

ENG 620: Medieval Lit
Spring 2017 448 PLC
CRN 36676
Thursdays, 2:00-4:50 pm

Prof. Anne Laskaya
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Hrs: Mon 10:30-11:30; Tues noon-2
(subject to change) & by appointment

Trauma and Middle English Literature

Trauma, in effect, issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge. In its shock impact, trauma is anti-narrative, but it also generates the manic production of retrospective narratives that seek to explicate the trauma . . . Culture rehearses or restates narratives that attempt to animate and explicate trauma that has been formulated as something that exceeds the possibility of narrative knowledge . . . If trauma is a crisis in representation, then this generates narrative possibility just as much as impossibility, a compulsive outpouring of attempts to formulate narrative knowledge or forgetting.
- Roger Luckhurst

Course Description: Reflections on grief, trauma and loss, as well as representations of plague, war, crusades, anti-semitism, torture, bodily suffering, and terror are not hard to find in medieval material, just as they are not hard to find in twentieth- and twenty-first-century texts. Of course these articulations vary: some attempt to express trauma directly, others to contain, control and/or avoid trauma. This seminar offers students opportunities for close reading and inquiry into later medieval English literary and visual material contextualized within theories of trauma and trauma narrative. We will begin by examining the historical context of fourteenth-century England, a period often called 'the calamitous century' to understand why trauma can logically frame readings of literature from the period (although two of our primary texts originate in the twelfth century, shortly after the Norman Invasion). As we dive into the challenges of reading Middle English, we will also consider the value of contemporary approaches to literature by placing them next to medieval texts and by considering the traces and imprints of the past on the imaginary of the present and future. 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 or visual 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; students will post 'thought-papers' almost every other week on the primary readings to our Canvas Discussion Board for everyone to read. We all read these posts carefully before seminar meetings, and also respond to postings with comments online as assigned. Seminar 'thought-papers' will focus our weekly seminar discussions, though discussions may also explore textual issues beyond the posts. Secondary, scholarly readings will sometimes become central to our conversations and at other times may provide background.

Texts:

Aberth, John. *From the Brink of the Apocalypse* 2nd ed. 2009 (ISBN: 9780415777971)
 Benson, Larry, ed. *Alliterative Morte Arthure in King Arthur's Death* TEAMS/Uof Western Michigan, rev. 1994 (ISBN: 9781879288386)
 Berechiah ben Natronai ha-Nakdan, (Berachaya) *Mishle Shualim (Fox Fables)*, trans. Moses Hadas [selections] provided on Canvas
 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (ISBN: 9780674048355)
 Chaucer, *Dream Visions and Other Poems*. Norton 2007. (ISBN: 9780393925883)
 Chaucer, 'Wife of Bath, Prologue and Tale,' Text/Notes provided on Canvas.
 Finch, Andrew and Waldron. *Complete Works of the Pearl Poet*, UC-Berkeley Press, 1993 (ISBN: 9780520078710)
The Golden Legend. (Christian Hagiography, selections) provided on Canvas.
The Bayeux Tapestry: <http://hastings1066.com/> (slides also on Canvas for additional views)
 Manuscript Illuminations (Paintings): *Job, Jonah, the Apocalypse*, others. Provided on Canvas.
Sultan of Babylon, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/lupack-three-middle-english-charlemagne-romances-sultan-of-babylon-introduction>
 Selections from other primary and secondary materials posted (or linked) on Canvas.

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, listening, responding), during the seminar.
- 4 short thought-papers posted to Canvas discussion board. Due: by 4 pm Tuesdays before our Thursday seminar. Some topics will be open; others may be assigned. (Length of each discussion post: approx. 500-750 words.)
- 4 response posts to others and reading all seminar participants' "thought papers." Responses due on Canvas discussion board by Wednesdays at 8 pm. Responses about 1 full paragraph (approx. 200-300 words).
- 1 presentation/discussion-leading teamwork performance (1 hour of seminar).
- 1 research proposal (1 page proposal and ½ page or 1 page bibliography).
- 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 assumed.

4 short thought papers & 4 responses to others' thought papers	40%
1 teamwork seminar discussion/presentation	10%
1 research proposal and polished seminar paper	50%

Canvas site: Syllabus, course assignments, some readings, and general course information will be available throughout the term on Canvas. Please check it regularly. If I send you email, it will usually be to your uoregon.edu email account, so be sure to check that also. Note that if you send

me an email from hotmail or gmail, it may or 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, do not hesitate to see me or send an email. We will begin the seminar promptly at 2 and sometimes take a short break part way through the 3 hours. Class sessions finish at, or close to, 4:50. Please do not go in and out during the seminar discussion, except in extremely necessary moments.

SCHEDULE: (subject to change as needed)

Week One

4/6 Introductions. Overview of the seminar and our goals/processes/etc. Syllabus, Historical Background, come to class having read through the full book:
Main Text for work/review/discussion: Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse*.

