

English 502: Compilational Reading and Middle English Romance

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Office hours: Mondays, 3:30-5pm

Course Description:

This seminar, which fulfills the manuscript studies requirement for the Textual Studies certificate, will both introduce graduate students to the capacious genre of late Middle English romance and invite students to explore the radically different ways in which these texts have been received over time. The first half of the course will situate students in the genre and tradition of late Middle English romance through the study of a select number of texts (such as *Isumbras*, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, *Sir Gawayne*, and *Sir Eglamour of Artois*). Particular attention will be paid to the representation of gender and also premodern race-making that medieval romance frequently enacts in its world-building. To that end, we will have the pleasure of hosting Geraldine Heng in the first week of the course whose landmark books *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romances and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* and *The Invention of Race in the Middle Ages* have encouraged increased attention to the formation of premodern racialized discourse.

The second half of the course will build off of this work and invite students to investigate how our readings shift once we begin to consider not only the manuscript provenance of these texts, but the ways in which the texts are positioned and compiled, drawing inspiration from Arthur Bahr's innovative book *Fragments and Assemblages*. We will focus directly on Arthur Bahr's work in *Fragments and Assemblages*, where he invites those who study medieval literature to read "compilationally," and we will have the pleasure of having him visit at mid-quarter to discuss his past and current work. In this portion of the course, we will revisit the romances covered in the first half of the class, exploring how our understanding/interpretations shift when we encounter these texts in ways that account for their material manuscript contexts (especially as their meaning might be informed by the other texts with whom they share textual space, and also how the compilers selected the works in question and ordered them in the manuscript). Our work will involve reading other texts housed in the same manuscript, visiting our rare books library, participating in a scribal workshop (the TS department is helping me purchase quills, iron gall ink, and parchment), and more.

On Grading: Students will be evaluated on their active participation in class and through the successful completion of the assignments they self-select through the course assignment menu (see below). The grade breakdown will vary from student to student, but participation will count for 40% of your grade. Please reach out at any point during the quarter for updates on your grade-to-date if you're uncertain.

Grading Scale

3.7 and above = A (you're doing fine)

3.6 and below = B (we should talk)

Course Assignment Menu: In order to help make this class one that will maximally benefit folks at both grad and undergrad levels, I've chosen to take inspiration from Dr. Victoria Ford Smith at UConn and offer an assignment menu in lieu of a mandated set of assignments. As I mentioned before the start of term, you have until Wednesday of next week to submit a proposal of the work

you have decided to do, and I'd ideally like to see each of you either Wednesday during office hours or by appointment on Friday of that week to go over everything in person. While you must pick one assignment from each section, you are not obligated to follow a particular track unless you want to do so.

	TIER I ASSIGNMENTS	TIER II ASSIGNMENTS	TIER III ASSIGNMENTS
RESEARCH TRACK	3 response papers, 2 to 3 pages each	20-minute conference paper (with option to present in class)	20-25 page seminar paper
PEDAGOGY TRACK	Lead discussion during half of one seminar period and submit notes	Book review of a monograph or collection relevant to the seminar published within the last 5 years	20-25 page MLA-style <i>Approaches to Teaching</i> essay on one of the texts or ideas on our syllabus
ARCHIVAL TRACK	Create a plan for teaching one text in an undergraduate class and submit a one-page narrative describing context and goals, notes, and relevant teaching materials (e.g. handouts)	Short piece of researched public-facing scholarship (4 to 5 pages)	Curated exhibit, virtual or planned, including at least two archival objects, a selection of nonarchival supporting objects or texts, narrative for viewers/visitors for each object or text, and a statement of purpose
DIGITAL TRACK	A plan for a visit to an archive with a statement of purpose	Annotated syllabus for a undergraduate course related to seminar material	Digital project, or the beginnings of a digital project with a narrative on how you would complete it
	Review and comparison of two digital projects relevant to the seminar (5 to 6 pages)	Archival object research and reflection (4 to 5 pages)	
		Proposal for digital project with supporting research	

Required Texts:

n.b.: All readings aside from these will be available through Canvas. You'll be able to find them by heading to our Assignments section and clicking on the particular week.

