

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

Troubadours at the Center

COML 6381-401

FREN 6381-401

GRMN 6381-401

ITAL 6381-401

Fall 2023, Wednesdays, noon-2:59 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Wendy Pfeffer

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office hours by appointment

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Course Description

‘Troubadour’ is a term whose meaning has evolved from the eleventh century to our day. In the Middle Ages, a troubadour was a singer-songwriter who composed in a language called Occitan, the language spoken in northern Italy, across southern France, and into today’s Catalonia. Medieval works in this language include epic poetry, didactic texts, lengthy romances, and love poetry. Renowned and imitated throughout medieval Europe – by authors from today’s Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Spain, and Portugal – the Occitan literary heritage cannot be ignored. Though sometimes presented as a dead language, Occitan is very much alive, and one purpose of this course is to introduce students to it and to its broad importance in European literary history. This course will present the literary and cultural history of the Occitan region, writ large, from the Middle Ages to the modern day. The course will be taught in English. In addition to learning the material covered in the course, students will gain expertise in producing professional presentations and research papers.

Linguistic Expectations

Knowledge of a romance language or German will be helpful but not necessary for this course. Materials will be read largely in English-language translation.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to read Occitan with the aid of a dictionary; they will understand the culture of the French Midi as distinct from that of France; they will know something of the distinctive cultural elements of Occitania. They will also have a profound knowledge of at least one Occitan author or topic, medieval, modern, or contemporary. Students will also improve their research and public-speaking skills.

Reading List, available at Penn Book Store (Barnes and Noble):

Akehurst, F. R. P. and Judith M. Davis, eds. *Handbook of the Troubadours*, ISBN: 978-0520079762

Gaunt, Simon and Sarah Kay, eds. *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, ISBN: 978-0521573887

Paden, William D. *An Introduction to Old Occitan*, ISBN: 978-1603290548

Not available at Penn Book Store; order your copy:

Thomas, James, ed. *Grains of Gold: An Anthology of Occitan Literature*, ISBN: 978 1 903 427 88 0; you can order from Amazon or directly from the publisher:

<https://francisboutle.co.uk/books/language/occitan/>

(Having these materials before the first day of class will help you complete the first assignment.)

Course Requirements (see calendar for due dates):

Attendance and Participation: Attendance is mandatory, and active participation in class discussions is expected. Students are required to complete the assigned readings before each class session and actively contribute to thoughtful and respectful discussions.

Select Research Topic: Students will be expected to pick “their” research topic very early in the semester. Recommended topics would be a specific author or a specific piece of Occitan literature (from any time period). This topic will drive student work for the class and will serve as the subject of the term paper. Submit a sheet of paper with student name and the author or work selected.

Seminar Presentation: Each student will deliver at least one presentation on a given week’s readings. Presentations should be approx. 40 minutes in length and provide an overview of the reading, key findings, and raise questions. Presentations should be engaging, well-structured, and effectively communicate the student’s understanding of the readings to the class.

Bibliography 1: Preparation of a bibliography on the chosen topic. The professor assumes the bibliography will give students their reading list for the term paper. The bibliography should include any title of potential interest and relevance to the chosen topic. For this assignment, completeness and currency are important (much depends on the topic chosen).

Bibliography 2: An annotated bibliography. For this assignment, students will read many of the works listed on Bibliography I, and then provide a more select list, with commentary.

Book Review: Students will write a critical review of a book that relates to their topic, similar to reviews found in scholarly journals. The book selected cannot be a critical edition nor a collection of essays (the instructor is happy to help students choose the book). Models for book reviews of this sort abound, especially in scholarly journals. *Speculum* would be one source, the Book Review section of the Sunday *New York Times* is another potential model.

Abstract: Students will submit an abstract (resume) of their proposed term paper topic; 500 words maximum, as if they were submitting the paper for a conference.

Term paper: Students will write a term paper on their chosen topic. This paper may be written in English, or, with permission of the instructor, in another language. The paper will be a scholarly discussion of some issue relating to the chosen topic, appropriately documented. For formatting, students may use the *MLA Handbook* 9th edition, or the Modern Humanities Research Association stylesheet, <https://www.mhra.org.uk/style/>.

Conference Presentation: Students will present their research to the class in conference-presentation format at the end of the semester (20-minute long presentation). They may use PowerPoint slides which will be subject to grading as well. The instructor has strong opinions on PP presentations; she expects them to assist audience understanding, not detract.

Other: There may also be weekly assignments relating to readings or materials discussed in class. These may include translation exercises.

Assessment

Attendance and Participation:	10%
Select Research Topic:	2%
Seminar Presentation:	10%
Bibliography 1:	8%
Bibliography 2:	5%
Book Review:	10%
Abstract:	10%
Term paper:	35%
Conference Presentation:	10%
	100%

Grading Scale:

98 - 100 A+	87 - 89 B+	78 - 79 C+	67 – 69 D+
93 - 97 A	83 - 87 B	73 - 77 C	63- 67 D
90 - 92 A-	80 - 82 B-	70 - 72 C-	Below 63 F

N.b. In a graduate class, the grade of C, while passing, does not constitute satisfactory performance.

Tentative Calendar:

August 30	first class session
September 6	select research topic
September 13	Pfeffer absent for AIEO; class will be made up on September 25
September 20	initial bibliography due
September 25	1:45-4:15, meet with Mary Caldwell's Music History class, details tbd "Jherusalem, grant damage me fais"
September 27	
October 4	abstract of term paper due
October 8	drop date
October 11	
October 18	annotated bibliography due
October 25	book review due
November 1	
November 6	withdrawal date
November 8	
November 15	
November 22	
November 23-26	Thanksgiving Break
November 29	term paper due
December 6	presentation of research

Student Disabilities Services:

If a student has been granted accommodations from Student Disability Services, it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor during the first week of class. As needed, students should also notify SDS at least one week in advance of an assignment due date.

Courtesy in Class:

Please arrive on time and refrain from leaving early. The use of electronic devices, such as computers, should be limited to note-taking purposes only.

Code of Academic Integrity

FIGS fully supports and adheres to all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc). The work you submit in this class is expected to be your own. If you submit work that has been copied without attribution from some published or unpublished source including the Internet, or that has been prepared by someone other than you, or that in any way misrepresents somebody else's work as your own, you will face severe discipline by the university. For more information, consult: <http://www.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html> (Code of Academic Integrity) and <http://www.upenn.edu/osc> (The Office of Student Conduct).