English 310 B
Chaucer--The Canterbury Tales

Neil Hultin
Office Hours: HH 139
H.H. 325
Tues./Thur. 11:30-1:00
Tuesday: 1:30-4:30
Phone: 885-4567 Ex. 3775
Other times by appointment

The purpose of 310B is to make you more familiar with a
major work of the English Middle Ages and with a writer--
Geoffrey Chaucer--who Caxton considered "worthy... the
lawren of poetry [to] have" and William Dunbar, the
Fifteenth-century Scots poet, agreed was "of makaris flour"
[the flower of poets]. This course deals with only one of
Chaucer's several works and that an unfinished work.

Even in its fragmentary state, the "Canterbury Tales"
is a text of some length and complexity, one which,
moreover, is largely written in a dialect typical of London
in the late Fourteenth Century. This means that Canadians
at the end of the Twentieth Century must accustom themselves
to a language differing from theirs in pronunciation, in
form, in some aspects of syntax, and in meaning before they
can enjoy the wit, humour, poetic skill, and intellectual
keenness of Chaucer. It is important that you make every
attempt to learn the pronunciation and that you watch for
possible differences in meanings. Nevertheless, as a
language, Middle English is not particularly difficult and
with a little care at the outset, you should have no trouble
with it. The introductory sections on language in your text
will help considerably and I would suggest that you try
reading the verse aloud from time to time.

Interpreting a text some six centuries distant is
another matter and we will spend the term discussing how we
might best understand this significant record of European
culture for the "Canterbury Tales" is a complex interweaving
of tale, narrator, and author, presenting us with issues and
concerns that were widely discussed at the end of the
Fourteenth Century and which, despite our quite different
preconceptions and approaches, continue to disturb us at the
end of the Twentieth Century.

L.D. Benson, et.al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company,
1987).

Assignments:
Essay 1: A brief essay (1000 words--i.e. ca. 3-4 pages of
type).
Subject: The depiction of one of the following
characters in the "General Prologue": The Reeve,
the Cook, the Friar, the Summoner, the Squire, the Physician, the Shipman, or the Monk. Consider how Chaucer creates a "biography" for his pilgrims.  
**Due: 17 May**
15%

**Essay 2:** An essay of roughly 8-10 pages (2,500-3,000 words of type)  
**Subject:** An examination of one of the tales not discussed at length in class, i.e. "Reeve's Prologue and Tale," "Cook's Prologue and Tale" (unfinished), "The Friar's Prologue and Tale," "The Summoner's Prologue and Tale," "The Squire's Introduction and Tale" (unfinished), "The Physician's Tale," "The Shipman's Tale," "The Monk's Prologue and Tale." You may, if you wish, continue with the character you selected for the first essay, looking now at the tale told by that individual.  
**Due: 19 July**  
35%

**Mid-term:** This will be an open book examination (but no notes or other reference works) covering all the material reached by the day of the examination  
**Scheduled for 14 June** (in class)  
20%

**Final:** The final examination will be open-book and will cover the entire Canterbury Tales--those tales not discussed in classes as well as those discussed.  
**Scheduled by the university**  
30%

**Reading Assignments:**

Note: Class discussions will concentrate on the 18 items listed below. Those tales in brackets are to be read but we will spend less time--in some instances, no time at all--on them. You are responsible for them nonetheless and they may appear on examinations. Your essays will concentrate upon one of those tales not discussed--or only briefly discussed--in class.

1. "The Canterbury Tales"  

2. "General Prologue"

3. "Knight's Tale"
4. "Miller's Prologue and Tale,"
   ["Reeve's Prologue and Tale," "Cook's Prologue and Tale"]

5. "Man of Law's Introduction, Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue"

6. "Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale,"
   ["The Friar's Prologue and Tale," "The Summoner's Prologue and Tale"]

7. "The Clerk's Prologue and Tale"

8. "The Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue"
   ["The Squire's Introduction and Tale"]

9. "The Franklin's Prologue and Tale"
   ["The Physician's Tale"]

10. "The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale"
    ["The Shipman's Tale"]

11. "The Prioress's Prologue and Tale"

    ["The Monk's Prologue and Tale"]

13. "The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue"


15. "The Canon Yeoman's Prologue and Tale"

16. "The Manciple's Prologue and Tale"

17. "The Parson's Prologue and Tale"

18. "Chaucer's Retraction"