

# 24th Biennial Congress

Freiburg,  
27-30 July 2026



The New  
Chaucer  
Society

# CALL FOR PAPERS

## Biennial Congress of the New Chaucer Society

University of Freiburg, 27-30 July 2026

The NCS Program Committee is pleased to announce the Call for Proposals for the Society's 2026 Congress at the University of Freiburg in Germany.

Please read the Guidelines for Submission (below our signatures) carefully before submitting your proposal.

There are seven themed threads and one Open Topic thread:

- Comparative Environmentalisms
- Multilingualism and Mobility
- The Social Lives of Medieval Books
- Ubiquitous Medievalism
- Precarity
- Tales in Translation
- Thinking with/through Medieval Literature and Texts
- Open Topic

In addition there is an Open Panel and a Research Expo, both detailed below.

We hope you enjoy browsing the rich range of threads and sessions below while considering your contribution to an exciting program.

**Proposal submission is in two parts (please see below) and due by 27 April 2025.**

Please note that proposers will not be notified of the outcome of their submission until the program is complete, with all sessions settled. We expect this process to take a number of weeks.

Congress sessions will take place in person. This decision reflects the overwhelming preference for an in-person congress voiced by members responding to the feedback survey circulated immediately after the 2024 congress. Information about hybrid panels and possible hybrid accommodations will be available closer to the Congress.

Huge thanks to the Program Committee for all their work in shaping this call: Koichi Kano, J. R. Mattison, Gina Marie Hurley, Alastair Bennett, Candace Barrington, Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, Eva von Contzen, and all of the thread organizers.

We look forward to seeing the congress take shape.

Mary Flannery and R. D. Perry  
Program Committee Co-Chairs

# Guidelines for Submission

Please follow the two-step proposal submission process outlined below.

- You may submit to only one session, including the Poster Expo.
- Session organizers may not present work in their own session, though they may chair the session and may present work in another session at the congress.
- If sessions are oversubscribed with proposals that merit a place on the program, the Program Committee will create new sessions as necessary and as will fit within a very tight schedule. **Your proposal will not be rejected simply because of your choice of session.**
- If you would like to submit a proposal that is not an obvious fit for any of the panels, please indicate in your submission that you are submitting to the 'Open Panel' (below at number 79) and we will work to find a place for your proposal.

Please note that you must be an NCS member to present at the congress.

## To Submit a Proposal

1. **Fill out the online NCS 2024 proposal submission form:**  
<https://forms.gle/nBQtN4GJGphu3MhY7>

This form ensures that the Program Committee can keep track of all submissions. We can only guarantee that your proposal will be considered if you fill out the form. In addition to your 200-word abstract and title, you will be asked to select the best session for your proposal and to describe your academic position (e.g. graduate student, early career, permanent or temporary, independent). This information will help us to find the best sessions for proposals and to support the Society's principle of inclusivity for session rosters. The information submitted on this form is only accessible to the Program Committee.

2. **Email your proposal** to your chosen session's organizer(s).

Proposals should be titled and no longer than 200 words. Please include your name, affiliation, and your email address along with your abstract.

Submissions are **not complete** until both steps have been followed. Submissions (both the online form and the email to organizers) are due by **27 April 2025**.

## Session Formats

All sessions will be an hour and a half in length.

**Long paper sessions** will consist of either three papers of 20 minutes max each or four papers of 15 minutes max each. These panels should include no more than 4 presenters total (**either** 4 papers **or** 3 papers and a respondent) and should allow for at least 30 minutes of open discussion.

**Short paper sessions** will consist of up to 6 speakers delivering short presentations of 5-7 minutes, allowing at least 45 minutes for open discussion. Presentations may be scripted but need not be. The sessions can be either in the style of roundtables/lightning panels (short, individual discussions of a topic) or position papers (presentations that open into discussion of the state of the field).

**Seminars** will consist of 5 to 8 pre-circulated papers on a given topic. Presenters will read all of the papers before the conference and the session will consist of discussion amongst the presenters about their papers and any audience members who have also read the papers before the session.

**The Research Expo** will be held as a poster session. Posters often rely more on oral and visual communication than the written word. This session provides a unique opportunity for participants to discuss their research in smaller, more informal group settings. Any text should be about 500-1,000 words and formatted in a way that is clear, easy-to-read, and often broken down into discrete parts. Words or graphs should be readable from about 10 feet away.

Information about the Research Expo location and poster printing can be found at the end of this CFP.

# Threads and Sessions

## **THREAD: COMPARATIVE ENVIRONMENTALISMS**

Organized by Anke Bernau ([Anke.Bernau@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Anke.Bernau@manchester.ac.uk)) and Kellie Robertson ([krobert@umd.edu](mailto:krobert@umd.edu))

### **1. Dolorous Strokes and Other Ecological Disasters**

*Organizers:* Joseph Taylor ([wjt0003@uah.edu](mailto:wjt0003@uah.edu)) and Randy Schiff ([rpschiff@buffalo.edu](mailto:rpschiff@buffalo.edu))

*Session Format:* Short papers

A central motif in medieval Arthuriana and the Grail story is the Dolorous Stroke, a decisive blow doled out to a mysterious king (often named Pellehen) by an individual (sometimes identified as the knight Balyn); this blow, like a bomb, maims the king and instantaneously manifests a profound wasteland. Thomas Malory's version, as one example, demonstrates the episode's fusion of politics, religion, ecology, and the supernatural as Balyn's stroke explodes a castle that has only just witnessed the murder of an invisible knight, the discovery of Longinus' spear, the maiming of a descendent of Joseph of Arimathea, and the ruination of one kingdom by an errant knight from another. Balyn's emergence from the ruins to continue his self-destructive quest is merely one version of a story that can be found in French, Welsh, German, and other Arthurian traditions. The Dolorous Stroke thus becomes a site for multiple modes of reading the conflation of land, life, and law, that informs the precarity of sovereign subjects within a medieval biopolitical unconscious. This panel solicits ecotheory-inflected papers that examine scenes of ecological disasters and their relationships to sovereignty and law in medieval literature. Papers might focus on particular versions of the Dolorous Blow or take comparative approaches.

### **2. Stones and Bones in Medieval European Literature**



*Organizers:* Claire Crow ([Claire.crow@yale.edu](mailto:Claire.crow@yale.edu)) and Maia Béar ([Maia.bear@yale.edu](mailto:Maia.bear@yale.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

Transformed, sometimes violently, from their original forms, stone and bone become the surfaces for inscriptions; writing implements; and the subject of literary meditations from Pygmalion's ivory statue in the *Romance of the Rose* to Bertilak's gargantuan castle. Unfeeling, cold stone is the medium for all kinds of artworks but retains a persistent association with deathliness; the livelier ivory—known for heating up upon touch—originates from the tusks of dead marine animals and elephants. Chaucer himself loves to invoke these materials in metaphors. In the *Book of the Duchess*, Lady White has a throat like a tower of ivory; Troilus proclaims that Pandarus 'moost me first transmuwen in a stoon' before his sorrow will cease (IV.467). Yet both stone and bone retain something of their natural origins: stone carries with it the memory of the earth, bone that of the living animal. This panel, we hope, will begin to excavate these material traces.

Potential papers might explore:

- The relationship between human and nonhuman organic matter
- Literary representations of stones and bones; how these materials transpire and how they are
- manipulated in a literary text
- Literary representations of statues, tombs, sculptures
- Creativity and artmaking; artis
- How materials derived from nature inform and/or construct human identities
- Exploring any of the above topics through an environmental studies framework

### 3. Dramatic Ecologies

*Organizers:* Shannon Gayk ([sgayk@iu.edu](mailto:sgayk@iu.edu)), Phoenix Gonzalez ([phoenix.gonzalez@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:phoenix.gonzalez@u.northwestern.edu)), and Benjamin Hoover ([bhhoover@iu.edu](mailto:bhhoover@iu.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

This session approaches the literature and performance of medieval drama through the lens of climate catastrophe and the creation of enduring spaces of refuge, resistance, and renewal. Submissions will take an expansive approach to ‘ecology’, seeking to answer the questions: To what extent is medieval drama ecological? How does it perform ecological thinking or reflect on ecological crisis or change? How does drama engage textual or social ecologies? How might medieval drama be said to evoke ecological thinking then and now? Successful proposals make clear how they are thinking through ecology as it relates not only to the more-than-human environment, but also to the ways that different agents might be imbricated in the performance of textual, social, and political ecologies within medieval dramatic texts and the societies and contexts in which their performance took place.

#### 4. Premodern Ecopedagogies (Or, Teaching Old Books While the World Burns)

*Organizer:* Aylin Malcolm ([amalco08@uoguelph.ca](mailto:amalco08@uoguelph.ca))

*Session Format:* Long papers

**Session Description:** This panel asks how medieval texts can contribute to education in the environmental humanities. Decades of scholarship has explored how longer histories of ecological change can shed light on the challenges we face today. This panel considers how these scholarly arguments can inform teaching, including questions such as: how might we integrate medieval texts into transhistorical ecofiction courses or curricula? Conversely, how can we discuss contemporary ecological issues in medieval courses? What do students stand to gain from reading medieval literature



alongside scientific texts or environmental history? And to what degree can the teaching of medieval ecologies contribute to advocacy for the humanities? Participants are invited to share concepts for in-class instruction as well as creative, participatory, or public-facing activities and projects. Proposals may address teaching at any level (undergraduate or graduate) and any type of institution. Papers may consist largely of teaching demonstrations or discussions of particular activities/assignments.

