

English 701.401: *Medieval Road Trip: Reading and Writing with Chaucer*

WHEN: Tuesday/Thursday 1:45-3:00 PM

LOCATION: 6th Floor Van Pelt Library, Rm 625

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CONTENT

In the 14th century, the short story was all the rage, and Chaucer was the expert in the form. In this course, we read his most famous work, *The Canterbury Tales*: this pathbreaking anthology ranges from raunchy to preachy, from fable to romance, and from comedy to horror. Chaucer's tales ask us to consider whether stories that entertain us can make us better humans, how to react when stories offend us, what power stories have to challenge hierarchies, and how adapting old stories can fashion communities of readers and writers across time.

In the second half of the course, we read Chaucer alongside modern authors inspired by Chaucer, such as Patience Agbabi, Caroline Bergvall, and Zadie Smith. We will try our hands at writing like, with, and against Chaucer. We will translate and annotate his tales and experiment with his language and meter. Our final project will be to assemble an anthology of critical or creative pieces in the spirit of Chaucer.

CLASS STRUCTURE: Seminar-style discussion; handling of rare books and manuscripts

PREREQUISITES: No knowledge of medieval literature is required. All students are welcome!

ASSIGNMENTS: Readings, 8 short writing pieces (choice of critical or creative), final project.

GRADING: 30% participation; 40% short writing pieces; 20% final project; 10% class notetaker