

English 415-1001 [85315] – Topics in Medieval Lit. and Culture:
Sin and Social Revolt in Middle English Literature

Prof. Richard Newhauser

Fall Semester, 2014; 9:00-10:15 a.m. TTh; LL 103

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Office Hours: TTh 12:00-2:00 p.m., and by appointment

The ideal of society in the Middle Ages can be defined by the theory of the three estates, a model in which the aristocracy, the members of the church, and the peasantry each fulfill a mutually satisfying function. In England by the mid-fourteenth century, however, this ideal was little more than a literary commonplace, unable to express a social reality that was shaped by the loss of population in the Black Plague, a changing economic situation and the effects of the Peasants' Revolt, and the development of radical theologies that challenged the Church's hegemony on dogma. The literature of late-medieval England articulated its critique of those in positions of power using the language of politics and theology, but above all a moral idiom. This ethical discourse can be found in allegories, lyrics, and Lollard sermons and treatises that will serve as the corpus of our readings for the semester to help us understand the connection between sin, dissent, heresy, and social revolt in late-medieval England.

Reading List

Langland, William. *Piers Plowman: A New Translation of the B-Text*. Trans. A. V. C. Schmidt. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001; reprint 2009. [ISBN: 9780199555260]

Medieval English Political Writings. Ed. James M. Dean. Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University – Medieval Institute Publications, 1996. [ISBN: 1879288648]

Selections from English Wycliffite Writings. Ed. Anne Hudson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. [ISBN: 9780802080455]

Works on Reserve:

Alford, John A. "The Design of the Poem." In *A Companion to Piers Plowman*. Ed. John A. Alford, 29-65. Berkeley, etc.: Univ. of California Press, 1988. [Hayden: PR2015.C65 1988]

Hilton, Rodney. *Bond Men Made Free. Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381*. London: Temple Smith, 1973. [Hayden: DA235.H49 1973]

Mann, Jill. *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire. The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. Cambridge, Engl.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973. [Hayden: PR1868.P9 M3]

Morrall, John B. *Political Thought in Medieval Times*. London, 1958; reprint Toronto, etc.: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980. [West: JA82.M6 1980]

- Scase, Wendy. *“Piers Plowman” and the New Anticlericalism*. Cambridge, Engl.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989. [Hayden: PR2017.A55S33 1989]
- Szittyta, Penn R. *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986. [Hayden: PR317.F75S9 1986]
- Yunck, John A. “Satire.” In *A Companion to Piers Plowman*. Ed. John A. Alford, 135-54. Berkeley, etc.: Univ. of California Press, 1988. [Hayden: PR2015.C65 1988]
- Zeeman, Nicolette. *Piers Plowman and the Medieval Discourse of Desire*. Cambridge, Engl.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006. [Hayden: PR2017.D45Z44 2006]

Requirements:

Students will be responsible for the content not only of the reading assignments, but also of our discussions in class. Regular attendance and participation in the discussions of *all* texts (not just the text[s] that you are researching for the semester) are prerequisites for passing the course. The door to the classroom will remain open for five minutes after the scheduled time for the class to begin; after that point the door will be closed. If you are late and see that the door has been closed, you have already been marked absent for that day – do not come into the classroom. Two unexcused absences are permissible without any effect on your grade, but three unexcused absences or more will adversely affect the final grade for the course. Absences due to a medical condition must be excused by a statement signed by the physician in charge of the treatment (not a nurse). You may also expect brief quizzes on all reading assignments. Do not use electronic equipment in the classroom to take notes or record the discussion. The final grades for the course will be composed of individual performance in six areas:

- 1) A Topic Description. All Topic Descriptions (1 page; typewritten; double-spaced; with 1-inch margins, and your name the top of the page; and carefully proofread), which will either be assigned to you or which you will choose yourself *after consultation with me*, are due on Thursday, September 11. You *must* meet with me during my office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss your topic. The grade on the Topic Description will account for about 10 percent of your final grade. Two or three students may wish to work together on a series of oral presentations of related topics or literary texts and/or intellectual documents to be held at successive class meetings. To see an example of a well done Topic Description, click on the following link: [Sample 1](#)
- 2) An oral presentation (ca. 10-15 minutes) representing the fruits of your initial research on a topic. The presentation should be open-ended and should encourage questions from the rest of the class. The grade on the presentation will account for about 15 percent of the final grade.
- 3) A brief critical book report (1-2 pages; typed or printed in no larger than size 12 font; double-spaced; with 1-inch margins, page numbers, and your name on every page; and carefully proofread) of one or two major studies of the topic or text on which your report is based, due on the date of the oral report. Include the bibliography of the book(s) or article(s) you are reviewing at the end of your review. The grade on the critical book report will account for about 10 percent of the final grade. To see an example of a well done review, click on the following link: [Sample 1](#).
- 4) Quizzes on each work to be read for the semester. The average of all the quizzes will account for about 20 percent of the final grade.

- 5) A short paper (5 pages, excluding bibliography; typed or printed in no larger than size 12 font; double-spaced; with 1-inch margins, page numbers, and your name on every page; and carefully proofread) to be handed in one week *before* the oral presentation. The paper will include an annotated bibliography of 3-5 items which you will have read in preparation for giving the report and writing the paper (for all questions of documentation and references, follow the guidelines available at: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~dedalus/guidetostyle/index.html>). The short paper for *all* reports to be held on or after October 23 will be due on Thursday, October 16. The short paper will serve as the basis for your term paper. The grade on the short paper will account for about 20 percent of the final grade. To see examples of all that is required for a good paper, click on the following links: [Sample 1](#), [Sample 2](#).
- 6) A term paper (12-15 pages including bibliography; typed or printed in no larger than size 12 font; double-spaced; with 1-inch margins, page numbers, and your name on every page; and carefully proofread) in which all of your research on the topic, and all of your own brilliance, are formulated carefully and in the scope which the subject demands. Term papers must be turned in to me – *together with the copy of the short paper you handed in to me and which I returned to you with my comments* – at the latest on the last day of class. I will not be able to complete your grade for the course (you will receive an Incomplete) unless I receive both papers at the end of the semester. The grade on the term paper will account for about 25 percent of the final grade.