## 5. Medieval Ecologies out of Place

*Organizer:* Sarah Wright ([wrights3@duq.edu](mailto:wrights3@duq.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

Discussions about the environment are often, understandably, rooted in place. As this session thread notes, the Middle French word *environs* means “to be surrounded by,” inviting considerations of proximity and adjacency. But Middle French *environner* also meant to traverse or to wander. It is the latter that concerns this session, which seeks papers on ecologies or ecological entities that are out of place. Ecologies are enmeshed networks, but what happens when one element of that network goes missing, or when an aberrant element appears? What does it mean to uproot an ecology? How might elements transcend or be transported across ecologies, and in what ways does this trans-ness effect change in the medieval world (literary or otherwise)? This session also welcomes papers on ecologies or ecological entities that exist out of time.

## 6. Queer Medieval Ecologies

*Organizers:* Danielle Allor ([dallor@haverford.edu](mailto:dallor@haverford.edu)) and Micah Goodrich ([mjgood@bu.edu](mailto:mjgood@bu.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

How are the environments of the Middle Ages involved in co-creating expressions of human sexuality and behavior? Premodern conceptions of embodiment reveal surprising intimacies between humans and the more-than-human world, as plants, animals, waters, and soils possess humoral properties and symbolic potencies that invite queer desires and new formations of gender and sexuality. This session seeks short papers that explore the queer and trans possibilities of environments across the interconnected medieval world. We invite papers that might examine herbal interventions in libido, travel accounts of encounters with queer natures, and literary representations of the erotic potentials of fictional environments. How can queer medieval ecologies help us rethink the categories of gender, sexuality, and embodiment that define our current climates?

## **7. Perspectives on Premodern Ecologies**

*Organizers:* Kellie Robertson ([krobert@umd.edu](mailto:krobert@umd.edu)) and Anke Bernau ([anke.bernau@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:anke.bernau@manchester.ac.uk))

*Session Format:* Short papers

As the outline for this thread states: the term biocultural diversity refers to the deep ‘interconnection of human societies and ecosystems’ (Maffi 2010), rather than to a separation between ‘human’ (or ‘culture’) and ‘nature’. This interdependence and dynamic interaction has many varied and long histories, and this session invites papers that think about and speak to different understandings, manifestations or imaginations of that interconnection. This can include, for instance: a focus on different times and/or places; sets of relations (e.g., plant-human, animal-human, multispecies); focus on a particular medieval practice or product (e.g., agriculture, food, ‘materials’); focus on different media and mediations; different literary forms; different current approaches to ‘premodern ecologies’; the interaction of different archives; how thinking about the bioarchive can help us to imagine environmental futures; how medieval

models of nature can (or cannot) contribute to contemporary ecocriticism and environmental humanities.

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## **THREAD: MULTILINGUALISM AND MOBILITY**

Organized by Rory Critten ([rory.critten@unil.ch](mailto:rory.critten@unil.ch)), Jonathan Hsy ([jhsy@email.gwu.edu](mailto:jhsy@email.gwu.edu)), and Elizaveta Strakhov ([yelizaveta.strakhov@marquette.edu](mailto:yelizaveta.strakhov@marquette.edu))

### **8. Middle English Multilingualism Beyond French and Latin**

*Organizers:* Helen Fulton ([helen.fulton@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:helen.fulton@bristol.ac.uk)) and Ad Putter ([A.D.Putter@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:A.D.Putter@bristol.ac.uk))

*Session Format:* Long papers

How can we do justice to multilingualism? Was Middle English multilingualism just a matter of the Big Three: English, Latin and French? This panel invites papers that examine the particularities of Middle English literature and language in relation to a range of other languages, both the Celtic languages native to Britain and the languages spoken and written by immigrant communities such as Dutch, German, Italian, and Hebrew. The panel also welcomes papers on the ways in which Anglophone speakers and speakers of other languages, European and non-European, managed communication and cultural transfer across linguistic boundaries and on the ways in which moments and consequences of interlanguage contact are reflected in texts, manuscripts and incunables of the period.

### **9. Multilingual Approaches to Pilgrimage and Crusade Narratives**

*Organizers:* Marcel Elias ([marcel.elias@yale.edu](mailto:marcel.elias@yale.edu)) and Shazia Jagot ([shazia.jagot@york.ac.uk](mailto:shazia.jagot@york.ac.uk))

*Session format:* Long papers

The fourteenth century brought new international experiences to a relatively broad segment of English society. Pilgrimage became a massive industry, catering to clerics and laypeople, men and women, the wealthy and poor, with Jerusalem as its most prized destination. In the absence of large-scale Levantine crusade campaigns, members of the nobility, capacious gentry classes, and their households took part in smaller military expeditions to Iberia, North Africa, the Baltic, and the Balkans. This session invites papers adopting multilingual approaches to English pilgrimage and crusade narratives. Papers might consider topics such as: translation as a vector of change; traces of Arabic-Islamic learning; parallels or resonances with non-English traditions; cross-linguistic literary histories; and textual manifestations of multilingualism. Engagement with methodologies in Mediterranean studies, postcolonial studies, critical race studies, translation studies, and world literature is welcome.

## **10. Languages Beyond Borders: Multilingual Contact Zones**

*Organizers:* Daniel Davies ([ddavies@central.uh.edu](mailto:ddavies@central.uh.edu)), Philip Knox ([pk453@cam.ac.uk](mailto:pk453@cam.ac.uk)), and Elizaveta Strakhov ([yelizaveta.strakhov@marquette.edu](mailto:yelizaveta.strakhov@marquette.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

This panel explores the movement and circulation of texts within multilingual contact zones, spaces that, through cultural exchange, commerce, and conflict, are defined by the presence of multiple languages. Multilingualism is often heralded as a feature of cosmopolitanism, defined against nationalist monolingualism, yet it can also be the product of forces including incipient capitalist mercantilism, imperialist conquest and colonization, and exile. This panel seeks to foreground these political pressures of multilingualism by focusing on how different sites engender different kinds of linguistic exchange: the multilingualism of English colonies in Ireland is different to the court of Béarn, which in turn is different to the mercantile sites of the Hanseatic League, Venice, or Genoa. How can turning our attention to the multilingual past illuminate new ways for thinking about the relationship between language, place, and identity today?

## 11. Multilingualism on the Road

*Organizers:* Rory Critten ([rory.critten@unil.ch](mailto:rory.critten@unil.ch))

*Session format:* Long papers

Travel was one of the reasons for which medieval English people might use languages other than English. Because English was largely unknown outside England, trips abroad for the purposes of diplomacy, trade, pilgrimage, education, and war required English people to mobilize the other languages that they knew—principally French and Latin—or to learn new languages on the ground. This panel invites papers that consider travel as a condition of multilingualism: what kinds of multilingualism does travel engender in the wayfarer? Presenters may reconsider well-known scenes such as Margery Kempe’s attempts at Italian in Rome. Attention to less well-known representations of multilingualism is also welcome: what of the depictions of English travellers in French and Latin teaching materials; comic depictions of insular speakers of French in francophone literature; or the strange languages attributed to Muslim others in texts like *Richard Coer de Lyon*?

## 12. Perspectives on Global Medieval Travel Writing

*Organizer:* Elizaveta Strakhov ([yelizaveta.strakhov@marquette.edu](mailto:yelizaveta.strakhov@marquette.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

Nine years in the making, *The Cambridge Guide to Global Medieval Travel Writing*, ed. Sebastian Sobceki (CUP, October 2025) is the first pan-European, Middle Eastern, and global guide through the bewildering maze of early travel narratives. The geographical scope of this collection, with chapters on travel writing produced by Persian, Arabic, and Chinese writers, among others, challenges Western periodisation and the term ‘medieval’. Using the dates 1200 and 1550 CE as boundaries for a global period of intercontinental contact, the volume is built around a combined European and Middle Eastern centre, foregrounding questions of race, gender, multilingualism, and manuscript transmission. We invite papers reflecting on the project of this volume. What are the challenges of telling the history

of medieval travel writing? What are the limitations of ‘global’ or ‘medieval’? What must be included and what is left out?

### **13. Multilingual Middle English**

*Organizer:* Rory Critten ([rory.critten@unil.ch](mailto:rory.critten@unil.ch))

*Session format:* Long papers

This panel asks presenters to consider the ways in which Middle English incorporates the mobilities of its speakers and writers. How is language contact between English, French, Latin, and other languages reflected in the lexis, grammar, and phraseology of Middle English, and to what uses can self-conscious writers put English’s multilingual debts? Potential topics include the deployment of loanwords, borrowing, and code-switching in Middle English poetry and prose, as well as the uses of interlingual citation, for example of proverbs, sentences, and lyric refrains. Contributors may also treat the darker side of Middle English multilingualism: the capacity of the language to become strange that is evoked by Mannyng, Rolle, and Usk. What are the problems and opportunities presented by a vernacular whose very diversity leaves it open to misunderstanding, miscopying, and even obsolescence?

### **14. Medievalists Moving Together: Social Movements and New Solidarities**

*Organizers:* Jonathan Hsy ([jhsy@gwu.edu](mailto:jhsy@gwu.edu)) and Shoshana Adler

([shoshana.adler@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:shoshana.adler@vanderbilt.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

This session of short presentations explores medievalist forms of collective action in the field of higher education and the world. If as Seeta Chaganti states ‘solidarity means looking beyond the invention of a better medieval studies’ to transforming the underlying sociopolitical structures in which medievalists are embedded, how can NCS members address urgent issues such as the devaluing of humanities, rise of authoritarianism, and willful destruction of academic institutions around the world—wherever we may be located? Proposals may include critical reflections on solidarity



movements such as the Chaucer-inflected Refugee Tales Walk (ongoing effort to end immigration detention in the UK), new approaches to social justice in medieval studies (including critical approaches to race, gender, language, migration, or disability), public outreach in the field (such as the Multicultural Middle Ages podcast), or successful strategies for teaching and organizing within and beyond institutional structures.

