

ENGL 7211/8211 Medieval Literature  
Dr. Cristina Maria Cervone  
cmcervone@memphis.edu  
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## Medieval Dream Visions

“God turne us every drem to goode!” (Chaucer, *House of Fame*)

Hugely popular in the Middle Ages, dream visions offered tantalizing possibilities for exploring moral and ethical truths, the psychology of cognition, bodily sensation, the relationship of humanity to divinity, and the power and nature of emotion, among other things. Many of their concerns still resonate strongly today: how can we deal with devastating loss? What is true happiness? Where should we look for love? How can we “do well” with regard to ourselves, our neighbors, and God? These remarkable and compelling works are at times surprisingly post-modern in their narrative disjunctures, the dream state allowing for some odd and disconcerting experiences that are (necessarily) narrated in the first person. The course will include instruction in medieval dream theory and psychology that will help us make sense of distinctively medieval aspects of these literary works. Readings are likely to be drawn from among the following, some of which will be read only in part: Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (in translation); *The Dream of the Rood*; a selection from Dante Alighieri’s *Commedia*; Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun’s, *Le Roman de la Rose* (in translation); Christine de Pizan’s *The Book of the City of Ladies* (in translation); Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess*, *The House of Fame*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale* (from *The Canterbury Tales*); the alliterative poem *Pearl*; and William Langland’s famously enigmatic and challenging *Piers Plowman*.

The readings and topics provide something of interest for students from all concentrations and all are welcome. Major assignments can be adapted in ways useful to concentrators working in areas other than literature (particularly creative writing). Work on many of the fundamental critical questions can be applied readily to other subfields of English studies.