Syllabus

1. Th 8/21: Introduction: The syllabus, documentation and style, academic integrity
2. T 8/26: Middle English 1; The Seven Deadly Sins; “The Letter of John Ball” (Dean, 136)
3. Th 8/28: Middle English 2; Medieval Politics 1: Ideals; Morrall, *Political Thought in Medieval Times*, 9-11, 81-118 (reserve)
4. T 9/2: Middle English 3; Medieval Politics 2: Hierocracy to The Great Schism; Anticlericalism: From *The Lanterne of Light* (Dean, 31-41, 75-91); report: _____
5. Th 9/4: Middle English 4; Anticlericalism: Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible, chaps. 12 and 13 (Dean, 60-68); Scase, “*Piers Plowman*” and *the New Anticlericalism*, 1-14 (reserve); report: _____
6. T 9/9: Middle English 5; Antifraternalism: “Preste, ne monke, ne yit chanoun” (Dean, 47-52); report: _____

7. Th 9/11: Middle English 6: Antifraternalism: “Thou that sellest the worde of God” (Dean, 55); “Allas, what schul we freris do” (Dean, 56-57); Szittyá, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature*, 183-230 (reserve); report: _____; all topic descriptions due today
8. T 9/16: Antifraternalism: “Of thes frer mynours” (Dean, 53-54); “Freers, freers, wo ye be” (Dean, 58-59); report: _____; report: _____
9. Th 9/18: The Evils of Money: “Sir Penny” (Dean, 179-88, 217-21); report: _____; “Beati qui esuriunt” (Dean, 189-92); Yunck, “Satire,” 135-54 (reserve); report: _____; report: _____
10. T 9/23: The Evils of Money: “The Simonie” (Dean, 193-212; trans.: http://www.sfsu.edu/~medieval/complaintlit/simonie_trans.html); report: _____; report: _____
11. Th 9/25: No class: Rosh haShanah
12. T 9/30: The Evils of Money: “London Lickpenny” (Dean, 222-25); report: _____; The Peasants’ Revolt: “On the times” (Dean, 140-46); Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, 137-64 (reserve); report: _____; report: _____
13. Th 10/2: The Peasants’ Revolt: “Tax has tenet us alle” (Dean, 147-49); report: _____; “There is a busch that is forgrowe” (150-52); report: _____
14. T 10/7: The Peasants’ Revolt: “Truthe, reste, and pes” (Dean, 153-58); report: _____; Addresses of the Commons (Dean, 137-39); report: _____
15. Th 10/9: Lollards: Sixteen points on which the bishops accuse Lollards (Hudson, 19-24; <http://www.umsl.edu/~gradyf/medieval/sixteenpoints.htm>); report: _____
- (10/11 – 10/14, No class: Fall Break)
16. Th 10/16: Lollards: Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible, chapt. 15 (Hudson, 67-72); report: _____; short paper for all reports to be held on or after October 23 due today

17. T 10/21: Lollards: *Epistola Sathanae ad Cleros* (Hudson, 89-93); report: _____;
 Miracle Plays (Hudson, 97-104); report: _____
18. Th 10/23: Lollards: Church and state (Hudson, 131-34); report: _____; The
 function of the secular ruler (Hudson, 127-31); report: _____
19. T 10/28: The Poor: Chaucer's Plowman (Dean, 258) and Parson (text to be supplied);
 Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, 55-74 (reserve); report: _____;
 report: _____
20. Th 10/30: The Poor: "God spede the plough" (Dean, 254-56); report: _____; "I-
 blessyd be Cristes sonde" (Dean, 257-58); report: _____; report: _____
21. T 11/4: The Poor: "Song of the Husbandman" (Dean, 251-53); report: _____;
 report: _____
22. Th 11/6: *Piers Plowman* (Prologue-Passus IV); Alford, "The Design of the Poem," 29-65
 (reserve); report: _____; report: _____
- (T 11/11: No class: Veterans Day)
23. Th 11/13: *Piers Plowman* (Passus V-VII); report: _____; report: _____
24. T 11/18: *Piers Plowman* (Passus VIII-X); Zeeman, *Piers Plowman and the Medieval
 Discourse of Desire*, 201-44 (reserve); report: _____; report: _____
25. Th 11/20: *Piers Plowman* (Passus XI-XV); report: _____; report: _____
26. T 11/25: *Piers Plowman* (Passus XVI-XVII); report: _____; report:

- (11/27 – 11/28: No class: Thanksgiving Break)
27. T 12/2: *Piers Plowman* (Passus XVIII-XX); report: _____

28. Th 12/4: Final Paper due today (with the copy of the short paper you handed in to me earlier in the semester)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY!

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see: <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Plagiarism is generally defined as using another's words, ideas, materials or work without acknowledging the source. You are responsible for knowing how to use someone else's work how to acknowledge that source properly.

You might want to read an article about plagiarism at US universities that appeared in *The New York Times* in 2010:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/education/02cheat.html?pagewanted=1&r=1&hp>