## 15. Involuntary Mobility: Displacement, Migration, Language, Refuge

*Organizers:* Jonathan Hsy ([jhsy@gwu.edu](mailto:jhsy@gwu.edu)) and Misho Ishikawa ([mi2501@nyu.edu](mailto:mi2501@nyu.edu))

*Session format:* Seminar

This seminar of pre-circulated papers is a venue for works in progress on the theme of involuntary mobilities. Medievalist explorations of mobility can tend to focus on people who travel to pursue their own goals such as trade, diplomacy, education, pilgrimage, or adventure. However, people can be compelled to relocate against their will due to conflict, disaster, political persecution, or economic circumstances. How do historical subjects in medievalist archives find ‘new homes’ in unfamiliar spaces, geographies, languages? What strategies can medievalists take to trace the lives of displaced people or communities in transit?

Topics may include: literatures of exile; histories of genocide, expulsion, and diaspora; theories of cultural displacement or belonging (race, religion, language, disability); restricted mobilities and travel restrictions; connections between medieval studies and contemporary fields (e.g., raciolinguistics, or critical refugee studies). Participants can workshop any form of writing (e.g., academic paper, book proposal, public writing, etc.).

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## **THREAD: THE SOCIAL LIVES OF MEDIEVAL BOOKS**

Organized by Megan Cook ([mlcook@colby.edu](mailto:mlcook@colby.edu)), Grace Catherine Greiner ([g.c.greiner@uu.nl](mailto:g.c.greiner@uu.nl)), and Zachary Hines ([hines.464@osu.edu](mailto:hines.464@osu.edu))

## 16. Old Books, New Science

*Organizer.* Megan Cook ([mlcook@colby.edu](mailto:mlcook@colby.edu))

*Session format.* Short papers

In the *Parliament of Fowles*, Chaucer writes ‘And out of olde bokes, in good feith, / Cometh al this newe science that men lere’. But how, exactly, is this new science to be derived from old books? This panel invites short papers that discuss the application of twenty-first century methods to the study of the medieval codex. Emerging technologies have the potential to impact the study of manuscripts and early printed books at every level, from microscopy to large-scale quantitative data analysis. Case studies of current projects are welcome as well as retrospectives of the role of the digital humanities studies in medieval book studies and discussions of the methodological and ethical implications of current technologies such as artificial intelligence.

## 17. The Social Lives of Medieval Devotional Texts

*Organizer.* Brandon Alakas ([alakas@ualberta.ca](mailto:alakas@ualberta.ca))

*Session format.* Long papers

This session explores the ways in which we trace the *devotional* lives of medieval people through the texts and books they produced, circulated, and consumed. Papers will consider texts produced in religious communities whose intended readership was primarily female—religious or lay. They will also explore the way in which such texts transmit and/or reconfigure specific elements of religious life: devotional practices, a more literate piety, or particular aspects of orthodoxy.

In considering the social lives of medieval devotional texts through the individuals and communities who produced or read them, this session investigates the following:

- the production and circulation of devotional texts
- the movement of devotional texts across languages

- specific concerns individuals or communities addressed in the production of devotional works
- the fashioning or refashioning of lives of readers and the holy people on which these texts focused, whether they be hagiographies, visions, or any genre of devotional literature

## 18. Interloping Latinities

*Organizer:* Thomas Swayer ([tsawyer@uchicago.edu](mailto:tsawyer@uchicago.edu) and [tsawyer@wustl.edu](mailto:tsawyer@wustl.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

Recent scholarship has explored how thoroughly the surviving medieval English literary corpus is inflected with Latin scribal and textual cultures. If literacy in England cannot be thought without multilingualism, then what evidence do we have for intermingling of distinct linguistic codes in composition, compilation, and reception? This session seeks papers that address instances of material or lexical overlap between compositions in (Middle) English and (Anglo-)Latin. Papers might consider:

- Latin additions to English compositions, whether authorial or scribal (in colophons, commentaries, etc.)
- likewise, English additions to Latin compositions
- English idioms or loanwords in Latin compositions
- code-switching, macaronics, language games, or genre-bending
- texts associated together in manuscripts, whether commonly or as singular instances
- or texts that have come to be associated in critical discourse through archival work

## 19. Literature and the Records of Social Life

*Organizer:* Daniel Wakelin ([daniel.wakelin@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:daniel.wakelin@ell.ox.ac.uk))

*Session format:* Long papers

The social life of late medieval England is recorded vividly, but not only in literary manuscripts. There is also a mass of everyday writing generated in the course of social life: letters, legal documents, accounts, inventories, wills

and similar. In one important recent book, Michael Johnston proposed that the copying of Middle English books was made possible by the growth of such paperwork (*The Middle English Book*, 2023). Meanwhile, Elaine Treharne has encouraged a 'phenomenological' approach to the experience of making and using books (what she calls in a subtitle *The Phenomenal Book*, 2021). This panel will marry the approaches. Beyond identifying the names, places and dates of scribes, the panel will ask: what can we learn about the experiences and attitudes—intellectual, aesthetic, social—of making and using Middle English literary books when we consider them alongside the documents of late medieval social life?

## **20. Reforming Middle English: Sixteenth-Century Readers and Medieval Books**

*Organizer:* David Matthews ([David.Matthews@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:David.Matthews@manchester.ac.uk))

*Session format:* Long papers

Many medieval books not only survived but lived on in active use in the English Reformation and afterwards. Chaucer's works provide the obvious example, while *Piers Plowman* is only the best-known case of a work taken to be "proto-Protestant," and therefore freshly acceptable to reformed readers. But it is also true in less obvious cases. John Mirk's *Festial*, for instance, was a standard of the printers' repertoire in the first half century of print and individual copies show signs of use long after the work's last appearance in 1532.

Why did reformed readers go on reading orthodox medieval texts? What do we know, conversely, about the destruction (in part or whole) of orthodox texts in the period? How were some seemingly orthodox texts "converted" into heterodoxy? Why was the so-called Wycliffite Bible never printed in the period? For this session I would welcome either responses to the larger questions, or individual case studies.

## **21. The Book and the Edifice: Chaucer, and the Architecture of Memory**

*Organizer:* Jonathan Fruoco ([jonathan.fruoco@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.fruoco@gmail.com))

*Session format:* Long papers

With the twenty-first-century rebuilding of Notre-Dame de Paris, Victor Hugo's declaration, "The book will kill the edifice," takes on renewed relevance. In the fifteenth-century, Gutenberg's printing press revolutionized human expression, dethroning architecture as the primary vessel of cultural memory. Chaucer's allegorical House of Fame, a palace built on fragile ice and shaped by the fleeting breath of Morpheus, anticipates this shift, contrasting the impermanence of architectural memory with the durability of the written word.

This session explores the interplay between medieval books and architecture, past and present. How does Chaucer's vision reflect the impending revolution in thought described by Hugo? What can the rebuilding of Notre-Dame teach us about the evolving relationship between architecture and text as vessels of cultural permanence? By bridging the medieval and modern, this panel invites reflection on how we preserve and transmit memory across eras, emphasizing the social lives of books in shaping cultural heritage.

## **22. Living Libraries, Living Laboratories: Medieval Books and Archives and/as Classrooms**

*Organizer:* Grace Catherine Greiner ([g.c.greiner@uu.nl](mailto:g.c.greiner@uu.nl))

*Session format:* Short papers

Medieval books and manuscripts perhaps live their most vibrant lives in the present in the classrooms, archives, and public spaces where they take on new lives as teaching and learning tools. Accordingly, this short paper session seeks 5- to 7-minute papers that explore and will provoke discussions about innovative ways of making medieval language, literature, and culture come alive for students, scholars, and the general public through manuscripts-based teaching, training, and knowledge-sharing. Potential topics might include (but are not limited to): accounts of hands-on book historical training in classrooms, libraries, or "book labs"; sharing of best practices for training in palaeography, codicology, bibliography, and archival research; reflections on recent or imagined public humanities or

digital humanities projects related to book historical research; the presence of medieval(-ish and -ist) books or libraries in contemporary creative productions; and/or theoretical/pedagogical manifestoes for the ongoing study and sharing of the medieval book in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **23. Persistent Places**

*Organizer:* Zachary Hines ([hines.464@osu.edu](mailto:hines.464@osu.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

Medieval books are artifacts that derive their meaning from the various historical, cultural, and textual contexts in which they are and have been situated. Recent scholarship reminds us of the value of studying the whole lifespan of the medieval manuscript, from the contexts of its production to evidence of its commodification and preservation after the Middle Ages. One way to approach the long histories of medieval books is to think of them as particular landscapes characterized by repeated readerly inhabitation (from Latin, ‘to dwell in, to occupy’). In the field of anthropological archeology, sites of continued human occupation over extended periods are described as ‘persistent places’, a concept that focuses scholarly attention on patterns of use and reuse over time.

How might we recognize manuscripts and early printed books as sites of long-term activity, persistent places marked by accumulations of marginal, material, textual, and bibliothecal features? This session invites proposals for papers that investigate the long histories of medieval books: accounts of collecting and cataloging; documentary and poetic representations of ‘old’ books, both real and invented; and evidence of interactions between readers old and new. How can studying longer histories of books (and their readers) revise the kind of questions that we as scholars ask of these artifacts and the texts they contain?

