

EN258.01
Fall 2013, MWF 11-12
Classroom: Cushing 333

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Office Hours: Friday, 12:15-1:15pm or by appointment



Sin and Evil in Medieval Literature

Course Description

This course examines works of literature from the eighth to fifteenth centuries through their treatments of, and navigation through, the interrelated (but not synonymous!) concepts of sin and evil. Beginning in the Anglo-Saxon period, we trace our theme through a wide array of sources (heroic, elegiac, and epic poetry, sermons, saints' lives, mystical visions, sagas, fables, biography, drama) and evaluate its functions in the interplay between literary text and historical context. Where do evil and sin lie – in the individual, in society, or external to both? – and in what forms? All texts are in English translation, though it should be noted that certain Middle English texts may not require translation.

The goals of this course are twofold: first, to expose you to the wide universe of literature upon the shoulders of which modern culture (at times unwittingly) stands; and second, through our conversations, examinations, and writing assignments, to foster deep critical thinking and engagement with the texts.

Required Texts

It is important you get the specific editions listed with an asterisk (*), the rest can be found *gratis* as described below.

**Old Testament Narratives*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, Harvard University Press, 2011 (ISBN: 978-0674053199)

**Beowulf*, Facing Page Translation, R. M. Liuzza (ISBN: 978-1554811137)

**Njal's Saga*, Penguin Classics, Robert Cook (ISBN: 978-0140447699)

The Book of Job (available online: <http://drbo.org/chapter/20001.htm>)

The “Sermo Lupi ad Anglos” (available online: <http://english3.fsu.edu/~wulfstan/noframes.html>)

The Book of Margery Kempe: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/staley.htm>

The Shewings of Julian of Norwich: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/julianfr.htm>

Juliana (selections) Trans. From Bjork, R. *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf* (course website)

“Blickling Homily XVII,” EETS edition (course website)

Sir Owein (available online: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/sofrm.htm>)

The Tale of Thorstein Shiver / *Thorsteins Thattr Skelks*, Trans. Anthony Maxwell (course website)

Canterbury Tales: Prioress, Pardoner, Friar, and Clerk (available online: http://www.canterburytales.org/canterbury_tales.html and <http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/>)

Evaluation

Studentship:	20%
Quizzes:	10%
Narrative Poetry Assignment	10%
Midterm Paper:	25%
Final Paper:	35%

Studentship

You will notice that a sizeable amount of your grade falls under “studentship.” Good studentship means a number of things, including attendance, participation, and attitude. Good studentship entails the following: coming on time to class each day, with the day's readings **in hand**; making evident that you have read the material, by contributing meaningfully to in-class discussions and performing well on in-class work; and contributing meaningfully and with direct citation of the works discussed to online discussion prompts as they are assigned.

Schedule

Weeks 1 & 2: Job, Noah, God's "evil" deeds and the nature of "sin"

Texts: Job (OT), Genesis (OT), "Sermo Lupi ad Anglos", Genesis (OE)

Wednesday, September 4 – First class: no reading assigned
Friday, September 6 – (Biblical) Genesis 6:1-8:22; Job 1:1-10:22.
Monday, September 9 – Job 11:1-end; pick narrative poetry example.
Wednesday, September 11 – Sermo Lupi ad Anglos
Friday, September 13 – Old English Genesis ll.1-234 (p.2-19)

Week 3: Genesis B and the Fall(s)

Texts: Genesis (OE)

Monday, September 16 – Narrative Poetry Assignment Due; Genesis B ll.235-441 (pp.19-35)
Wednesday, September 18 – ll.442-851 (pp. 35-65)
Friday, September 20 – Genesis ll. 852-1054 (pp.65-79)

Weeks 4-5: Beowulf, Cain and Abel, and Kin-killing

Texts: Beowulf (Liuzza)

