena in geardagum, 
þeodelcyninga þrym gefrunon,  
huða æþelingas ellen fremedon!  
Oft Scyld Seefing sceaþena þreatum,  
monegum mæþum meodosetla  
ofeah,  
egodsode corlas, syððan ærest weard  
fæsceæft funden; he þæs frofre gebad,  
wexof under wolcnum weorðmyndum þah,  
oð þæt him æghwylc ymbsittendra  
ofer hronrade hyran scolde,  
gomban gyldan; þæt wæs god cyning!

Yo! We have heard of the noble deeds of the Spear-Danes,  
of the nation-kings, in days of yore,  
how the princes performed courageous deeds.  
Often Scyld Seefing [shield, son of sheaf] deprived troops of  
[and] terrified warriors, after he was first  
found destitute; he experience a compensation for that,  
[he] grew under the skies, flourished in glories,  
until each of the neighbouring kingdoms [lit. around-sitters]  
over the whale-road had to obey him,  
to give him treasure; that was a good king!
Old Norse: Snorri Sturluson, Prologue to *Edda* (early 13th century)

Almáttigr guð skapaði himin ok jörð
ok alla þá hluti er þeim fylgja,
ok síðarst menn tvá
er ættir eru frá komnar, Adam ok Eve,
ok fylgðaði þeira kynslóð
ok dreifðið um heim allan.
En er fram líðu sundir,
þá ójafnaðsk mannfólkit:
váru sumir góðir ok rétt trúðir,
en myklu fleiri snerusk
eptir gínum heimsins
ok óræktu guðs bódórð,
ok fyrir því,
drekti guð heiminum í sjávargangi
ok òllum kvíkvedum heimsins
nema þeim er í þræktinnn váru með
Noa.

Almighty God created ["shaped"] heaven and earth
and all of the things ["lots"] that belong to it ["follow it”]
and last two people
from whom generations are descended, Adam and Eve,
and their progeny multiplied
and dispersed around the whole world.
But as the ages passed from this,
then mankind became unequal:
some were good and rightly orthodox,
but many more turned aside
after worldly desires
and ignored God’s commandment,
and on account of this,
God drowned the world in surgings of the sea
and all living things in the world
except those who were in the ark with Noah.

Early Middle English: *Laamon*, *Brut*, ll. 10559-10573 (c. 1250)

Þa cleopede Arður ludere stæfne:
"Lou war her biforen us heðene hundes,
þe slo en ure alderen mid luðere heore craften,
and heo us beoð on londe lædest alre þinge.
Nu fusen we hom to and stærlijke heom leggen on,
and wreken wunderliche ure cun and ure riche,
and wreken þene muchele scome þat heo us iscend habbeoð
þat heo over uðen comen to Dertemuðen;
and alle heo beoð forsworene and alle heo beoð forlorene—
heo beoð fordemed alle mid Drihttenes fulste."

Influence of French: *Sir Orfeo*, ll. 1-13 (c. 1300)

We redeþ oft and findeþ ywrite,
And þis clerkes wele it wite,
Layes þat ben in harping
Ben yfounde of ferli þing.
Sum beþe of wer and sum of wo,
And sum of joie and mirþe also,
And sum of trecherie and of gile,
Of old aventours þat fel while,
And sum of bourdes and ribaudy,
And mani þer beþ of fairy.
Of al þinges þat men seþ,
Mest o love, for soþe, þai beþ.
In Breteyne þis layes were wrote,

**West Midlands dialect: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ll. 1-19 (late 14th century)**

Siþen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye,
Þe bor britten and brent to bron dez and askez,
Þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wrot
Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe,
Hit watz Ennias þe athel and his highe hynde
þat siþen deprecied provindes and patrounes bicome
Welne e of al þe were in þe west iles.
Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,
With gret bobbaunce þat bur e he biges upon þýrst
And nevenes hit his aune nome as hit now hat;
Ticius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,
Langaberde in Lumbardie lyfles up homes,
And fer over þe French floid Felix Brutus
On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settez
   Wyth wynne;
   Where werre and wrake and wonder
   Bi syþez hatz wonþ þerinne,
   And oft boþe blysse and blunder
   Ful skete hatz skyfted synne.