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## THREAD: UBIQUITOUS MEDIEVALISM

Organized by Jenna Mead ([jenna.mead@uwa.edu](mailto:jenna.mead@uwa.edu)), Anita Obermeier ([aobermei@unm.edu](mailto:aobermei@unm.edu)), Lawrence Scanlon ([lscanlon@english.rutgers.edu](mailto:lscanlon@english.rutgers.edu)), and Richard Utz ([richard.utz@lmc.gatech.edu](mailto:richard.utz@lmc.gatech.edu))

### 24. Time Management

Organizers: Thomas Goodmann ([tgoodmann@miami.edu](mailto:tgoodmann@miami.edu)) and Thomas Prendergast ([tprendergast@wooster.edu](mailto:tprendergast@wooster.edu))

*Session Format:* Short papers

This session invites brief talks exploring how medieval and/or medievalistic narratives ‘tell’ time, both in terms of accounting for and presenting temporalities and temporal relations. What narrative vehicles convey time travel? (Hank Morgan’s blow from a crowbar in Twain’s novel; Morris’s dreaming narrator of John Ball’s rebellion) How do texts mark their temporal setting? How do they tell the passing of time in narrative, or the temporal relation of one narreme to another? What are the relations of a medieval ‘now’ and a medieval “then” (think, for instance, of the beginnings of *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*, and *Yvain*)? How do texts’ authors relay bending, spending, rending, or mending time? Explorations of all forms and genres of texts are welcome with respect to medieval and post-medieval medievalisms.

### 25. Analog Medievalisms

*Organizer:* Thomas C. Sawyer ([tsawyer@uchicago.edu](mailto:tsawyer@uchicago.edu) and [tsawyer@wustl.edu](mailto:tsawyer@wustl.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

Every October since 1983, tabletop gaming enthusiasts have gathered in Essen, Germany for the world’s largest annual board game fair. Attendees play, test, and purchase thousands of entries in dozens of thematic and mechanical subgenres. Many games – over five thousand tagged on Boardgamegeek.com – feature expressions of medievalism,

ranging from the bestselling DnD-like romp Gloomhaven to the pseudo-literary *The Road to Canterbury*, and including titles historical (Castles of Burgundy), fanciful (Flamecraft), fantastic (Tainted Grail), globalizing (Tzolk'in, Five Tribes), etc. In the twenty-first century, *homo ludens* looks often to the medieval past for analog play. This session seeks short papers that cast a critical eye on instances of medievalism in contemporary board games. The parameters for inquiry are broad: papers might address genealogy, politics, aesthetics, material production, ludic affordance, or other aspects of experience and agency attendant upon one or more instances of modern tabletop gaming.

## 26. Global Medievalisms

*Organizers:* Anita Obermeier ([aobermei@unm.edu](mailto:aobermei@unm.edu)) and Richard Utz ([richard.utz@lmc.gatech.edu](mailto:richard.utz@lmc.gatech.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

This panel invites short papers exploring global medievalisms, focusing on cultural engagements with the Middle Ages after 1500. While the Arthurian Legend and Chaucer's works have inspired diverse post-medieval adaptations including plays, musicals, fiction, poetry, film, rap, comic books, children's literature, crime fiction, and games in the US and Europe, this session particularly welcomes papers examining interactions with the Middle Ages in regions beyond Europe and North America, including decolonizing and ironic revisions.

## 27. Medievalism and Contemporary Retellings

*Organizers:* Anna Opanasenko ([anna.opanasenko@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:anna.opanasenko@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de)) and Sophia Philomena Wolf ([sophia.philomena.wolf@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:sophia.philomena.wolf@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de))

*Session Format:* Long papers

Retellings, from Madeline Miller's *Circe* (2018) to Percival Everett's *James* (2024), have been ubiquitous in recent years: topping bestseller lists, winning literary prizes, highlighted on bookstore tables, featured in

curricula, explored in scholarly publications and conferences, and thriving in social media communities such as BookTok.

This session aims to locate the intersection of medievalism and the retelling trend, interrogate manifestations and transformations of the medieval in works such as Zadie Smith's *The Wife of Willesden* (2021), short story anthology *Sword Stone Table* (2021), and Simon Armitage's translations, and map out the potential retellings hold for the field of medievalism studies.

We invite paper proposals that:

- examine twenty-first-century medievalist retellings in Anglophone literature across genres, including Chaucerian reception
- explore the broader literary and cultural contexts of these texts, such as processes of canonization, genre-specific trends (e.g. YA or fantasy), decolonization, and (mis-) appropriations of the Middle Ages
- reflect on the potential impact of retellings for medievalism studies as a presence in pedagogy, on digital platforms, etc.

## 28. Ageless Medievalisms

*Organizers:* Clint Morrison, Jr. ([clinton.morrison@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:clinton.morrison@austin.utexas.edu)), Eve Salisbury ([eve.salisbury@wmich.edu](mailto:eve.salisbury@wmich.edu)), and Meg Cornell ([meganec3@illinois.edu](mailto:meganec3@illinois.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

This panel invites papers that examine how age operates in medievalism. Medievalism often provides flexibility for various ages and audiences. Inherently a genre that provokes questions of what temporality and aging means in transhistorical contexts, medievalism often provides flexibility of interpretation for various ages and audiences at once. We invite papers that specifically target certain age groups for textual transformation, as in adaptations 'for children' or 'for adults only', or medievalism media that deal with adultification, infantilization, double audiences, intergenerational relationships, or supernatural age-related transformation. We also invite approaches to medievalism media that resist chrononormativity, including but not limited to nonlinear life-stories, queer temporality, and trans ageing.

## 29. Institutions

*Organizer:* Daniel Davies ([ddavies@uh.edu](mailto:ddavies@uh.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

This panel examines the role of institutions in late-medieval literature and the contexts in which it is encountered and studied. The OED traces the emergence of ‘institution’ in English to the late fourteenth-century, suggesting that Chaucer’s life and the generation after it witness a growing awareness of the role of institutions in shaping different social, religious, and political forms. As the New Chaucer Society approaches its 50th anniversary in 2028, joining other medieval studies organizations like the Medieval Academy of America in marking significant institutional milestones, this moment marks a resonant juncture to examine how institutions mediate our engagement with medieval literature, from the libraries, archives, and repositories that hold medieval materials through to the colonial histories of medieval scholarship and the technologies of modern editions. How do institutions shape literary history? What modes of knowledge do they enable, and what do they foreclose? How might renewed attention to the previous institutional forms of Chaucer scholarship, such as the original Chaucer Society, the Chicago Chaucer Project, and university curricula, illuminate futures for Chaucer studies (or bear warnings from the past)?

## 30. Reconstructing the Middle Ages: Architectural Medievalism

*Organizer:* Christine Neufeld ([cneufeld@emich.edu](mailto:cneufeld@emich.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

Since the rise of Romantic Nationalism, the remains of medieval buildings have inspired the medievalist imagination, appealing as sites of remembrance upon which the past might be materially reconstructed and encountered. Public debates about the recent restoration of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, post WW II reconstruction projects of bombed German city centers as “authentic” medieval gems, and the nationalist architectural debates between France and Germany over Alsace’s Haut-Kœnigsbourg Castle in the early 20th century highlight that ‘preservation’ is always an intervention that serves our desire for a useable past. This roundtable seeks

short presentations focused on specific medieval architectural restoration projects as politically, culturally, or ideologically contested spaces, investigating what is at stake when we reconstruct medieval built environments.

### 31. Understanding the Coloniser/Re-Imagining the Medieval

*Organizer:* Brenna Duperron ([Brenna.duperron@dal.ca](mailto:Brenna.duperron@dal.ca))

*Session format:* Short papers

Settler-Colonial ideology is heavily infused with medievalism. Recent scholarship has critically interrogated this intersection in Medieval Studies and its conventions (e.g., Tarren Andrews, Sierra Lomuto, Adam Miyashiro, Mary Rambaran-Olm, and Eduardo Ramos). The medieval world symbolizes two extremes: it stands for both the ‘epitome’ of society and its most ‘backwards’ state, as seen in the political designation of the Anglo-Saxon in white supremacist discourse versus how global Indigenous populations are labelled as ‘medieval’. This panel is interested in how this paradox has been explored artistically. Papers should probe works that use medievalism critically to re-write, re-imagine, and reevaluate the past, considering for example, Patience Agbabi’s *Telling Tales*, Waubgeshig Rice’s (Anishinaabe) “Heartbeat,” Ryan Coogler’s *Black Panther*, Gerald Vizenor’s (Minnesota Chippewa) “Monte Cassino Curiosa: Heart Dancers at the Headwaters,” Moniquill Blackgoose’s (Seaconck Wampanoag) *To Shape a Dragon’s Breath* among others. Questions to consider include: how have Indigenous/colonized populations appropriated the ‘medieval’ iconography, stories, or ideology? What alternate futures are suggested or imagined? How has this appropriation shed light on the settler-colonial ideology that permeates medievalism?

