

**UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH GRADUATE COURSES
SUMMER SESSION 2019**

English 515
(CRN 31471)

**STUDIES IN MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE: AREA
COURSE**
Chaucer and Italian Literature
(1.5 units)

June 25 to Aug 16, 2019
Tuesday and Friday
CLE C316
10:00 a.m.-12:50 p.m.

Dr. Joseph Grossi

This course invites comparative-minded students to read Chaucer and fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Italian writers against the larger backdrop of Anglo-Italian cultural relations. Prospective students need have no knowledge of Italian but will obtain a smattering of it when reading translated texts alongside key passages in the original language. Understanding, for example, “what Chaucer really did to *Il Filostrato*” (to borrow the title of a famous essay by C.S. Lewis) will become clearer when *Troilus and Criseyde* is studied in tandem with selections from Boccaccio’s own poem. Moreover, Chaucer’s feminine characters, such as his Wife of Bath, will likewise seem more evocatively delineated when considered in relation to imagined (or, in the case of Margherita Datini, real) female subjectivities adumbrated in Italian writings. Besides Chaucer and Boccaccio, authors will include Dante, Petrarch, Christine de Pizan (an Italian author who identified herself as such even though she wrote in French), and the aforementioned Datini. The aim will be not only to look for Italian ‘influences’ on Chaucer but also to consider the broader intertextual relationships which composed the rich tapestry of late-medieval European literary cultures.

TENTATIVE TEXTS

- Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *House of Fame* (probably in Norton Critical Editions; the one of the *Troilus* includes Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*)
- Coursepack, which may include selections from Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda aurea*, the *Poems of the Anonymous Genoese*; Dante’s *Vita nuova*, *Commedia*, and *De vulgari eloquentia*; Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, *Teseida*, and *Filocolo*; Petrarch, *Canzoniere* and *De remediis utriusque fortunae*; de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies* and *Book of Long Study*; and Margherita Datini’s *Letters*.
- Secondary sources may include selections from Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento* (Cambridge, 1985); Karla Taylor, *Chaucer Reads ‘The Divine Comedy’* (Stanford, 1989); David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* (Stanford, 1997); Warren Ginsburg, *Chaucer’s Italian Tradition* (Ann Arbor, 2001); Suzanne Hagedorn, *Abandoned Women* (Ann Arbor, 2004); William Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Brewer, 2010); Susanna Fein and David Raybin, eds., *Chaucer: Contemporary Approaches* (Penn State, 2010); Kenneth P. Clarke, *Chaucer and Italian Textuality* (Oxford, 2011).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (TENTATIVE)

- One short comparative assignment (10%), which will analyze two short quotations in relation to each other, the first from a Chaucerian text, the second (in English translation) from one of the Italian-authored works
- In-class presentation of a critical article or book chapter (20%)
- Preliminary work leading to the end-of-term research essay (20%); this will comprise an introductory paragraph, outline, and annotated bibliography
- The end-of-term research essay itself (40%)
- Class participation (10%)

English 561
(CRN 31399)

**STUDIES IN 20TH-CENTURY BRITISH AND IRISH
LITERATURE: SPECIAL TOPIC**
Masterpieces of Modern Irish Literature
(1.5 units)

May 7 to June 14, 2019
Tuesday and Friday
CLE B215
10:00 a.m.-12:50 p.m.

Dr. Magdalena Kay

Ireland produced a huge amount of important, innovative work in the twentieth century in multiple genres. It is imperative to consider Irish literature in terms of its unique historical and cultural position, and this course will seek to balance historical, “contextual” readings with formal readings, in which we foreground the stylistic innovations of particular literary texts. Our guiding question may be whether these approaches must be seen as discrepant or exclusive, as they are often popularly considered. The authors we study often have strong opinions as to how they should be read, and we will consider their personal stakes in such methodological questions.

When asked whether he was a British writer, Samuel Beckett replied, “au contraire.” How can we understand such contrariness? Or situate such cheeky yet wry humor? The course will survey the Irish twentieth century (and part of the twenty-first) in order to grapple with such questions. In the twenty-first century, scholars have begun to query whether we can move beyond the “Irish” label, and perhaps beyond the concept of nationality itself. There are good reasons for this desire: contemporary Irish writers often feel hampered, both by an antiquated notion of Irishness that has medieval roots and by twentieth-century notions of it that focus on Ireland’s struggle for independence and on Protestant-Catholic conflict. In this course, we will think critically about Irishness as we work through a modern era that begins with the anti-modern, nationalist Yeats and continues today with the cosmopolitan Mahon. This will necessarily include questioning why women have been remarkably absent from this conversation until the contemporary period.

TENTATIVE TEXTS

- W. B. Yeats, *Selected Poems*
- James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- Patrick Kavanagh, *The Great Hunger*
- Elizabeth Bowen, *The Death of the Heart*
- Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*
- Eavan Boland, *In a Time of Violence* and *The Lost Land*
- Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Selected Poems, 1966-1996*
- Derek Mahon, *New Collected Poems*
- Brian Friel, *Translations*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (TENTATIVE)

- First Presentation (on Irish history and culture): 25 %
- Second Presentation (a critical assessment of a scholarly article): 25 %
- Final essay: 40 %
- Participation in essay workshop: 10 %