ENGL 5301: 001 Medieval English Literature

Claiming Poverty in the Middle Ages and Now

R 2.00-4.50pm Carlisle Hall 212

Spring Semester 2014

J. Stodnick

**21** [**Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go [and] sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come [and] follow me.**](http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Matthew-19-21/)

**22** [**But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.**](http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Matthew-19-22/)

**23** [**Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.**](http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Matthew-19-23/)

**24** [**And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.**](http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Matthew-19-24/) **(Matthew 19: 21-24)**

**Office:** 624 Carlisle Hall

**Office Hours:** T 3.00-4.00 p.m. (or by appointment at other times)

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**Course Description**: A connection between poverty in the medieval and the contemporary world has recently been drawn by the latest Pope electing to be named after Francis of Assisi, the thirteenth-century saint who established the ideal of voluntary poverty. Pope Francis and President Obama have increased calls to address income disparity, while even celebrities like Beyonce and LeBron James, themselves multi-millionaires, are entering the poverty debate. All over America well-off people are choosing to simplify and live in more restricted circumstances; in the same America, millions of people live in restricted circumstances because they have to. In this course we will consider the representation, treatment, and lived experience of poverty in late medieval England and contemporary America. In particular we will address the question of agency as it relates to poverty: to what degree can poverty be chosen, or does it by definition have to be an unwilled state? How necessary are the poor to the functioning of certain social or imaginary structures? How might poverty be combatted? How does the existence of poverty affect the notion of work (and vice versa)? How is poverty defined? How is poverty treated in legislation? In our exploration of these and other questions, we will be attentive to the differences and similarities between medieval and modern approaches to poverty, and what the contemporary world might have to learn from the past.

**Learning Outcomes:**

* Students will develop a more nuanced understanding of poverty as a historical and contemporary phenomenon
* Students will undertake service learning by volunteering at a local charity
* Students will gain knowledge of historical events, texts, and genres of late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century England
* Students will gain experience writing papers and giving presentations

**Required Texts**: Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On Getting by in America*.

*Cleanness*. Edited and translated by Kevin Gustafson. Broadview Press, 2010.

*The Book of Margery Kempe.* London: Penguin, 1985. ISBN: 978-0140432510

William Langland, *Piers Plowman: An Alliterative Verse Translation*. Translated by E. Talbot Donaldson. New York: Norton, 1990.

Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend.* London: Penguin, 1998.

**Course Assessment:**

10% Minimum of 25 hours service at Mission Arlington

5% Weekly one page reflective post to the class wiki

20% Review of contemporary book on poverty, and accompanying class presentation

60% Final paper

5% Final presentation

Poor attendance and lack of participation will adversely affect your overall grade at the discretion of the instructor.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. According to the UT System Regents’ Rule 50101, §2.2, "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

**Student Support Services Available**: The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources) for more information.

**Electronic Communication Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/>. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

# Library: Rafia Mirza is the Librarian for the English Department. She can be reached at 817 272 7428, and by email at rafia@uta.edu

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 (Jan 16)**

* Introduction to the course
* Visit to Mission Arlington

**Week 2 (Jan 23)**

* Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On Getting By in America*
* Kate Crassons, “Nickel and Dimed: Poverty Polemic Medieval and Modern” (on blackboard)

**Week 3 (Jan 30)**

* *The Life of Saint Francis* in the *South English Legendary* (available online at

[*http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/whatley-saints-lives-in-middle-english-collections*](http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/whatley-saints-lives-in-middle-english-collections))

* View *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* (on reserve at library)
* Bruce Holsinger and Ethan Knapp, “The Marxist Premodern,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 3 (2004): 463-71. Skim the remainder of the special issue (available in full-text through UTA library)

**Week 4 (Feb 6)**

* Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend.* Selections (London: Penguin, 1998)
* Critical article

**Week 5 (Feb 13)**

* *Piers Plowman*
* Andrew Cole, “Scribal Hermeneutics and the Genres of Social Organization in *Piers Plowman*,” in *The Middle Ages at Work*, ed. Kellie Robertson and Michael Uebel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 179-206. (on blackboard)

**Week 6 (Feb 20)**

* *Piers Plowman*
* Critical article

**Week 7 (Feb 27)**

* *Piers Plowman*
* Critical article

**Week 8 (Mar 6)**

* *Cleanness*, ed. and trans. Kevin Gustafson (Broadview Press, 2010)
* Critical article

**Week 9 (Mar 13) SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10 (Mar 20) CLASS CANCELLED**

**Week 11 (Mar 27)**

* *The Book of Margery Kempe* (London: Penguin, 1985)
* Kate Crassons, “The Costs of Sanctity: Margery Kempe and the Franciscan Imaginary” (on blackboard)

**Week 12 (Apr 3)**

* Chaucer*, The Wife of Bath’s Tale* (on blackboard)
* *Havelok the Dane* (available online at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/salisbury-four-romances-of-england-havelok-the-dane>)

**Week 13 (Apr 10)**

* Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid* (available online at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/kindrick-poems-of-robert-henryson-testament-of-cresseid>)
* Julie Orlemanski, “Desire and Defacement in *The Testament of Cresseid*,” in *Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture*, ed. Katie L. Walter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 161-82 (on blackboard)

**Week 14 (Apr 17)**

* Chaucer*, The Clerk’s Tale* (on blackboard)
* Chaucer, *The Pardoner’s Tale* (on blackboard)
* Andy Galloway, “The Economy of Need in Late Medieval English Literature,” *Viator* 40, no. 1 (2009): 309-331 (on blackboard)

**Week 15 (Apr 24)**

* David Aers, Professor of English, Religious Studies, and Historical Theology, Duke University presents "Chaucer's *Lyf of St. Cecilia*: Religion and Politics" at UNT 3:30pm  ENV (EESAT) 125

**Week 16 (May 1) Presentations**

 **Austerity Cooking —consider making one of Jack**

**Monroe’s recipes from agirlcalledjack.com**

 **Final Papers Due May 6th**