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**THREAD: PRECARITY**

Organized by Taylor Cowdery ([cowdery@email.unc.edu](mailto:cowdery@email.unc.edu)), H. M. Cushman ([hcush@email.unc.edu](mailto:hcush@email.unc.edu)) and Mariah Min ([mariah\\_min@brown.edu](mailto:mariah_min@brown.edu))

### **32. Transcending Precarity Through Solidarity**

*Organizers:* Boyda Johnstone ([bjohnstone@bmcc.cuny.edu](mailto:bjohnstone@bmcc.cuny.edu)) and Hillary Cheramie ([hpcheramie@ucdavis.edu](mailto:hpcheramie@ucdavis.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

While debt creates precarity by alienating the individual from the collective experience, forcing people into anti-solidaristic singular modes, this panel seeks papers that find in visionary and speculative literature an antidote to the precarity of medieval life. Survival in a burning world depends on building and sustaining structures of livelihood and sources of value beyond oneself. These emerge from communities (real or imagined) or through dreams and speculative visions that offer broader horizons of transcendence and hope. How do texts that engage with spiritual and material possibilities offer solace to readers struggling with precarious realities? From the dream vision to the mystical text, to post-medieval encapsulations of medieval forms, what role does literature play in combating precarity (however insufficient its response)? Papers that address themes of joy, pleasure, friendship, hope, solidarity, and dreaming in the context of material vulnerability are warmly encouraged.

### **33. Age, Alas, and Beyond**

*Organizer:* Theresa Coletti ([tcoletti@umd.edu](mailto:tcoletti@umd.edu))

*Session Format:* Short papers

The Wife of Bath's famous statement channels Jean de Meun and Ovid. She concludes that all she can do, since her flower/flour is gone, is sell bran rather than wheat. But hers is not the only or final statement on women and age. Do medieval writers offer other ways of thinking about aging, particularly female aging? This panel invites papers that reflect on aging and old age in medieval texts and cultures. In what ways does age work as a textual category? How are ideas of aging subject to inflection by race, gender, and social class? What are the terms in which figures in medieval



texts speak about their own aging? What pleasures are licit (or illicit) for the old? When the Wife of Bath says ‘Lat go, Farewel!’ does she (or anyone) mean it?

### **34. Medieval Intersectionality**

*Organizers:* Taylor Cowdery ([cowdery@email.unc.edu](mailto:cowdery@email.unc.edu)) and H. M. Cushman ([hcush@email.unc.edu](mailto:hcush@email.unc.edu))

*Session Format:* Short papers

Though ‘intersectionality’ is a modern term, medievalists have long examined the role that racial prejudice, class bias, and gender relations play in shaping the lives of certain groups. In the wake of Roland Betancourt’s *Byzantine Intersectionality* (2020), this panel asks what might be gained in contemporary medieval studies from an approach that is more *explicitly* intersectional—from an approach, in other words, that self-consciously thinks through or across more than one vector of social identity formation. Papers might examine individual lives, artifacts, and texts in relation to two or more of those vectors—for example, the role of class privilege and gender relations in the life of Margery Kempe, or the representation of racism, religious difference, and masculinity in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. But we also welcome papers that consider the value and drawbacks of intersectionality in a more general way, or papers that reflect upon the utility of intersectional theory for medieval studies now. Papers on medievalisms are very welcome, as are those with a global or comparative orientation.

### **35. Teaching in the Era of Trumpism: Safe Classrooms, Care, and Medieval Texts**

*Organizers:* Roberta Magnani ([R.Magnani@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:R.Magnani@swansea.ac.uk)) and Nicole Nyffenegger ([nicole.nyffenegger@unibe.ch](mailto:nicole.nyffenegger@unibe.ch))

*Session Format:* Short papers

In an increasingly polarized and exclusionary world that marginalizes LGBTQIA+ communities, ethnic minorities, and the economically vulnerable, how should teachers respond? As medievalists, we face the challenge of resisting the appropriation of our field for ideological agendas.

The rich and complex medieval queer and global archives, often subjected to erasure, remind us of our responsibility to amplify these histories. What pedagogical strategies can we deploy to foster critical conversations with our students? What role should universities— and medievalists in particular— play in civic society? As we create classrooms rooted in safety, care, and kindness, we must also question the systems that shape our field. And how do we responsibly navigate emerging technologies like generative AI and social media, recognizing their entanglements with the very forces of exclusion and hostility we seek to counter?

### **36. Precarious Bodies**

*Organizers:* Sarah Baechle ([sebaechl@olemiss.edu](mailto:sebaechl@olemiss.edu)) and Carissa Harris ([carissa.harris@temple.edu](mailto:carissa.harris@temple.edu))

*Session Format:* Short papers

This panel welcomes proposals that explore the ways that the precarity of ancillarity—from the Latin *ancilla* [female slave], a structural position of being subordinate, yet essential—extends among bodies (in Chaucer’s age, or across time) to create networks of consolation or resistance to oppression, or shared vulnerabilities to risk and harm. Proposals can explore how ancillarity, grounded in the intersectional disadvantages of race, gender, sexuality, and/or socio-economic status, fans out to ensnare individuals living under precarious conditions; or they can trace the ways that ancillarity shapes individuals’ consent to sex, labor, or reproduction. We particularly welcome proposals that think transhistorically, examining the ways that ancillarity drives identification with or disregard for precarious bodies, shaping the assumptions that frame scholarship on Chaucer’s life and writing—exploring, for example, how Cecily Chaumpaigne’s precarity and Chaucer’s canonicity have inflected critical reception of the archival documents featuring both individuals, or how the precarity of the female servants in the *Franklin’s* or *Miller’s Tales* occludes their conscription into deeper agendas of gendered violence and coercion.

### **37. Generosity: Then**

*Organizers:* Robyn Bartlett ([rmalo@purdue.edu](mailto:rmalo@purdue.edu)), Rebecca Davis ([davis@uci.edu](mailto:davis@uci.edu)), and Shannon Gayk ([sgayk@iu.edu](mailto:sgayk@iu.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

These paired sessions aim to investigate generosity in times of precarity. Generosity has long been a subject of theoretical and historical inquiry, from Marcel Mauss's foundational anthropological study of the gift to more recent discussions of gifts and givenness by phenomenological and poststructuralist thinkers (Derrida, Bataille, Marion) that invite consideration of the possibilities and limitations of relationship and exchange (social, economic, material, spiritual, etc.). Recent literary scholarship has also provided valuable insights into the political and juridical meanings of gifts and gift-giving (e.g., Epstein, Perkins, Wadiak). We hope these panels will extend these conversations from the gift to investigate practices and forms of generosity more generally. Attending to generosity can open questions of reciprocity, hospitality, fairness, equity, grace, gratitude, gratuitousness, excess, debt, obligation, and sacrifice, terms that resonate deeply with issues of precarity, vulnerability, and need. Generosity can bind people and communities together, but it can also divide them, materializing difference or inequity. We invite papers that consider any aspect of generosity, grace, or givenness in the Middle Ages and/or in our field now. The long paper panel, 'Generosity: Then' will historicize generosity in medieval contexts by thinking about the relationships of generosity, grace, and gifts in Middle English literature and culture, particularly in response to some of the crises of the 14th and 15th centuries.

### **38. Generosity: Now**

*Organizers:* Robyn Bartlett ([rmalo@purdue.edu](mailto:rmalo@purdue.edu)), Rebecca Davis ([davis@uci.edu](mailto:davis@uci.edu)), and Shannon Gayk ([sgayk@iu.edu](mailto:sgayk@iu.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

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### **39. Precarity, Necessity, and the Law**

*Organizers:* Andreea Boboc ([aboboc@pacific.edu](mailto:aboboc@pacific.edu)) and Conrad van Dyk ([conrad.vandyk@concordia.ab.ca](mailto:conrad.vandyk@concordia.ab.ca))

*Session format:* Long papers

As the philosopher Giorgio Agamben famously observed, the notion that necessity is its own law (*necessitas non habet legem*) has long provided legal justification for desperate actions (from stealing a loaf of bread to declaring a state of emergency). Similarly, the law seeks to limit or sublimate vengeance and feuding—two extralegal remedies founded on the belief that desperate times call for desperate measures. Yet the law itself also frequently invokes necessity, not least in using legal fictions and providing loopholes to make the system work. Arguments from necessity are common in Chaucer's work (think of Theseus recommending making a virtue of necessity, or the clerks in *The Reeve's Tale* insisting that the adage "needs must" excuses their

sordid sexual deeds). But does necessity always compel? How does Chaucer's work engage with the legal ramifications of precarity?

#### 40. Medieval Anticlimax

*Organizers:* Kashaf Qureshi ([kashaf@uchicago.edu](mailto:kashaf@uchicago.edu)) and Joe Stadolnik ([jstadolnik@uchicago.edu](mailto:jstadolnik@uchicago.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

This panel invites proposals for short papers that take up anticlimax as a central feature of medieval textual forms or literary experience. What might we make of all the letdowns, flops, digressions, and setbacks depicted in medieval narratives? Where does a text's formal structure, genre, or rhetorical strategy invite feelings of disappointment or dullness from its readers? The anticlimactic here encompasses a range of affective experiences—dissatisfaction, bathos, boredom. Anticlimax might be sudden (failure or collapse) or more gradual (the slow realization that something expected will be unfulfilled). What can attention to anticlimactic styles and strategies do for our understanding of readerly experience in late medieval England? Papers might consider rhetorical techniques of interruption (*aposiopesis*, *occupatio*) or narratives of diluted intensity (the monotony of the *Monk's Tale*, the abrupt ending of the *Book of the Duchess*, the dissolute tapering-off of the *Cook's Tale*). How might 'anticlimactic' convey an aesthetic choice that isn't quite captured by terms like subversion or irony?

