

ENGL 7230-001/8230-001 Chaucer
Monday 5:30–8:30 p.m.
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Chaucer

Who painted the lion? When Chaucer's Wife of Bath questions whether it is possible for male, clerical authors to portray women in any terms other than unflattering ones, she draws on an old story, claiming that if lions painted hunt scenes, the stories they showed would vastly diverge from traditional ones. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* famously employs the framework of a pilgrimage to Canterbury to connect a diverse collection of stories loosely, juxtaposing voices and opinions that can seem as varied, as lively, and as real as those we hear around us today. But Chaucer did not make up these stories out of whole cloth; like other medieval writers, he was a bit of a magpie, feathering his nest with bits and pieces gathered from other writers, with considerable artistic manipulation and more than a smattering of true-to-life personal observation thrown in for good measure. For this course we will read a generous portion of the *Canterbury Tales* along with some of Chaucer's wonderfully surreal dream poems, a few short lyric poems, and perhaps some of his marvelous *Troilus and Criseyde*. We will concentrate on the "earnest and game" of Chaucer's serious and playful manipulations of language and source texts with an eye toward the historical circumstances of late fourteenth-century England. Secondary readings and reports will offer a sense of current trends in medieval studies, from queer theory to animal studies to new directions in lyric poetry. If you have no experience with medieval literature, this course will show you what you have been missing, while if you presume Chaucer is old-fashioned or irrelevant, the readings will paint a new picture! Prior knowledge of Middle English is not required; coursework will include language practice as well as close analysis of poetic forms.

Required texts:

Boethius/Slavitt, *Consolation of Philosophy* (Harvard) 9780674048355
Chaucer/Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3d ed. (Houghton Mifflin) 9780395290316
Horobin, *Chaucer's Language* (Palgrave) 9781403993564