- *Siege of Jerusalem*, ed. Boyarin: <https://broadviewpress.com/product/the-siege-of-jerusalem/#tab-description>
- *Richard Coeur de Lion*. Either of these will be fine:
 - *Katherine Terrell's translation: <https://broadviewpress.com/product/richard-coeur-de-lion/#tab-description>
 - Peter Larkin's student-friendly edition (available for free online, see Canvas for link)
- **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Winny.
- **Cleanness*: <https://broadviewpress.com/product/cleanness/#tab-description>

Course Schedule:

Week 1 Introduction to Medieval Romance

March 30th: Introductions to the Genre

- Read **TWO** of following:
 - Susan Crane: *Insular Romance* (selections)

- James and Peggy Knapp: Medieval Romance and the Aesthetics of Possibility (introduction)
- Helen Cooper: The English Romance In Time (selections)
- Hahn and Dana Symons: “Middle English Romance”
- Read: Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic* (Introduction)

Week 2 Auchinleck Romances

April 4th: Otuel, Sir Orfeo

- Read *The King of Tars*
- Read Sir Orfeo (Intro and Lay): <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-sir-orfeo-introduction>
- **Optional:** Otuel and Roland: <https://archive.org/details/taillraufcoilye00herrgoog/page/n90>

Pick Two:

- Read Megan Leitch, “Middle English Romance: The Motifs and the Critics”
- Read Neil Cartlidge, “Medieval Romance Mischief”
- Read Calkin, *Saracens and the Makings of Middle English Romance: The Auchinleck Manuscript*, Introduction.

April 6th: Richard Coer de Lyon, Part I

- Read *Richard Coer de Lyon* (Larkin edition or Terrell Translation, first half)
- Read and compare the online Auchinleck version of RCL (Entitled “King Richard”) and peruse the digitized facsimile and website: <https://auchinleck.nls.uk/editorial/bibliography1.html>
- Read Marissa Libbon, “The Invention of *King Richard*”

Week 3 Thornton Romance Pt. I

April 11th: Richard Coer de Lyon Part II

- Read *Richard Coer de Lyon* (Larkin or Terrell, second half)
- Read Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic*, Chapter 2
- Read Suzanne Akbari, “The Hunger for National Identity in *Richard Coer de Lyon*”

April 13th: Sir Isumbras

Week 4 The Thornton Romances, Part II

April 18th: Sir Perceval of Galles (secondary reading tbd)

April 20th: Sir Degrevant (secondary reading tbd)

Week 5 The Gawain Poet

April 25th: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

- o Read or revisit SGGK in translation
- o 1-2 articles tbd

April 27th: Pearl

- o Read *Pearl* (METS edition or Armitage translation)
- o Read Bahr, “The Manifold Singularity of Pearl.”

Week 6

May 2nd: Compilational Reading and Medieval Manuscripts, An Introduction

- o Read *Fragments and Assemblages* (Introduction, Chapter 1)
- o Read Excerpts from Kathryn Kerby-Fulton’s *Opening Middle English Manuscripts* (TBD)

May 4th:

- o Read *Fragments and Assemblages* (2, and 3)
- o Read Excerpts from Kathryn Kerby-Fulton’s *Opening Middle English Manuscripts* (TBD)

Note: Discussion of Pearl will continue into this week

Week 7

May 9th: Cotton Nero Discussion

- o Read *Patience*.
- o Read *Cleanness*
- o Peruse the Cotton Nero A.ii website.
- o Read Maidie Hilmo, “Illustrating the Gawain Manuscript.”
- o Read Maidie Hilmo, “Reconceptualizing the Poems of the Pearl-Gawain Manuscript in Line and Color”

May 11th: Possible Visit to Rare books (backup plan: final projects workshopping)

Week 8

May 16th : Scribal Workshop (Details Coming soon . . .)

May 18th: Auchinleck revisited

- o Read The lives of St. Katherine and St. Margaret (mets versions) and then take a look at the Auchinleck versions themselves to see how they compare.
- o Read Excerpts from *The Auchinleck Manuscript, New Perspectives* (Intro, Chapters 1-2)
- o Read Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, Chapter 4

Week 9 Thornton Revisited

May 23rd:

- o Read St. Christopher
- o Read The *Anynters*.
- o Read “Robert Thornton Reads Romance.”

May 25th: Read *Siege of Jerusalem*. (read Boyarin’s introduction as well)

Week 10 and Beyond

June 1st: No classes, Memorial Day

June 3rd: Course-wrap-up, final project workshopping

June 9th, 5pm: Final projects due