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#### THREAD: TALES IN TRANSLATION

Organized by Leah Schwebel ([las235@txstate.edu](mailto:las235@txstate.edu)), Juliette Vuille ([juliette.vuille@unil.ch](mailto:juliette.vuille@unil.ch))

#### **41. Medieval Narrative Then and Now, 1: Medieval Ideologies and Narrative Worlds (Focalizations, Characterizations, Audience Responses)**

*Organizers:* Mark Amsler ([m.amsler@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:m.amsler@auckland.ac.nz)) and Monika Fludernik ([monika.fludernik@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:monika.fludernik@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de))

*Session Format:* Short papers

We invite proposals for short papers which explore with specific texts how a theoretically-informed exploration of medieval narratives (narratology) can enrich our readings of medieval storytelling, not only Chaucer's. We especially invite proposed papers exploring the usefulness of narrative theory's critical vocabulary—narration, narrator, focalization, narrative voice, temporality (e.g. duration), mixed media, speech and thought representation, etc. – in relation to contemporary thematic or ethical modes of reading medieval texts, including gender criticism, ecocriticism, values-based analysis, historicism, new materialism, and multimodal textuality. What does narrative theory's language- and media-focused framework reveal about the social, historical, and/or aesthetic dimensions of late medieval narratives and society's investments in storytelling? Do late medieval English narratives create 'different' kinds of characters as 'persons' or new kinds of narrative interiority, psychological realism, or representations? Are the concepts of 'narrator' and 'author', derived from post-1700 novel criticism, still relevant for medieval stories and modes of representation?

#### **42. Queer and Trans Temporalities Within Chaucer and the Lancastrian Poets**

*Organizers:* Alice Fulmer ([alicefulmer@ucsb.edu](mailto:alicefulmer@ucsb.edu)) and Tekla Bude ([budet@oregonstate.edu](mailto:budet@oregonstate.edu))

*Session Format:* Seminar

This session invites scholars to bring Chaucer and the Lancastrian poets in conversation with the latest criticism and theoretical underpinnings in relation to queer and trans studies of the last few years. Particularly, using time as a teleological field to measure queer and trans experience, embodiment, and memoir. Chaucerian and medieval studies have been



responsible for groundbreaking work over the years on pre-modern conceptions of gender and sexuality. However, those fields are also responsible for the perpetuation of cisgender/cissexual centred optics that have continued to influence the reception of texts like *The Canterbury Tales*, characters like the Pardoner, or historical persons like Eleanor Rykener. This session would break new ground on how to move teaching, writing, and close reading Chaucer during this time when queer and trans time and the lives enmeshed in it are existentially dragged into a new lavender panic.

#### **43. Global Perspectives on the Study of Chaucer**

*Organizer:* DeVan Ard ([da153@aub.edu.lb](mailto:da153@aub.edu.lb))

*Session Format:* Short papers

This roundtable seeks to host a discussion of Chaucer's position in the study of Anglophone literature beyond the North Atlantic and Australia. We will hear about the institutional and vocational challenges faced by Chaucerians in what Braj Kachru called 'the expanding circle', i.e. countries in which English serves as a major second language. How is Chaucer scholarship beginning to take hold, or even spreading, in new ways and in new contexts? What opportunities do these contexts present for the teaching and study of Chaucer and Middle English? What role do translations of Chaucer play in teaching and scholarship? Participants will open with brief prepared remarks in order to allow ample time for conversation and discussion.

#### **44. Translatio Urbis / Cities in Translation**

*Organizer:* Juliette Vuille ([juliette.vuille@unil.ch](mailto:juliette.vuille@unil.ch))

*Session Format:* Long papers

This session will consider the translation and transmission of classical and medieval cities, mythical and real, as their histories are told and retold by writers and poets over centuries. In particular, let us think about cities in genealogical terms. How does the curse of Thebes inform the fall of Troy? How is Troy reborn in Rome, France, England, etc? How is Rome presented

as a mirror or inverted image of Jerusalem, such as when Dante imagines entering a Rome where Christ is Roman? Or, vice versa, how is Jerusalem mapped onto the topography of Rome, as in Palm Sunday processions that culminate at St. Peter's Basilica?

#### **45. Lost and Found in Translation**

*Organizer:* Leah Schwebel ([las235@txstate.edu](mailto:las235@txstate.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

This session invites contributions that reflect on writers who experiment with breakdowns in the process of translation, or the ways in which authors negotiate their inability to reproduce the original linguistic and historical or social context of a text into its new form. Chaucer famously expressed this difficulty in his translation of Virgil's 'arma virumque cano' into 'I wol now synge, yif I can, / The armes and also the man' in the *House of Fame* (l.143-4), utterly faithful to the original in echoing the sound of cano with his 'yif I can', and reflecting at the same time on the conditional ('yif') aspect of reproducing faithfully one's source in translation. Papers might also consider how authors of Troy authorize the conveyance of the 'true history' of the fallen city by feigning to translate pseudo eye-witness accounts into a new tongue. This session will elicit papers centering around the way late medieval writers deal with the impossibility of transferring the source faithfully in translation, and the moments where their reflection on the subject transpires in their writing.

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#### **THREAD: THINKING WITH/THROUGH MEDIEVAL LITERATURE AND TEXTS**

Organized by Martha Rust ([martha.rust@nyu.edu](mailto:martha.rust@nyu.edu)), Amanda Gerber ([gerberax@jmu.edu](mailto:gerberax@jmu.edu)), and Stephanie Batkie ([slbatkie@sewanee.edu](mailto:slbatkie@sewanee.edu))

#### **46. It's Not Boring, It's...: Why Do We Teach What We Teach?**

*Organizers:* Robert Meyer-Lee ([meyerlee@aya.yale.edu](mailto:meyerlee@aya.yale.edu)) and Claire Waters ([cmwaters@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cmwaters@ucdavis.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

Bracketing literary-historical or curricular considerations, how do we decide which medieval texts to teach? What do we hope students gain from the experience of medieval literature, and what justifies our choice of texts—what theories, implicit or explicit, lie behind our teaching? What claims are we willing to make about the affordances, ethical benefits, pleasures, intellectual payoffs, etc., of teaching particular texts, and on what grounds? Papers might engage with categories like those Rita Felski proposes as ‘uses of literature’; with the resistances and solidarities provoked or challenged by medieval texts; with issues of pleasure and desire; with practices of critical reading and thinking; and so forth. The question is less about specific approaches or lesson plans and more about what lies behind those specifics, what drives our teaching and shapes our choices, in the evolving world of the literary humanities at the secondary and tertiary levels.

#### **47. The Debating Game: Rhetoric, Play and Performativity**

*Organizers:* Wendy Matlock ([wmatlock@ksu.edu](mailto:wmatlock@ksu.edu)) and Betsy McCormick ([bmccormick@mtsac.edu](mailto:bmccormick@mtsac.edu))

*Session format:* Seminar

Chaucer plays with the form of debate, both structurally, as in the ‘requeyting’ that drives the *Canterbury Tales*, and thematically, as in the binary oppositions between good and bad women in the *Legend of Good Women*. Catherine Brown explains that such dialogic puzzles serve as ‘hermeneutic irritants’, while Joel Kaye traces a simultaneous interest in balance that opens up ‘striking new vistas of imaginative and speculative possibility’. This seminar asks, ‘what possibilities do dialogic practices create?’ and ‘what results from such dialogic practices?’ We seek answers not only in late medieval texts, but also in relation to intuitive and experiential models and invite papers that take seriously narratives and texts that play

systematized rhetorical games with dialogic practices to explore the ethical, intellectual, and cultural implications of those games.

#### **48. Taxonomy is (not) Taxidermy**

*Organizer:* Jessica Rosenfeld ([jrosenfe@wustl.edu](mailto:jrosenfe@wustl.edu))

*Session format:* Long papers

We need categories (arguably) to think and speak. Classification is fundamental to how we perceive and talk about the world. However, while literary works like *The Canterbury Tales* have been understood to run on the engine of various taxonomies – especially estates satire and other kinds of social and character differentiation – classification has nevertheless been understood to mark the limits of the literary in works like *The Parson's Tale* and its forebears. How do Chaucer and other medieval authors engage with the question of categories? How might texts thought to be “un-literary” – handbooks, lists, schemas – be productively re-examined? How do late medieval literary works engage with categorialism, in conversation with Aristotle's *Categories* or otherwise? What is the relationship between ethics and classification?

#### **49. Forms and Complexity**

*Organizers:* Tekla Bude ([tekla.bude@oregonstate.edu](mailto:tekla.bude@oregonstate.edu)) and Danielle Allor ([dallor@haverford.edu](mailto:dallor@haverford.edu))

*Session format:* Seminar

A complex adaptive system is a network that can respond to itself and its surrounding environment without external controls. Such responses are called ‘emergent’ behaviors – that is, they confound linear models of cause and effect, often with surprising or even counterintuitive outcomes. Systems create distinctions that separate them from their environments and mark their boundaries with ‘operational closure’, which determines identity based on behavior and process. This seminar seeks papers that explore intersections between medieval literary forms and complexity/systems theory. Papers might ask how the systems/environment distinction applies

to literary making; how literature demonstrates emergent behaviors (Levine, Caracciolo, Deleuze and Guattari); how the work of prominent systems theorists or cyberneticists (e.g. Luhmann, von Foerster, Hansen, Spenser-Brown, Maturana and Varela) speaks to medieval literary forms and formalisms; how iterative approaches to literature or literary histories might demonstrate the complexity of medieval forms.