**Scots: William Dunbar, The Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo, ll. 1-6 (late 15th century)**

Apon the Midsummer evin, mryiest of nichtis,
I muvit furth till ane meid, as midnicht wes past,
Besyd ane gudlie grein garth, full of gay flouris,
Hegeit of ane huge hicht with hawthorne treis,
Quhairon ane birde on ane branche so birst out hir notis
That never ane blythfullar birde was on the beuche hard.

**Influence of Print: William Caxton, Prologue to Enydos (c. 1490)**

And when I had advysed me in this sayd boke, I delybered and concluded to translate it into Englysshe, and forthwyth toke a penne and ynke and wrote a leef or twyne whych I oversawe agayn to corecte it. And when I sawe the fayr and straunge termes therin, I doubted that it sholde not please some gentylmen whiche late blamed me, sayeinge that in my translacyons I had over-curyous termes whiche coude not be understande of comyn peple and desired me to use olde and homely termes in my translacyons. And fayn wolde I satysfye every man, and so to doo toke an olde boke and redde therin; and certaynly the Englysshe was so rude and brood that I coude not wele understande it. And also my lorde abbot of Westmynster ded do shewe to me late certayn evydence wyton in olde Englysshe for to reduce it into our Englysshe now usid. And certaynly it was wretyn in suche wyse that it was more lyke to Dutche than Englysshe: I coude not reduce ne brynge it to be understanden.
And certaynly our langage now used varyeth ferre from that whiche was used and spoken
when I was borne, for we Englysshemen ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is never stedfaste but ever waverynge, wexynge one season and waneth and dyscreaseth another season.

And that comyn Englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from another. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchaunte was in a shippe in Tamyse for to have sayled over the see into Zelande. And for lacke of wynde that taryd atte forlond and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named Shefelde, a mercer, cam into an hows and axed for mete and speclye he axyd after egys. And the goode wyf anserde that she coude speke no Frenshe. And the marchaunte was angry, for he also coude speke no Frenshe, but wolde have hadde egges; and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste another sayde that he wolde have eyren; then the good wyf sayd that she understod hym wel. Loo! What sholde a man in thys dayes now wryte, “egges” or “eyren”? Certaynly it is harde to playse eery man bycause of dyversite and chaunge of langage.

Some Causes of Reading Difficulty

Abbreviations
ME = Middle English
ModE = Modern English
OE = Old English

1. Morphology

- history of English is one of simplification, first morphological (ME loses OE inflexions) and then syntactic: ME is morphologically more complex than ModE

- nouns:
  - ModE plurals in -s or -es
  - ME plurals can also end in -is (e.g., goddis = “gods,” not “goddess”)
  - some nouns form plural with -(e)jn: a few survivals in ModE (oxen, children), but rather more in ME (brethren, sustren, shoon, foon, eyen, eyren [“eggs”]) — some of these nouns alternate between -n forms and -s forms

- pronouns:
  - I is normal form for 1st-person sing., but ich or ik sometime occur
  - ME retains distinct forms of second-pers. pronoun: thou (thow) / thee / thyn for singular, you (yow) / ye / your for plural; like mod. French, ME uses plural for polite speech, even when referring to singular subject
  - 3rd-person sing. as ModE, except that it can alternate with hit / hyt
    - neuter it has no possessive, so his is used ( “The lylie upon his stalke grene” — this is not personification)
    - feminine possessive spelled hir / hire / here
  - 3rd-person plural is they, but hem in object form
    - possessive is hire or here, so there’s a possibility of confusion with 3rd-pers. sing. fem (e.g., hire shoon can mean “her shoes” or “their shoes”). In practice this won’t pose serious difficulties, since context will guide you.
    - man / men = indefinite pronoun, as mod. German or Dutch: “one,” not “a male human being” (e.g. “What asketh men to have?” means “What does one want?” not “What do guys want?”)
adverbs:
- some formed by adding -ly or -liche, but most formed by adding -e to adjective
  - in translation, let context guide you as to whether an adjective or an adverb is needed
  - e.g. “The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun,” / “[he] That loveth so hoote Emelye the brighte”

