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| primaryBlackWhite | **Syllabus and Course Description** |

English 489: Medieval Drama

Fall 2013, MWF

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Prerequisites: ENGL 104 or its equivalent and junior or senior standing. ENGL 313 (Medieval Literature) will be useful as context but is not necessary to complete the course successfully.

**I. Required Texts and Materials**

1. Richard Beadle and Alan Fletcher, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre,* 2nd Ed*.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). ISBN: 978-0521682541
2. Clifford Davidson. *Technology, Guilds, and Early English Drama*. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997). ISBN 1-879288-80-X
3. *\**David Klausner, ed. *The Castle of Perseverance.* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010). ISBN 978-1580441490
4. *\**Clifford Davidson et al., eds. *Everyman and Its Dutch Original, Elckerlijc.* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007) ISBN 978-1580441063
5. *\**Kathleen M. Ashley and Gerard NeCastro, eds. *Mankind. .* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008) ISBN 978-1580441407
6. \*Douglas Sugano, ed.*The N-Town Plays (*Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007) ISBN 978-1580441162
7. Additional materials provided as handouts and distributed either in print or electronically.

NB: any item marked with a \* is a TEAMS edition, which means it is available in its entirety online as well as in printed form. The online version can be a bit cumbersome to use, but I encourage you to consider it in the interests of saving yourself some money.

**II. What Are We Doing Here?**

This course is an upper-division introduction to the three main types of medieval English drama: the pageant play, the hall play, and the place and scaffold (or *locus* and *platea)* play. As an upper-division course, the reading assignments will be challenging and your writing assignments will be evaluated at a standard appropriate for serious students of literature. Medieval drama will seem odd even if you have read a lot of plays in the past. However, it is also fascinating, bawdy, often humorous, and shows interesting insights into the issues and culture of the period. Your semester-long conversation with these plays will provide you with improved analytical ability, an expanded repertoire of thoughts about literature and the world, and a finer understanding of literary and dramatic history.

My goals for you in this course are: 1. to gain a sense of the extent, types, and variety of drama written in Middle English. 2. to gain familiarity with the conventions of medieval performance (insofar as we know them). 3. to discuss the various uses the plays we’ve received could have been put to besides performance 4. to become comfortable with some of the major aesthetic and philosophical sensibilities encoded in this literature; 5. to understand the relationship between the literature and the culture that produced it; 6. to consider how these plays could have been performed in the period they were written in, and to what ends; and 7. to develop your skills in analytical reading, critical thinking, and articulate writing, especially in how to develop your own research methodology through the use of mind-maps and databases. Lastly, we’ll have fun.

**III. Course Requirements and Grading**

To receive credit in this course, you must receive a passing grade based on completing all of the work in the order its on the syllabus and regular classroom attendance and participation. I expect all of you to attend class unless something unavoidable comes up that won’t allow you to do so.

Forty percent of your grade in this course will come from writing assignments, forty percent will come from exams or performances and presentations, and twenty percent will come from the research process assignment. That said, you’ll have some choice as to how credit is distributed in those two blocks. It works like this: everyone will do the final essay, the final exam, the research process assignment, and the performance/presentation project. At the midterm of the course, you’ll have the opportunity to do other assignments for credit – a shorter paper and a take-home midterm exam. You must choose at least one of the two elective assignments, and you may choose to do both if you’d like. Any elective assignment you do will be worth ten percent of your grade in the course. Thus, if you were to choose to do the short paper, your larger term paper would be worth ten percent of your grade, the shorter paper ten, the final exam forty percent, the research process assignment twenty, and the performance/presentation assignment twenty. Likewise, if you choose to do both, then your final exam would be worth thirty percent of your grade rather than forty.

Since the course instruction and discussion takes place in the classroom, not being in class is equivalent to not taking the course. Thus, if I can’t honestly say you have completed the course due to excessive absences, it will result in your failing the class. Hopefully everyone will make every effort to attend all the class sessions and this won’t be needed, but if I mention to you that I’ve noticed a pattern of absences, it should be taken as a warning that you’re at risk of missing so much class that I will not be able to give you a passing grade.

An excused absence is anything covered by the Student Rules (see http://studentrules.tamu.edu/rule07/ ). If you are going to miss class for what you feel is an excusable reason, please contact me via email and let me know; that way, we both have a record of the fact you were absent and why. If I feel like I need further documentation, I’ll ask for it once I receive your email.

**IV. Conferences**

I think being available to you for conversations outside of class is incredibly important. I keep my posted office hours. If you have any questions regarding grades this is the only way we can discuss it as departmental policy does not allow me to talk about grades over email. However, for more general questions regarding the readings or assignments, I will check my email once a day and respond to any emailed questions within 24 hours..

**V. Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty hurts your fellow students and is an insult to me as an instructor. It also defeats the purpose of your time here – if you have not earned anything the letter grade you received is ultimately meaningless. If I become aware of a case of academic dishonesty, of whatever stripe, you will fail the course.

Every piece of graded work in this course should be created by you and created for this course. You are responsible for understanding what plagiarism is, what cheating is, and how to avoid them both. If you don’t know what is meant by “plagiarism” or “cheating” in regards to a particular assignment or in terms of the course as a whole, please be sure to contact me immediately. I’m always happy to answer questions, but in the interests of fairness there is little I can do after the assignment is turned in.

**Syllabus and Major Assignment Due Dates**

**Week 1 – What is drama in the Middle Ages?**

M 08/26 Course Introduction; what is a medieval play? Is that a distinction we need to make?