## 50. The Literature-Thought Connection

*Organizers:* Martha Rust ([martha.rust@nyu.edu](mailto:martha.rust@nyu.edu)) and Amanda Gerber ([gerberax@jmu.edu](mailto:gerberax@jmu.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

When Chaucer's Pandarus first approaches Criseyde on Troilus's behalf, he ponders how he will 'endite' his 'tale' to serve her 'wit' (II.267-74). His consideration likens thinking to literary forms. Conversely, in the *House of Fame*, the eagle scolds Geoffrey for fixating on didactic literature, rather than observing the Milky Way. Despite their disparities, both examples connect thoughts with literary forms. This panel invites papers that explore this connection, teasing out the ways in which rhetorical and narrative devices induce such varied thought processes as decision-making, differentiating, discerning, questioning, exploring, inventing, or (mis-)understanding. Papers may reconsider the formal boundaries of literature, including questions of genre, text-image relations—e.g. *ductus* as explored by Mary Carruthers—or the function of literature, asking, for instance, what thoughts can literature encapsulate? What are the boundaries of its expressions? We invite papers devoted to Chaucer as well as those that pursue broader medieval literatures.

## 51. Discernment as Process/Method

*Organizer:* Yea Jung Park ([yeajung.park@slu.edu](mailto:yeajung.park@slu.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

What does it really mean to 'discern' in the Middle Ages? 'Discernment' today serves as a catch-all for all kinds of fine-tuned perception, good sense,

and wisdom, but we find the roots for this generalized ability in the somewhat technical faculty of *discretio*: the skill of identifying differences and assigning hierarchies of value. This session invites reflections on how medieval texts engage with ‘discernment’ in this narrower and more concrete sense. What are the sensory, social, and intellectual methods and heuristics involved in telling apart good from evil, wheat from chaff, high quality from low? How can such practices be put into language, if at all? What can medieval texts tell us about the longer histories behind distinctions—moral, aesthetic, or otherwise—that we now take for granted? Topics from all areas of medieval knowledge-making are welcome, including literature, art, theology (esp. *discretio spirituum*), medicine, law, and everyday life. Papers may draw on the Middle English family of terms *discernen/discrecioun/discret* (imported in Chaucer’s time), Latin *discernere/discretio* and its other vernacular offshoots, or adjacent terms such as *demen, jugen, preven, or tasten*.

## 52. Narrative Movement and Forms of Stasis

*Organizers:* William Rhodes ([william-rhodes@uiowa.edu](mailto:william-rhodes@uiowa.edu)) and Hillary Cheramie ([hpcheramie@ucdavis.edu](mailto:hpcheramie@ucdavis.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

This panel invites papers assessing the influence of form on narrative movement in ‘non-literary’ texts like lists, compendia, indexes, or diagrams. In addition to considering what differentiates ‘literary’ from ‘non-literary’ forms, the panel will explore the following questions: What kinds of thinking are captured and structured in forms like lists, and how do readers navigate the spaces between sequenced items or texts? How do these forms instrumentalize lists, listing, and order to both limit and expand narrative movement and progression? How do medieval non-literary texts engage with ethics and didacticism? What is the role of the reader in moving through, navigating, and experiencing non-literary forms? Would medieval audiences have had a different relationship to these texts than modern audiences? How do prescribed textual routes influence the text as a journey and the relationship between form, meaning, and experience?

### 53. Lyric Threats

*Organizer:* Sara Torres ([sarita.victoria.torres@gmail.com](mailto:sarita.victoria.torres@gmail.com))

*Session format:* Long papers

In her poem about confronting the loss of political rights, Leslie J. Anderson writes, ‘Someone once told me / The best poems are threats’. This panel considers the ways that poems, and other forms of language, exerted agency in the medieval world. How does literature advocate for reform, engage in prince-pleasing, or serve as propaganda? In what ways can literature be understood as issuing a threat, or as the object of suppression? Where in medieval culture do we see the transgressive energies of lyric unleashed? How do we theorize censorship—or the impulse to stay ‘mum’—in the premodern world? And how do texts justify or challenge forms of violence, or support an emergent sense of ethics?

### 54. Reading and Doing

*Organizer:* Noa Nikolsky ([noa.nikolsky@miami.edu](mailto:noa.nikolsky@miami.edu))

*Session format:* Short papers

This session considers instructional writing from the Middle Ages as literary forms. The later Middle Ages saw a rise in so-called ‘practical’ texts, written mainly in the vernacular, and claiming to teach their readers anything from good table manners to fishing. But instructions for how to do things are likewise found in many other kinds of writing (political, religious, historical, scientific, literary etc.). This session asks what such didactic textual moments can tell us about the nature of writing and reading itself. How do instructions function within the nexus of reader and text? What is the relationship between instructional texts and the world in which they circulated? How does this type of “textual knowledge” think and work? What sort of stories do instructional and didactic texts tell their readers?



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## THREAD: OPEN TOPIC THREAD

Organized by Catherine Nall ([Catherine.Nall@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Catherine.Nall@rhul.ac.uk)) and Joe Stadolnik ([jstadolnik@uchicago.edu](mailto:jstadolnik@uchicago.edu))

### 55. Medieval Narrative Then and Now, 2: Realism, Naturalism, Unnaturalism

*Organizers:* Monika Fludernik ([monika.fludernik@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:monika.fludernik@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de)) and Olga Timofeeva ([olga.timofeeva@es.uzh.ch](mailto:olga.timofeeva@es.uzh.ch))

*Session Format:* Short papers

Recent narrative theory has distinguished ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ modes of storytelling. How do those modes inform medieval narratives? We invite short papers addressing questions such as: What’s natural, unnatural, or unreal about medieval narratives, with their magic objects, miracles, divine interventions, monsters, bodily transformations, anachronic temporalities, alternate worlds, transcendent vs physical reality? Are (all) medieval literary narratives inherently unnatural? For whom? Is a literary ‘real’ different to an everyday, psychological, or transcendental ‘real’? Must characters be plausible ‘persons’ to be ‘real’? How are medieval notions of ‘realism’ stress tested in Middle English stories? Which narrative genres most embody an alternative realism from medieval everyday life practices? Why?

Papers may emphasize a particular approach to narrative theory and criticism OR focus on a late medieval genre or text type or aspect of narrative realism, naturalism, or unnaturalism, OR discuss how natural or unnatural narratives are mediated in oral, written, pictorial, or multimodal narratives.

## 56. Medieval Narrative Then and Now, 3: Developments in Medieval Narrative

*Organizer:* Olga Timofeeva ([olga.timofeeva@es.uzh.ch](mailto:olga.timofeeva@es.uzh.ch))

*Session Format:* Seminar

Recent developments in the theory of narrative structure (narratology) emphasize the historical reception or diachronic shifts inside or between genres. This seminar explores these developments and their special relevance to medieval narratives and their afterlives by focusing on Monika Fludernik's forthcoming book *Developments in Narrative Structure: From the Thirteenth Century to the Rise of the Novel* (2025/26). We invite proposals for short papers (1500 words +/-) which explore questions of narrative structure and genre change in the late medieval and early modern periods (including Chaucer). We especially invite proposals to explore the persistence or modification of oral narrative patterns in written medieval texts, how different narrative media (oral, written, pictorial) shape audiences' reception, or how historical discourse analysis contributes to our understanding of the development of received medieval genres (e.g., voice, temporality, character, pragmatics). Those whose proposals are accepted for the seminar will receive selected chapters from Fludernik's book, devoted to changes within or between late medieval/early modern narratives, to develop their seminar papers. All papers and selected chapters will be circulated prior to the conference.

## 57. Alcohol Epistemologies

*Organizers:* Bruce Holsinger ([bh9n@virginia.edu](mailto:bh9n@virginia.edu)) and Noëlle Phillips ([phillipsn2@douglascollege.ca](mailto:phillipsn2@douglascollege.ca))

*Session Format:* Long papers

This panel invites papers that explore the central role of alcohol—beer, ale, wine, and spirits—in shaping medieval ways of seeing, knowing, and writing. Possible topics include the ethics of intoxication (intoxication as socially disruptive yet potentially spiritual), Chaucer’s depictions of and/or biographical relation to tavern culture and the wine trade, the role of alewives and tapsters and their social and economic stigmatization, the spiritual significance of alcohol in Christian rituals, and the importance of beer and wine production in sustaining monastic communities and spiritual practices. How did the production, consumption, and cultural representation of alcohol influence medieval understandings of the body, the divine, and social order? Papers might consider alcohol’s role in poetic, theological, or philosophical texts, or its broader material and symbolic functions within medieval societies. We welcome contributions that engage with these questions through textual analysis, historical frameworks, or interdisciplinary approaches.

## 58. Narrating Uncertainty

*Organizers:* Shea McCollough ([shea.mccollough@wustl.edu](mailto:shea.mccollough@wustl.edu)) and Kashaf Qureshi ([kashaf@uchicago.edu](mailto:kashaf@uchicago.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

This panel invites proposals for 15-20 minute papers that take up literary representations of self-doubt, uncertainty, and insecurity in the Middle Ages. In a time of socio-political change, religious conflict, ecological disruption, and apocalyptic energy, how did medieval writers use literature to narrate experiences of instability? How do medieval narrative forms experiment with the limitations of capturing subjectivity through the voice of a narrator? Do certain figurative and representational modes lend themselves to interpretive uncertainty? What does it mean to have an

“unreliable narrator” in a medieval text, and can we locate this paradigm in the longer literary history of fiction? Papers might consider uncertainty in the contexts of life-writing, devotional instruction, and self-reflexive narrators. We especially welcome submissions that explore how medieval literature helps us understand the experience of uncertainty as unevenly distributed across the boundaries of class, gender, and race in the Middle Ages.