CHAUCER

Week Two

4/11 *Tuesday Thought Papers by Oxford Group posted by 4 pm for seminar discussion this week.*
4/12 *Wednesday Responses to Oxford Posts by Cambridge Group due 8 pm.*
4/13 Seminar. Primary: Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* Read the full text in Middle English.
Secondary: *Consolation of Philosophy*; Louise Fradenburg, "Voice Memorial": Loss & Reparation in Chaucer's Poetry," *Exemplaria: Medieval, Early Modern, Theory*, Vol 2.1 (1990): 169-202. Thought Papers by Oxford Group: addressing connections between BofD and one of the secondary texts.

Week Three

4/18 *Tuesday Thought Papers by Cambridge Group posted by 4 pm for seminar this week.*
4/19 *Wednesday Responses to Cambridge Posts by Oxford Group due 8 pm.*
4/20 Primary: *House of Fame*. Read the full text in Middle English.
Secondary: Ruth Evans, "Chaucer in Cyberspace: Medieval Technologies of Memory and *The House of Fame*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001): 43-69. Michelle Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," *Mosaic* Vol 41 no. 2 (2008). Thought Papers by Cambridge Group re: connections/problematic relationship between Primary text and Secondary readings.

Week Four

4/25 *Tuesday Thought Papers by Oxford Group posted by 4 pm for seminar discussion this week.*
4/26 *Wednesday Responses to Oxford Posts by Cambridge Group due 8 pm.*
4/27 Primary: *Wife of Bath, Prologue and Tale* from the *Canterbury Tales*
Secondary: Parsons, 'Beaten for a Book: Domestic and Pedagogic Violence in the *WofB's* Prologue,' *SAC* Vol 37 (2015): 163-94. Selections from *The Trauma Controversy*:

Philosophical and Interdisciplinary Dialogues, ed. Kristen B. Golden & Bettina Bergo (SUNY 2009): 99-168. Corinne Saunders, "Woman Displaced: Rape and Romance...WofB" *Arthurian Literature* 12 (1995): 115-31.

ALLITERATIVE MORTE

Week Five

5/2 *Tuesday Thought Papers by Cambridge Group posted by 4 pm for seminar this week.*

5/3 *Wednesday Responses to Cambridge Posts by Oxford Group due 8 pm.*

5/4 Primary: *Alliterative Morte Arthure* in *Death of King Arthur*, Benson;

Secondary: Selection from Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (2004); Anne Baden-Daintree, "Visualising War: the Aesthetics of Violence in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*" in *Representing War and Violence 1250-1600*, ed. J. Bellis & L. Slater (Brewer, 2016)

PEARL POET

Week Six

5/9 *Tuesday Thought Papers by Oxford Group posted by 4 pm for seminar this week.*

5/10 *Wednesday Responses to Oxford Posts by Cambridge Group due 8 pm.*

5/11 Primary Pearl poet (Patience and Cleanness) :

Secondary: Jonah in the Vulgate (parallel trans. online link provided on Canvas); Jonah MS images; Sodom and Gomorrah in the Vulgate (parallel trans. online); MS images

****Preferrably in week six (or, if needed week seven), please submit your research proposal and preliminary bibliography**

VISUAL

Week Seven Trauma/Loss: Visual materials from late Medieval England

5/16 *Tuesday Thought Papers by Cambridge Group posted by 4 pm for seminar this week.*

5/17 *Wednesday Responses to Cambridge Posts by Oxford Group due 8 pm.*

5/18 Primary: *Bayeux Tapestry*; *Apocalypse MS Douce*

Secondary: from Suzanne Lewis, *Rhetoric of Power in the Bayeux Tapestry*. CambridgeUP, 1999; and Lewis's, *Reading Images: Narrative Discourse...* Cambridge UP 1995; Selections from *Visual Images and Trauma*, tba

MEDIEVAL DRAMA

Week Eight Body, Performance

5/23 *Tuesday Thought Papers by Oxford Group posted by 4 pm for seminar this week.*

5/24 *Wednesday Responses to Oxford Posts by Cambridge Group due 8 pm.*

5/25 From *Mystery Plays & Cycles*: Noah, Massacre of the Innocents, Crucifixion Plays.

Secondary: selections from Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory and Violence* Cornell UP, 2002

FABLES, ROMANCE, TRAUMA & RESPONSE

Week Nine Anti-semitism, Anti-Muslim dominant culture, response.

5/30 *Tuesday Thought Papers by Cambridge Group posted by 4 pm for seminar this week.*

5/31 *Wednesday Responses to Cambridge Posts by Oxford Group due 8 pm.*

6/1 Primary: *Sultan of Babylon* and Berechiah, *Fables* [selections trans. Moses Hadas]

Secondary: Susan Einbinder, *Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France*, Princeton, 2002 Selections.

CHRISTIAN HAGIOGRAPHY

Week Ten

6/8 Hagiography, Torture in dominant culture

Primary: *The Golden Legend*, selections

Secondary: Larissa Tracy, “Rending the Flesh, the Orthodoxy of Torture in Hagiography” in *Torture and Brutality in Medieval Literature: Negotiations of National Identity* (Brewer, 2015): 31-69.

Finals Week

No class session

**Final Seminar Papers due Friday, June 16, noon.