English 353:
An Anthology of Medieval English Poetry
Spring 2023

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Course Description:
This course is devoted to a single large manuscript (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 61) containing over forty short and long poems, presenting a broad cross-section of popular verse in Middle English. Many items are well-attested elsewhere (e.g., Sir Orfeo, Sir Cleges, the Northern Passion, and the Charter of Christ), and all seem to be driven by a particular concern: the moral formation of children within the gentry household. To study medieval verse in this way is to observe how texts, annotations, and illustrations are materially bound together as a whole, producing a domestic anthology. We will read the book “cover to cover,” pausing to examine recreational, devotional, and educational writings within broader literary and cultural contexts.

Proposed Assignments:
• in-class writings
• brief presentations
• research proposal
• research paper
• final exam

Required Text: