

ENG 620 Spring 2015
CRN 32103
253 PLC
Fridays 10 am –12:50 pm

Prof. Anne Laskaya
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Hrs: Wed 1-2:30; Fri 1:30-3:00
and by appointment

The Gawain Poet: Transgression and ‘The Medieval’

Course Description: This seminar offers graduate students opportunities for close reading and inquiry into the works of the ‘Gawain Poet’ contextualized within theories of ‘transgression.’ We will begin by examining our own attempts to transgress historical difference in the process of reading as we dive into the challenges of reading the Gawain Poet’s Middle English. All along, we will also consider the value of transgressing historical difference by considering contemporary approaches to medieval texts and by considering the traces and imprints of the past on the imaginary of the present and future. During the term we will read several major statements about the nature of poetry and literature from the late Middle Ages, including Chretien de Troyes’ prologues to *Erec et Enide*, the *Chevalier de la Charrette* (‘Lancelot’), and *Cligés*; essays and focused statements by Dante and Petrarch; as well as perhaps Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s *Poetria Nova*. But we will also place the Gawain Poet’s major works within the context of several contemporary inquiries into transgression: the transport between language and body found in Teresa Brennan’s *Transmission of Affect* (2004), the crossings between visual and verbal discussed in Claire Barbetti’s *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions* (2011), selections from J. J. Cohen on the medieval monstrous, and the trans(re)lation between reader and text, past and present examined in Carolyn Dinshaw’s *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (2012). Primary texts will include *Pearl*, *Patience*, *Cleanness*, *St. Erkenwald*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The seminar will be discussion-based and include regular online postings/responses, active participation, short assignments, and a research project.

To engage this literature with an ethical commitment to good scholarship means we must read both "with" and "against" the grain of the texts, just as we might with any literary text, regardless of its world view or historical moment. I encourage you to work toward an understanding of what the texts might have meant in their own time (and this will be plural), as well as an understanding of what you see in the texts from your own twenty-first century vantage point.

Seminar participants will actively shape the discussion; participants will post 'thought-papers' almost every week on the primary readings to our Blackboard Discussion Board for everyone to read, prepare before seminar meetings, and respond to others’ postings and comments as assigned. The 'thought-papers' will serve to focus our seminar discussions. Some secondary, scholarly readings will be assigned. These will be central to the seminar discussion at times.

Requirements:

- Readings prepared rigorously for each seminar session: both the primary and secondary materials. Reading in Middle English/on-sight translation where assigned.
- A commitment to participation (speaking and listening), during the seminar.

- 3 short thought-papers posted to Blackboard discussion board. Due: by 6 pm. Wednesdays before our Friday seminar. Some topics will be open; others may be assigned. (Length of each discussion post: approx. 800-1000 words.)
 - 3 response posts to others and reading all seminar participants' "thought papers." Responses due on Blackboard discussion board by Thursdays at 8 pm. Responses about 1 full paragraph (300-500 words).
 - 1 presentation/discussion-leading teamwork performance (1 hour of seminar, week eight).
 - 1 research proposal (1 page proposal and ½ page or 1 page bibliography).
 - 1 polished draft of a seminar paper (15-20 pages) on a topic approved by professor.
- Other short assignments, translation quizzes or writings may occur in seminar or during the term.

Grading: Final grades will include evaluations of the quality of your three thought-papers, your response posts, short assignments or quizzes, your term project, and participation. Fifty percent of the course grade will rest on the seminar paper. If you wish to discuss your seminar performance at any time during the term, please see me. I will send you an update assessing your first thought paper and the quality of your first response post via personalized email.

Participation and Preparation for all seminar sessions:	20%
3 short thought papers & 3 responses to others' thought papers	20%
1 teamwork seminar discussion/presentation week eight	10%
1 research proposal and polished seminar paper	50%

Blackboard site: Syllabus, course assignments, some readings, and general course information will be available throughout the term on Blackboard. Please check Blackboard regularly. If I send you email, it will usually be to your uoregon.edu email account, so be sure to check that regularly. Also note that if you send me an email from hotmail or gmail, it may not make it into my mailbox because of UO spam filters.

CLASS POLICIES:

Students with disabilities: If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this class, please register with the University's Office for Students with Disabilities and see me early in the term so we can make appropriate accommodations, if necessary, for your full access to all course activities and requirements.

Other issues: If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to see me or send an email. We will begin the seminar promptly at 10 and take a short break part way through the 3 hours. We will finish at, or close to, 12:50. Depending on noise in the quad during Spring term, we may need to meet, occasionally, at another location. If so, a notice will be posted on Blackboard and at 253 PLC.