verbs:
- infinitives usually end in -(e)n, e.g., to loven, to singen, to ben
- present tense more inflected than ModE:
  - 2nd-person singular in -(e)st
  - 3rd sing. in -(e)th
  - plural usually in -(e)n
- in questions, pronouns sometimes assimilate to verb: artow = “art thow,” wiltow = “wilt thow,” thinkestow = “thinkest thow”
- some shortened forms: bit for biddeth, rit for rideth, worth for wortheth, etc.
- strong verbs (past tense indicated by vowel change, not -ed): vowel changes are often different from ModE, simply must be learned
  - ME sing, song, songe(n); ModE sing, sang, sung
  - some verbs are strong in ME but weak in ModE: streccchen → straughte, werken → wrought — hard to find in glossary
- irregular verbs: e.g., goon → went(e) or yede
  - hoten → highte = “to promise,” but also “to be called”
- past participles: end in -(e)n, optionally begin in i-/y- (reduced form of German & Dutch ge-): “He wol nat with his arwe been ywroken” — ywroken = ppl. of wreken, like ModE “wreak,” = “to avenge”
- negation: ne before verb, nat / not after, intensifiers (noght, nevere, in no wise)
  - multiple negation possible: “He nevere yet no vilene ye seyd”
  - negative particle ne can assimilate to verbs beginning in vowels, h- or w- (I nadde = “I ne hadde,” I not = “I ne wot,” I nyste = “I ne wiste”)
- impersonal verbs
  - me seemeth = it seems to me
  - me thinketh (Shakespeare’s “methinks”) = it seems to me (thinken = “to seem,” not to be confused with thenken = “to think”)
  - me liketh = lit. “it likes to me,” i.e., “I approve” (“it liketh me wel” = OK)
  - me liste = lit. “it wants to me”, i.e., “I want”
- modal auxiliaries will, can, may etc. like ModE, but one very frequent auxiliary is unfamiliar: ginnen (gan, goon)
  - survives in ModE “begin,” but means something like “do”
  - “On her knees she gan to fall” = not “began to fall” but “fell”
  - “my herte ginneth blede” = my heart bleeds

2. Vocabulary
- Words that have disappeared must be memorized (e.g., whilom = long ago, eke = also, wrecche = vengeance, mynne = remember (imperative))
- variations in spelling: this is a feature of manuscript culture, before printing technology fixed the written form of English into a more rigid convention
- $i$ and $y$ are interchangeable ($y$ was used to avoid minim confusion)
- $u$ and $v$ are interchangeable
- sometimes initial $i$- where we would expect a $j$- (Januarie)

- watch out for metathesis: e.g., $axen$ = "to ask"

- False friends (words that look the same as ModE equivalents but have a different meaning) pose greater problems for comprehension
- for example, many words denoting moral condition in ME often narrow to a purely sexual meaning in ModE
  - $buxom$ = obedient
  - $lust$ = desire, not necessarily sexual ("Lord, welcome by thy lust and thy plesaunce; / My lust I putte al in thy ordinaunce.")
  - $likerous$ (mod. "lecherous") = "eager," "greedy" in addition to mod. sense
  - $pleye$, $disport$ = relaxation, but can often connote amorous play

- social terminology evolves into an attribution of value
  - "noble" = aristocratic, but also innately superior in quality
  - $vilein$ (mod. "villain") > $vill$ = rural estate
    - originally means "peasant," inhabitant of $vill$
    - acquires connotation of base, ignoble, boorish, untrustworthy, contemptible
    - primary, value-neutral meaning co-exists in ME with pejorative meaning: "For now I wot wel utterly / that thou art gentyll by thi speche. / For though a man fer wolde seche. / He shulde not fynden, in certeyn, / No sicch answer of no vileyn; / For sich a word ne yghete nought / Isse out of a vilayns thought" (Chaucer, Romaunt of the Rose 1986-92).
  - $churl$ = peasant, non-noble, but acquires pejorative sense of "rude," "boorish" ("The Millere is a cherl; ye knowe wel this. / So was the Reve eek and othere mo, / And harlotrie they tolden bothe two," $CT$ 1.3182-84)
  - $rude$ = uniformed, uneducated
  - $lewed$ (mod. "lewd") = uneducated
    - formulative phrase "the lerned and the lewed" (i.e., everyone)
    - when Chaucer says of himself, "I am a lewed man," he doesn't mean that he has a dirty mind!
  - $knav$ = boy (cf. modern German Knabe), begins to acquire mod. sense of "rogue," "crook"
    - boys often worked as servants in great houses, servants were assumed to be lower in class and therefore quality