Monday, September 23 – Genesis ll. 1229-1554 (pp.89-111); Mellinkoff, "Cain's Monstrous Progeny"; Beowulf ll.1-455 (pp. 55-81).
Wednesday, September 25 – Beowulf ll. 456-836 (pp. 83-105)
Friday, September 27 – Parents' Weekend – Beowulf ll. 837-1650 (pp. 105-153)
Monday, September 30 – Beowulf ll.1651-2220 (pp. 153-187)
Wednesday, October 2 – Beowulf ll. 2221-2751 (pp. 187-219)
Friday, October 4 – Beowulf ll. 2752-3182 (pp. 220-245)

Weeks 6-7: Njal's Saga and the Problem of Violence

Texts: Njal's Saga

Monday, October 7 – Njal's Saga Ch. 1-34 (pp. 3-57)
Wednesday, October 9 – Ch. 34-45 (pp.57-78)
Friday, October 11 – Ch. 46-81 (pp.78-133)
Monday, October 14 – Columbus Day, no classes
Wednesday, October 16 – Ch. 82-130 (pp. 133-227)
Friday, October 18 – Ch. 131-159 (pp. 227-310)

Week 8: Hell and Those Who Saw It

Texts: Blickling Homily XVII (EETS), The Tale of Thorstein Shiver, Sir Owain (TEAMS) (selections)

Monday, October 21 – Blickling Homily XVII (EETS)
Wednesday, October 23 – The Tale of Thorstein Shiver, Sir Owain ll. 43-168
Friday, October 25 – Sir Owain, ll.169-288; 337-450; 715-798;

Weeks 9-11: Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich, and what it means to be “holy”

Texts: The Book of Margery Kempe (TEAMS), The Shewings of Julian of Norwich (TEAMS)

Monday, October 28 – **Midterm Paper Due**; Margery ll. 1-129
Wednesday, October 30 – Margery ll. 130-300
Friday, November 1 – Margery ll. 301-581
Monday, November 4 – Margery ll. 620-721; 1551-1645
Wednesday, November 6 – Margery ll. 926-1044; Julian ll. 1-40
Friday, November 8 – Julian ll. 41-179; 286-345
Monday, November 11 – Julian ll. 346-534; 562-588
Wednesday, November 13 Julian ll. 930-963; 1071-1145
Friday, November 15 – Julian ll. 1310-1346; 1599-1676

Weeks 12-15: Chaucer's (sinful) Canterbury Tales

Texts: Prioress's Tale, Pardoner's Tale, Friar's Tale, Clerk's Tale (canterburytales.org / Harvard)

Monday, November 18 – Prioress's Tale
Wednesday, November 20 – Prioress cont'd
Friday, November 22 – Pardoner's Tale
Monday, November 25 – Pardoner cont'd
Wednesday, November 27 – **Thanksgiving break**
Friday, November 28 – **Thanksgiving break**
Monday, December 2 – Friar's Tale
Wednesday, December 4 – Friar cont'd
Friday, December 6 – Clerk's Tale
Monday, December 9 – Clerk cont'd

Wednesday, December 11 - TBA

Friday, December 13 – Study day, no classes

Final Paper Due: Friday, December 13

Final Exam: There will be no final exam for this class

Policies

Attendance Policy

Each class, attendance will be taken with a sign-up sheet or in-class assignment. It is your responsibility to ensure that your name is recorded. Students are allowed two unexplained absences without any affect to their grade. Any further unexplained absence without a documented medical excuse will be considered an **unexcused** absence, resulting in a percent loss from that student's final grade. **Five unexcused absences will result in a student failing the course.** Student athletes who inform me of anticipated absences will be excused, but will be required to keep up with any work missed (please see me).

Late Policy

An assignment's grade will drop **one third of a letter grade** for each day late: for example a B+ paper will become a B paper, and then a B- paper, and so on. **Work that is a week late will not be accepted, and will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment.**

Plagiarism:

The BC Policy on Academic Integrity states: "Plagiarism is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged." Always consult with me if you are in doubt. **Any form of plagiarism will, at the very least, result in a failing grade in this class.**

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with Kathy Duggan (kathleen.duggan@bc.edu), Associate Director, Academic Support Services, The Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or ADHD) or Paulette Durrett (paulette.durrett@bc.edu) Assistant Dean for Students with Disabilities (all other disabilities). Advanced notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.