Schedule: (subject to change as needed)

Week One

4/3 Historical Background, work through *St. Erkenwald* in its entirety in Middle English. It runs just 350 lines and begins on p. 324 of our Andrew, Waldron, Peterson, and Finch edition of primary texts. Also read Finch's Introduction coming prepared to note and discuss main ideas found in it from p. 1 to the top of p. 26.

Week Two

4/10 No seminar since I'm giving paper at Medieval Assoc of the Pacific conference

Mon or Tues 4/13 or 4/14 make up session TBA for Week Two

Sir Gawain & Green Knight, Fit 1

Prologues of Chretien de Troyes (run about 3-4 pages of reading total; selections on Blackboard)

Petrarch, Letters: 'The Ascent of Mount Ventoux,' 'Ignorance and Presumption Rebuked,' 'On the Nature of Poetry' On BB

Aranye Fradenburg, "Introduction" and "Becoming Medieval: Psychoanalysis and Historicism," from her book, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* UMinnesota Press, 2002, pp. 1-78. On BB

Thought Papers on Fit 1 (3 & 4 write responses)

1. Katie Jo L.
2. Annie N.

Week Three

4/17 *Sir Gawain & Green Knight*, Fit 2

Selection from Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*. On BB

Thought Papers on Fit 2 (1& 2 write responses)

3. Amy C.
4. Lorra J.

Week Four

4/24 *Sir Gawain & Green Knight*, Fit 3

Discussion of manuscript culture/MS and Edition. See: <http://gawain.ucalgary.ca/>
(BL MS Cotton, Nero A. x.)

Thought Papers on Fit 3 (3 and 4 write responses)

1. Katie Jo L.
2. Annie N.

Week Five

5/1 *Sir Gawain & Green Knight* Fit 4 Focus on Close Reading/Intertextual features/
Lexical resonances (MED)

Thought Papers on Fit 4 (1 and 2 write responses)

3. Amy C.
4. Lorra J.

Week Six

5/8 *Patience* in its Middle English entirety (530 lines)

Dante on allegory, from the Letter to Can Grande:

<http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/authors/dante/cangrand.html>

Thought Papers on *Patience* (3 and 4 write responses)

1. Katie Jo L.
2. Annie K.

A 1 page research proposal with .5 or 1 page bibliography required week six or seven, no later than Saturday 5/16

Week Seven

5/15 No seminar since I'm presenting at ICMS conference; session made up Finals Week

Week Eight

5/22 Intense engagement with 'time,' 'history,' 'difference,' 'past,' 'present,' 'future' challenging theoretical essays; about 200 pages of reading total

Reinhart Koselleck, selection from *Future's Past*, 9-25

Cole and Smith, eds., LMA: Editors' Introduction "Outside Modernity" 1-36;

Kathleen Davis, "Sense of an Epoch: Periodization, Sovereignty, and the Limits of Secularization," LMA, 39-69

Andrew Cole, "The Sacrament of the Fetish, the Miracle of the Commodity," LMA, 70-93

Bruce Holsinger, "Empire, Apocalypse, and the 9/11 Premodern," LMA 94-118

Labbie and Uebel, "We have Never Been Schreber," LMA, 127-158

Ethan Knapp, "Medieval Studies, Historicity and Heidegger's Early Phenomenology," LMA 159-193

**All of us will read all materials very carefully.

**Two of you will prepare K. Davis, A. Cole, and B. Holsinger together, to lead that discussion

**Two of you will prepare Koselleck, Labbie and Uebel, Knapp together, to lead that discussion

Week Nine

5/29 *Cleanness*, read in translation and original to allow careful work on the following:

(Rigorous consideration of the text in relation to Week Eight's readings; so what?)

Thought papers on *Cleanness* (1 and 2 write responses)

3. Amy C.

4. Lorra J.

Week Ten

6/5 *Pearl*, in the original ME

Claire Barbetti, *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions: A New Discussion of Interarts Theory*, pp. 1-60.

Additional Secondary reading TBA

Week Eleven, Finals Week

Session TBA Mon or Tues 6/8, 6/9 Discussion of Gawain within the manuscript as a 'whole book': <http://gawain.ucalgary.ca/> (BL MS Cotton, Nero A. x.)

**Primary focus: 15-20 minute presentations of Individual Research Projects and Responses to them.

**Final Seminar Papers due by Friday, June 12, 4 p.m.