



Discovering the medieval world through the writing of the Gawain-poet

Start date Friday 11 February 2022 **End date** Sunday 13 February 2022

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor Dr Scott Annett **Course code** 2122NRX084

Director of ISP and LL Sarah Ormrod

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Tutor biography

Dr Scott Annett is an experienced teacher of medieval literature, having taught courses in both the Faculty of English and the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages at the University of Cambridge. He has experience working on authors as diverse as Chaucer, Marie de France, Dante and the Gawain Poet. Indeed, the relationship between medieval English and medieval Italian literature is one of his primary research interests. Dr Annett enjoys working on texts written in various languages (Latin, English, Italian and Anglo-Norman), as well as attending to the complex theological, philosophical and literary questions posed by authors of this time.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	An Introduction to the Gawain Poet
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Apprehending the Natural World (<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i>)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	The Pagan Supernatural (<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i>)
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Sex and Chivalry (<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i>)
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Justice and Forgiveness in Arthurian Literature (<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i>)
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Ghosts and Grief (<i>Pearl</i>)
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Visions of the Afterlife (<i>Pearl</i>)
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

This course explores the Gawain-poet's writing, focusing on *Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl*. Particular attention will be paid to medieval culture and to the Gawain-poet's place within a broader medieval context.

Content:

This course presents an opportunity to explore the complexities and contradictions of the medieval world through the subtle and sophisticated poetry of the anonymous "Gawain-poet". Writing as a contemporary of Chaucer's and working across a similarly wide range of literary traditions, from secular romance to deep spiritual reflection, the works of the Gawain-poet stand as a unique achievement in English literature, while also demonstrating the full diversity of medieval writing. Students will enjoy discussing the challenging, and often surprisingly contemporary, questions posed in *Gawain and the Green Knight*, which has recently been turned into a major film (*The Green Knight*, 2021), while the devastating grief articulated by the speaker in *Pearl* is a stark reminder of the horrors of the Black Death. As part of this course, students will reflect upon questions relating to medieval presentations of the natural and the supernatural, as well as the consequences of sin and the possibility of forgiveness.

Presentation of the course:

This course will take place primarily through group discussions, guided by the lecturer. You will be encouraged to participate fully in discussion of the texts and the issues surrounding them, and may be invited to prepare an informal individual presentation on particular aspects of a text or historical issue.

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

- Develop knowledge and understanding of medieval literature and in particular the writing of the *Gawain-poet* within its cultural and historical context;
- Show awareness of critical and theoretical approaches to literature from the period;
- Develop keener close reading skills, particularly when engaging with texts in medieval texts;
- Articulate and discuss the broader concepts of the course and the relationships between the texts, particularly the Gawain-poet's writing and later texts.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *

Required reading

- *Gawain and the Green Knight and Pearl in The Works of the Gawain poet: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Ad Putter and Myra Stokes (London: Penguin, 2014) *

Note you may want to read these poems in translation and/or to use a published translation as a parallel text throughout our discussions. There are several excellent editions available, but none are particularly recommended. Our discussion will focus primarily on the edition above, which also has excellent and very helpful notes.

Supplementary reading

- Ashe, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Limits of Chivalry* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010)
- Bowers, *The Politics of 'Pearl': Court Poetry in the Age of Richard II* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001)
- Brewer and Gibson, eds., *A Companion to the Gawain Poet* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997)
- Conley (ed.), *The Middle English Pearl: Critical Essays* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970)
- Hahn in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Krueger (Cambridge: CUP, 2000)
- Putter, *An Introduction to the Gawain-poet* (Longman, 1996)
- Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)
- Spearing, *The Gawain-poet: a critical study* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970)
- Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1977)