W 08/28 Johnston, “An introduction to medieval English theatre” (*Cambrdige*, 1-25)

Walker, “The cultural work of early drama” (*Cambridge,* 76-98)

F 08/30 Twycross, “The theatricality of medieval English plays” (*Cambridge,* 26-75)

**Week 2 – Is Medieval drama really medieval? Is it really drama?**

M 09/02 Towneley *Second Shepherd’s Play* (handout)

Meredith, “The Towneley pageants” (*Cambridge,* 152-182)

W 09/04 Coletti and Gibson, “The Tudor Origins of Medieval Drama” (handout)

Walker, “When did ‘The Medieval’ End? Retrospection, Foresight, and the End(s) of the English Middle Ages” (handout)

F 09/06 Clopper, “The Persistence of ‘Medieval Drama’ in the Tudor and Elizabethan

Periods” (handout)

Entry of Henry VII into York (handout)

**Week 3 – How does drama connect to other medieval artforms?**

M 09/09 Chaucer, *The Prioress’ Tale* (handout)

The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* (handout)

Jones, “Theatrical History in the Croxton ‘Play of the Sacrament’” (handout)

W 09/11 Sponsler, “Devoted Bodies: Books of Hours and the Self-Consuming Subject”

(handout)

Lerud, “Corpus Christi Drama and the Places of Memory: Liturgical Precedents and Illuminated Manuscript Analogues” (handout)

F 09/13 Lerud, “Drama as ‘Quick Image’: The Fifteenth-Century Context” (handout)

Rose, “Drama and the Roof Bosses” (handout)

Norwich Grocer’s Pageant (handout)

**Week 4 – So how do you put on a play, anyway?**

M 09/16 Davidson, “Preface”, “Technology and the Medieval Drama”, “Pageant Wagons”

(*Technology*, ix-x, 1-31)

W 09/18 Davidson, “Staging the Passion” and “The Textile and Clothing Industries and

Costumes for Plays” (*Technology*, 32-79)

F 09/20 Davidson, “Falling and Rising on the Medieval Stage” (*Technology*, 80-100)

Cook, “Audiences: Investigation, Interpretation, Invention” (handout)

**Week 5 – The hall play**

M 09/23 *Fulgens and Lucrece* (handout)

Norland, “Medwall’s *Fulgens and Lucres*” (handout)

Bevington, “Chaplin Medwall and the New Tudor Ruling Class” (handout)

W 09/25 Caxton’s translation of *De Vera Nobilitate* (handout)

Blayney, “The Publication of Playbooks” (handout)

F 09/27 Mind maps and the development of a research agenda

Performance discussion

**Week 6 – Chester Cycle**

M 09/30 Mills, “The Chester cycle” (*Cambridge*, 125-152)

Chester Cycle, Banns and pageants 1-4 (handout)

W 10/02 Chester Cycle, pageants 5-10 (handout)

Secondary reading selected by group 1

F 10/04 Building a database to develop your mind-map

Performance discussion

**Mind Map Assignment Due**

**Week 7– Chester Cycle Continued**

M 10/07 Chester Cycle, pageants 11-17 (handout)

Secondary reading selected by group 2

W 10/09 Chester Cycle, pageants 18-24 (handout)

Secondary reading selected by group 3

F 10/11 Data retrieval questions and issues.

Performance discussion

**Schema one due**

**Week 8 – N-Town**

10/14 Fletcher, “The N-Town Plays” (*Cambridge*, 183-210)

N-Town, Banns and pageants 1-7

10/16 N-Town, pageants 8-14

Meredith, *The Mary Play,* vi-viii, 1-23(handout)

10/18 Performance discussion

**Schema two due**

**Optional Midterm Essay due**

**Week 9 – N-Town Continued**

10/21 N-Town, pageants 15-22

Secondary reading selected by group 4

10/23 N-Town, pageants 23-32

10/25 N-Town, pageants 33-42

**Schema three due**

**Optional Midterm Examination due**

**Week 10 – Similarities in Subject Matter, Differences in Style**

10/28 N-Town *Judgement*

Towneley *Judgement* (handout)

10/30 York *Doomsday* (handout)

Chester *Judgement* (handout)

11/1 Performance discussion

**Schema five due**

**Week 11 – Allegorical Drama**

11/4 “Morality plays” (*Cambridge,* 235-263*)*

*Everyman*

11/6 *Mankind*

11/8 Performance discussion

**Schema five due**

**Week 12 – *The Castle of Perseverance***

11/11 Coldewey, “The non-cycle plays and the East Anglian Tradition” (*Cambridge,* 211-234)

*The Castle of Perseverance,* lines 1-1239

11/13 *The Castle of Perseverance,* lines 1240-2556

11/15 *The Castle of Perseverance,* lines 2557-2648

**Research process paper due**

**Week 13 – *Wisdom* and the Digby Plays**

11/18 *Wisdom*

11/20 *The Killing of the Children* (handout)

11/22 *The Conversion of St. Paul* (handout)

**Week 14 – The Digby *Mary Magdalen***

11/25 *Mary Magdalen,* lines 1-1132 (handout)

11/27 *Mary Magdalen,* lines 1133-2143 (handout)

11/29 Performance discussion

**Final Essay Due**

**Week 15 – Finals**

**12/4 Performance/Presentation due**

**12/6 Take-home Final Exam due**