This is the first of a three-course sequence required of all English majors. The sequence is meant to introduce new and prospective majors to the full range of literature in English, and the various methods and modes of literary history, criticism, and theory required to understand it. The first term covers three distinct periods of English literature: Old English, from its beginnings in oral tradition in the seventh century to the mid-twelfth century; Middle English, from the twelfth through the fifteenth century, and the sixteenth century. We will concentrate on one work from each of these eras: Beowulf, from the Anglo-Saxon era, Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales from the Middle English period, and Spenser’s Faerie Queene from the early Renaissance.

The course meets for lectures Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00-3.20 in LILLIS 282, and once each week in discussion sections.

Required Books

Norton Anthology of English Literature, vol. 1A (The Middle Ages)
Norton Anthology of English Literature, vol. 1B (The 16th Century and the Early 17th Century)

Attendance

It is assumed that everyone will attend every lecture and every discussion session. You are allowed 2 absences, only one of which may be from your section meeting: if these absences are necessary, discuss them with your instructor. For each additional absence, you will lose one letter grade unless you see Professor Ginsberg; he alone will authorize exceptions to this policy.

Grades and Policies

A final grade of C or better for the course is required for English major credit. Final grades are based on papers and exams and in-section work:

- papers will account for 50% of the grade;
- exams 35% (midterm 15%, final 20%);
- in-section work (including participation, quizzes, and sectional assignments) 15%.

- All papers must be neat, typed, revised, finished and proofread, with correct grammar and spelling. Sloppiness and mechanical errors will result in a lower grade. See Prof. Ginsberg or your section instructor if you need help with your papers. Late papers lose one letter grade per day.
- You are totally responsible for your own work. Cheating or plagiarism (including Internet plagiarism) results in a failed grade for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the Student Handbook.
• **Exams** will test your critical reading of the assigned texts, and will include materials and ideas which are not in the reading assignments but are introduced in class. The **midterm** will consist of passages that you will need to identify and elucidate in short paragraphs; the **final** will include a synthetic essay question in addition to such passages. The **final is cumulative**. Quizzes will consist of objective and short answer questions, including many of the study questions in this syllabus. **Reading quizzes may be given at the beginning of any lecture or section meeting.**

**Daily Reading Assignments**

*Read each assignment before the lecture.* Though they are broken down day by day, it is best to consider each week's assignment as a whole and read ahead. Please read slowly and carefully. Skimming will prove useless in this course. **You are responsible not only for the literary texts themselves, but also for all introductions and notes in the book.**

**Study Questions**

You are expected to read closely enough to answer the study questions. Read them ahead of time. Many are obvious; others will be open-ended, designed to elicit your thoughts. Some of these questions, or others like them, will appear on the quizzes and final exam. **NOTE**: the study questions cover only materials and ideas in the book (including introduction and notes). You are also responsible for the ideas presented in lectures and discussion sections.

**Paper Topics**

There will be **THREE papers**. The first will be 3 pages; you will be asked to analyze a specific passage. The second paper will be a revision of the first based on the comments you received. The last paper will be 5 pages; it will focus on a topic in Chaucer or Spenser.

For your best chance at achieving a good grade, get started early. Do not leave it until the night before it’s due. You should write a rough draft, revise it at least once, and then proofread it carefully for mechanical and other errors before you hand it in.

**You will submit your papers in two forms: electronically, via safe-assign, and as a hard copy. You must send your paper to Safe-Assign by the end of the Wednesday lecture (i.e. 3.20 pm) of the week they are due: Oct. 5, Oct. 19, and Nov 30. You will hand in the hard-copy version during your weekly section meeting.**
## Schedule of Readings

| Mon   | Sept 26 | INTRODUCTION |
| Wed   | Sept 28 | Norton: The Middle Ages  
Bede and Cadmon’s Hymn  
The Dream of the Rood  
The Wanderer |

| Mon   | Oct 3  | Judith, The Wife’s Lament,  
The Battle of Maldon |
| Wed   | Oct 5  | Beowulf, Headnote  
Lines 1-835  
FIRST PAPER |

| Mon   | Oct 10 | Beowulf, 836-1798 |
| Wed   | Oct 12 | Beowulf, 1799-3182 |

| Mon   | Oct 17 | Norton: “Anglo-Norman England,” “Middle English Literature”  
Sir Gawain ad the Green Knight (part 1 and 2) |
| Wed   | Oct 19 | Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (parts 3 and 4)  
REVISION |

| Mon   | Oct 24 | Chaucer: Headnote  
General Prologue |
| Wed   | Oct 26 | Miller’s Prologue and Tale |

| Mon   | Oct 31 | MIDTERM |
| Wed   | Nov 2  | Wife of Bath’s Prologue |

| Mon   | Nov 7  | Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale |
| Wed   | Nov 9  | Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale |

| Mon   | Nov 14 | Nun’s Priest’s Prologue and Tale; Parson’s Tale; Retraction  
Spenser, Fairy Queene, Headnote and Author’s Letter  
Cantos 1-3 |
| Wed   | Nov 16 | Spenser, Fairy Queene, Headnote and Author’s Letter  
Cantos 1-3 |

| Mon   | Nov 21 | Fairie Queene, Cantos 4-6 |
| Wed   | Nov 23 | NO CLASS |

| Mon   | Nov 28 | Fairie Queene, Cantos 7-9 |
FIRST PAPER

Write a three page paper (typed; double-spaced) in which you analyze the following passage. Be sure to comment on the images used, figures of speech, the register of the language, and the ideas that the passage raises. I have provided a literal translation that follows the word order of the original. You may refer to this translation if you think it will help you to support the point you wish to make. You may also want to place the passage in the poem from which it is drawn.

The Wanderer (Lines 8-18)

“Often before the day dawned I have had to speak of my cares, alone: there is now none among the living to whom I dare clearly express the thought of my heart. I know indeed that it is a fine custom for a man to lock tight his heart’s coffer, keep closed the hoard-case of his mind, whatever his thoughts may be. Words of a weary heart may not withstand fate, nor those of an angry spirit bring help. Therefore men eager for fame shut sorrowful thought up fast in their breast’s coffer.”

Here is a literal version:

Oft I have had to, alone, each dawn
my cares speak forth; there is not now none of those who live
to whom I thoughts (mod-sefa: both words mean mind, spirit) mine dare
clearly to tell. I as truth know
that it is among earls a noble (indryhten: dryht means leader) custom
that he his spirit-enclosure (ferth-locan: locan=lock) fast bind,
hold his hoard-coffer, think what he will.
Nor may the weary-minded fate withstand
nor the rough thought help perform.
Therefore fame-yearning men a dreary thought often
in their breast-coffer bind fast.