

Reading Middle English out loud with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

Start date 13th November 2016 **Time** 10.00am – 4.45pm

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge

Tutor Tony Harris **Course code** 1617NDX008

Director of Programmes Emma Jennings

For further information on this course, please contact Public Programme Co-ordinator, Clare Kerr
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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Tony received his BA (Oxon) in English Language and Literature in 2010 as a mature student and subsequently graduated with distinction from the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies (GCMS), University of Reading, with an MA (Res) in Medieval Studies. Now a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge in the department of Anglo-Saxon Norse and Celtic (ASNaC), Tony is working on aspects of scientific vocabulary associated with medieval timekeeping. Prior to this, he was a computer scientist for twenty-five years. Tony's aim is to make his love and enthusiasm for all things literary and medieval as infectious as possible.

Course programme

9:30		Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/ coffee
10:00 – 11:15	Session 1	‘Discovering Chaucer’: A very short introduction to his life & works. The basics of 14th/15th century Middle English.
11.15	Coffee	
11:45 – 13:00	Session 2	A group introduction to reading & interpreting Chaucer’s Middle English verse
13:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 15:15	Session 3	How to read the General Prologue to <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> out loud and in the original.
15:15	Tea	
15:30 – 16:45	Session 4	Discovering and reading more stories from <i>The Canterbury Tales</i>.
16:45		Day school ends

Aims:

Although we can read works such as *The Canterbury Tales* in translation, the best way for us to appreciate Chaucer's humour and wordplay by far is to read them in the original Middle English. The primary aim of this short course is to provide a basic grounding in the Middle English language of the 13th/14th century through a mixture of enjoyable activities including reading out loud, short analysis and translation, as well as group discussion within the limits of a one-day course.

Content:

In the latter part of the 14th century the standard language of the court and church was French and Latin respectively. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Geoffrey Chaucer was obedient to neither convention and instead developed a style of English poetry that was written in the vernacular English spoken in and around London in his day. This course will consider some of Chaucer's influences, and will explore selections from *The Canterbury Tales* in this original 'Middle English' language.

No prior knowledge of Middle English will be required but in preparation for the course participants might read extracts from the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* in translation and have a passing familiarity with some of the other stories and characters. Photocopied extracts of the extracts under discussion will be provided in each session but, if participants wish to have a copy of the Middle English texts with associated commentaries to refer to, the Norton Critical Edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (ISBN 0393925870) might be helpful. Alternatively, Oxford University Press *The Riverside Chaucer* (ISBN 9780192821096) is a standard edition which contains all of Chaucer's works.

Presentation of the course:

This one day course will cover the basics of Chaucer's Middle English, in particular, skills required for reading out loud. Participants will learn the basics of pronunciation and will engage in a number of classroom style mini group workshops practising the skill of reading Chaucer aloud in the original Middle English. The primary text for the day will be 'The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales'.

Outcomes:

Participants will gain a better knowledge of Chaucer, his influences, selections from *The Canterbury Tales* and some of the hidden meanings that often lie behind the language. Hopefully, in the future, participants will also be able to expand their reading of the Chaucerian canon and to begin to approach and enjoy other original Middle English texts such as 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' and 'Piers Plowman'.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

Understand Chaucerian Middle English within the limitations of a one-day course, read it aloud and become more familiar with the person of Chaucer and the Middle English language. In addition, participants will gain a knowledge of an outline of the Chaucerian canon.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of other texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Brown, Peter	<i>Geoffrey Chaucer</i>	OUP, 2011
Horobin, Simon	<i>Chaucer's language</i>	Palgrave Macmillan, 2007
Pope, Rob	<i>How to study Chaucer</i> . 2nd ed	St. Martin's Press, 2001
Sisam, Kenneth, and Tolkien, J. R. R.	<i>A Middle English reader</i>	Dover Publications, 2005
Strohman, Paul	<i>The poet's tale: Chaucer and the year that made The Canterbury Tales</i>	Profile Books, 2014

Website addresses

These websites contain information about Geoffrey Chaucer and his works and may prove helpful and interesting. Browsing them or listening to the audio material is not a course pre-requisite:

<http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003hycq>
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/chaucer/chttexts.htm>

Additional information

Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:

<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746262.

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 16 September 2016