

**Victoria University of Wellington  
School of English, Film, Theatre, and Media Studies**

**ENGL 322 – Middle English Language  
ENGL 406 -- Medieval Studies: Middle English to Early Modern English  
(2007 2/3)**

**Course organisation**

*Teaching staff:* Christine Franzen, VZ 919, 463-6805 (home: 476:6126);  
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*Class time and place:* Monday 12-2 in VZ 509 and Wednesday 10-11 in VZ 808. Any changes to the course schedule will be announced in class and posted on the course Blackboard site; the classes are all conducted as seminars.

**Course aims and objectives**

The course aims to give students a good reading knowledge of, and ability to differentiate, dialectal varieties of Middle English between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries and firm understanding of the development of the English language during this period. The emphasis will be on textual analysis with some translation, especially of early texts.

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- translate the set texts demonstrating a good standard of accuracy and comprehension;
- demonstrate a good grasp of Middle English grammar in its various manifestations;
- recognise, describe, and differentiate the dialect features of the texts;
- assign unseen texts to a dialect area;
- demonstrate an understanding of the morphological and phonological development of the English language in this period;
- demonstrate an understanding of semantic development in the language in this period;
- demonstrate an understanding of the development of the standard written language;
- demonstrate proficiency in using the major research tools for the period such as *OED*, *MED*, *Linguistic Atlas*, Early English Text Society, etc.;
- above all, work to a high standard of accuracy, consistency, and attention to detail; and**
- demonstrate good work habits to complete assignments within an allotted time frame.**

**Set texts**

J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers, eds. *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, 2nd edn. 1968.

Kenneth Sisam and J. R. R. Tolkien, eds. *A Middle English Reader and Vocabulary* (Dover); previously published as Kenneth Sisam, ed. *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose* (Clarendon). Either is fine.

ENGL 322/406 Middle English Language Class Notes

**Assessment/Relationship between assessment and course objectives**

**Note: This assessment differs from that in the Prospectus in that it does not include a Final Examination. My Research and Study leave begins on 22 October and makes a final examination impractical. The written agreement of all the students in 322 and 406 to this change in assessment has been obtained.**

**The course assessment consists of:**

**Test #1** on East Midlands and Northern texts and dialects, **at the end of Week 4.**

It is designed to check progress on translation and comprehension, on dialect identification, and on recognition of significant features in Middle English (morphological, phonological, orthographical, and semantic).

ENGL 322: 25% of final assessment; ENGL 406: 20% of final assessment.

**Test #2** on *Ancrene Wisse*, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and *The Ayenbyte of Inwyt*, **at the end of Week 10.**

Objectives and weightings as for Test # 1.

**Assignment # 1:** a short project on the Western dialect, which involves side-glossing a section of a text; discussing differences between two versions of the same text; transcribing a short extract of Middle English; and learning to use *A Linguistic Atlas of Later Mediaeval English* and *MED*. A detailed description will be given out later.

**Due at the end of Week 7.**

Designed to give experience in the use of some of the major research tools for the period and to apply knowledge of semantic and morphological change. See also below \*\*\*.

ENGL 322: 25% of final assessment; ENGL 406: 20% of final assessment.

**Assignment # 2:** commentary on two passages

Part A: an extract from EITHER *Gawain and the Green Knight* OR *Piers Plowman*  
AND

Part B: an extract from EITHER *Chaucer* OR London documents/Paston letters

**Part A will be due at the end of Week 11**

**Part B will be due at 5:00 p.m. on 15 October.**

The commentaries will put to use all the skills you have learned in this course. A detailed description will be given out later. See also below \*\*\*.

ENGL 322: 25% of final assessment; ENGL 406: 20% of final assessment.

**ENGL 406 only:**

An assignment on a language topic of your own choice relevant to this course, to be decided in consultation with me. **Due the end of Week 6.** 20% of final assessment.

\*\*\* Both assignments will involve detailed language work and a range of skills, editorial, translation, analysis, and critical. They are intended to develop independent research skills which will be invaluable in post-graduate courses and many jobs. Accuracy and attention to detail are vital skills in all assessed work for this course. Word limits cannot be specified for any of the assignments for this course because in most cases they are not in normal essay format. All work must be produced in accordance with the School's *Guidelines for SEFT Students*; note particularly the attached statement on plagiarism.

**Extensions for term work**

If you need an extension beyond the due date for any piece of work, you must apply **in writing** to me, **before the due date**, stating your reasons for needing an extension, providing supporting documentation if possible. Work submitted with an extension will be graded in the normal way.

Late work submitted **without an extension** will be counted, as long as it is received within two weeks of the due date **and** before 5:00 p m on 19 October. You will, however, be penalised by having your grade lowered one step (for example, B+ to B) for each week late. Comments on late work will also be minimal. If you fail to hand in work before this two-

week deadline, you may be considered as having failed to meet a mandatory requirement, and therefore fail the course.

Extensions will not be granted beyond 19 October nor will late work be accepted after that date, except in cases of **very exceptional circumstances**. The University does not permit us to accept work after 9 November, and students who cannot complete their work by this date for medical or similar reasons should consult the aegrotat provisions in the *Calendar*.

### **Workload**

Students in 322 should expect to spend about 18 hours per week on this course including class contact hours. Students in 406 should expect to spend about 24 hours per week. This work consists of weekly translation and exercises as specified in the Class Notes Book and preparation for assessed tests and assignments.

### **Mandatory course requirements**

1. You must complete all the in-term written work above.
2. You must attend a minimum of 70% of the classes.
3. You are expected to come to class having prepared the assignment for the session, and able to contribute. ENGL 406 students will be asked to present one or two topics.

### ENGL 322/406: Course Schedule

Texts will be covered in the following order, though some adjustments to the schedule may be necessary as the course proceeds. The specific extracts and exercises to be prepared are given in your ENGL 322/406 Class Notes book.

Week 1	B & S: XVI	<i>The Peterborough Chronicle</i>
Week 2	B & S: XIII	<i>The Ormulum</i>
Weeks 3-4	Class Notes B & S: XIV S & T: X	Chaucer's 'The Reeve's Tale' <i>Cursor Mundi</i> Barbour's <i>Bruce</i>
Week 5	B & S: XVII	<i>Ancrene Wisse</i>
Weeks 6-7	S & T: V S & T: VIII(A) S & T: XIII(B)	<i>Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight</i> <i>Piers Plowman</i> Trevisa's translation of Higden's <i>Polychronicon</i>
Week 8-9	B & S: I S & T: III	<i>The Owl and the Nightingale</i> <i>The Ayenbyte of Inwyt</i>
Week 10	Class Notes	Chaucer's 'The Reeve's Tale' (a second look)
Weeks 11-2	S & T: XI(A) Class Notes Class Notes	Wiclif on the Translation of the Bible London documents Paston letters