## 60. Medieval Lyrics and their Situations

*Organizer.* DeVan Ard ([da153@aub.edu.lb](mailto:da153@aub.edu.lb))

*Session Format.* Long papers

From John Shirley’s chatty incipits to the petitionary *envois* of courtly poetry, medieval lyrics often come down to us attached to specific situations. By *situation* we mean both the immediate rhetorical occasion that a poem addresses and the broader social circumstances that give rise to it. Responding to the recent renewal of scholarly interest in Middle English lyric (e.g. Ingrid Nelson’s *Lyric Tactics* [Penn] and *What Kind of Thing Is Middle English Lyric?*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Cristina Cervone [Penn]), this panel will explore the critical affordances of the *situation*, as opposed to broader frameworks such as *context* or *history*, in the study of vernacular lyric. What social, religious, and/or political pressures do these situations mediate? What strategies do poems use to formally constitute scenes of address while remaining embedded in networks of patronage and circulation? How do situations hold lyric poems apart from, or bind them more firmly to, the material structures that preserve lyric? And how should lyric situations be incorporated into new editions of Middle English poetry?

## 61. Framed: Teller and Tale in *The Canterbury Tales*

*Organizer.* Heather Blurton ([heatherblurton@english.ucsb.edu](mailto:heatherblurton@english.ucsb.edu))

*Session Format:* Short papers

To be “framed” is to be enclosed, but also to be set up, tricked. Although *The Canterbury Tales* is the most famous frame narrative in English literary history, the extent to which the characterization of the pilgrims in the “General Prologue” and in the various prologues to the *Canterbury Tales* is intended to or is useful in supplying a hermeneutic for the interpretation of the tales is an implicit, but under-theorized, bedrock of Chaucerian criticism. Nevertheless, assumptions about the relationship between teller and tale underlie many of our key theoretical engagements with the tales, such as feminism (“The Wife of Bath’s Tale”), antisemitism (“The Prioress’s Tale”) and sexuality (“The Pardoner’s Tale”). This session seeks to revisit the state of the field on this question, to excavate long-held truisms, and to propose new methodologies for interpreting the teller-tale dyad. Papers might explore new approaches to the history of criticism, character, voice, form and formalism, fictionality, hermeneutics, frame narrative in/and the Mediterranean story-world, adaptation. To what extent are we, as modern readers, framed by Chaucer’s fictions?

## 62. Making Sense of Medieval Faces I

*Organizers:* Annette Kern-Stähler ([annette.kern-staehler@unibe.ch](mailto:annette.kern-staehler@unibe.ch)) and Stephanie Trigg ([sjtrigg@unimelb.au.edu](mailto:sjtrigg@unimelb.au.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

This session invites contributions on the way medieval texts characterise and represent the acts of reading and interpreting faces; and also the extent to which facial expressions can be deliberately controlled or manipulated. What kinds of interpretative acts (diagnostic, emotional, rhetorical, ekphrastic or spiritual) are put into play when medieval narrators or characters observe, interpret, or describe the faces of others? What kinds of sensory feelings or cognitive processes are evoked? To what extent are facial

expressions read as physiognomic indications of character or humor; or as signs of mastery, control, deceit, or seduction? How do faces elicit or discourage empathetic feelings? What kinds of responses do mutilated faces engender? What is the relation between the human and the divine in medieval faces? The works of Chaucer and Hoccleve are obvious starting-points, and proposals that work with these authors are welcome, but we especially invite proposals that consider other texts, whether religious or secular, that foreground the interaction between faces and the discerning or affective minds of viewers or readers. We also welcome papers which critically engage with the conceptual tools of the neurohumanities. How might insights into the emotive mirror system, for example, help us understand the role of literature in not only creating but teaching empathetic responses to facial expressions?

### **63. Making Sense of Medieval Faces II**

*Organizers:* Annette Kern-Stähler ([annette.kern-staehler@unibe.ch](mailto:annette.kern-staehler@unibe.ch)) and Stephanie Trigg ([sjtrigg@unimelb.au.edu](mailto:sjtrigg@unimelb.au.edu))

*Session Format:* Short papers

This session invites contributions on the way medieval texts characterise and represent the acts of reading and interpreting faces; and also the extent to which facial expressions can be deliberately controlled or manipulated. What kinds of interpretative acts (diagnostic, emotional, rhetorical, ekphrastic or spiritual) are put into play when medieval narrators or characters observe, interpret, or describe the faces of others? What kinds of sensory feelings or cognitive processes are evoked? To what extent are facial expressions read as physiognomic indications of character or humor; or as signs of mastery, control, deceit, or seduction? How do faces elicit or discourage empathetic feelings? What kinds of responses do mutilated faces engender? What is the relation between the human and the divine in

medieval faces? The works of Chaucer and Hoccleve are obvious starting-points, and proposals that work with these authors are welcome, but we especially invite proposals that consider other texts, whether religious or secular, that foreground the interaction between faces and the discerning or affective minds of viewers or readers. We also welcome papers which critically engage with the conceptual tools of the neurohumanities. How might insights into the emotive mirror system, for example, help us understand the role of literature in not only creating but teaching empathetic responses to facial expressions?

#### **64. Affordances and the Unyielding**

*Organizers:* Matthew Boyd Goldie ([mgoldie@rider.edu](mailto:mgoldie@rider.edu)) and Lisa H. Cooper ([lhcooper@wisc.edu](mailto:lhcooper@wisc.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

James J. Gibson famously described an “affordance” as the “‘values’ and ‘meanings’ of things in the environment” that “can be directly perceived.” “The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*.” And an affordance “does *not change* as the need of the observer changes”; rather, “[t]he object offers what it does because it is what it is.” Gibson’s work has influenced many, from the design theorist Donald Norman, to Bruno Latour, to Caroline Levine. Papers are invited to reconsider Gibson’s ideas about affordances in his work and related theoretical writings as well as what his ideas, in turn, afford in the study of medieval literature.

Questions presenters might take up include: What kinds of objects in medieval literature and culture are particularly effective in offering up their properties for the use of humans and other animals? Where and how does something withhold or resist affording itself, in whole or part, to audiences? Do medieval literature and philosophy depict objects as having unchanging



qualities no matter what an observer wants? How does Gibson's objectivity remain useful in analysis, and how is it potentially problematic for political and other readings of literature? What does medieval literature afford today?

## 65. Pastoral Care

*Organizers:* Nicole D. Smith ([Nicole.Smith@unt.edu](mailto:Nicole.Smith@unt.edu)) and Jessica D. Ward, ([Jessica.Ward@untsystem.edu](mailto:Jessica.Ward@untsystem.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

We invite papers that examine how pastoral care informs and/or inspires Middle English literature. Works of pastoral care pervade the written landscape: sometimes they take the form of a lengthy dialogue or a guide; in other instances, components of care are woven into narratives, such as romances, exempla, dream visions, and debates. This session investigates how pastoral care informs individual and cultural ideas about the self, community, professions, or conduct. How do authors reshape the care of self, and to what ends? Does generic choice impact spiritual meaning? What of reform and virtue ethics in narrative? Are there differences between the ways in which medieval women writers pursue care of self, compared to their male counterparts? We encourage papers that explore myriad expressions, interpretations, and adaptations of spiritual guidance and renewal as medieval writers play with local expressions of scholastic theology, *pastoralia*, and lay devotion.

## 66. Medieval Temporalities: Literary, Social, and Planetary

*Organizers:* Kathy Lavezzo ([kathy-lavezzo@uiowa.edu](mailto:kathy-lavezzo@uiowa.edu)) and Cathy Sanok ([sanok@umich.edu](mailto:sanok@umich.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

Representations of narrative timing (e.g., Chaucer's fabliaux), novelty and agedness (e.g., the Pardoner's Old Man, the Squire's Tale), eternity and ephemerality (e.g., Troilus's ascent and Theseus's First-Mover speech), and ruptures and repetitions (e.g., Wife of Bath's Tale, the Monk's Tale), comprise just a portion of Chaucer's expansive engagement with questions of time. We invite fresh approaches to the ever-generative topic of time in Chaucer's work, his readers, and/or his contemporaries. Possible topics include but are not limited to: temporalities of identity (racial, gendered, religious, class, etc.); apocalyptic and end times; beginnings; secular and profane times; linear and nonlinear times; affective temporalities; planetary times (seasonal or cosmic); periodization, historicism, and rupture; the "medieval" as a temporality; Christian versus non-Christian times; technologies of time; empty time; labor, capital, and time; progress and innovation; trans-temporalities and time-travel; monumental time; and temporal-spatial intersections.

## **67. Affective Piety Reconsidered: Affective Piety and Affective Communities**

*Organizers:* Mary Dzon ([mdzon@utk.edu](mailto:mdzon@utk.edu)) and Heather Blurton ([heatherblurton@english.ucsb.edu](mailto:heatherblurton@english.ucsb.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

For a long time now, "affective piety" has been understood as one of, if not *the*, dominant mode of religious expression and experience in the later Middle Ages. More recently, affect theory and cognitive literary studies have reinvigorated the study of affective devotion. This session invites a reassessment and recalibration of our understanding of medieval affective piety. How can we re-evaluate and rethink affective piety after the cognitive turn and in light of new trends in the history of emotions, such as more attention increasingly given to negative emotions.

Papers might consider topics such as the history of study of "affective piety," the interplay of liturgical and paraliturgical experience, emotionally mixed

communities, variations on the Holy Family, and the relationship between affective piety and the construction of alterity, gender, and/or genre.

## **68. Medieval Age I: Childhood, childishness, and infantilization in medieval literature.**

*Organizers:* Lucy Fleming ([Lucy.fleming@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:Lucy.fleming@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de)) and Anna Wilson ([anna\\_wilson@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:anna_wilson@fas.harvard.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

This panel invites proposals for papers on the topic of childhood, infancy, childishness, and infantilization in late medieval literary culture and in medieval reception. The figure of the child pervades this era, from the *puer senex* of hagiography to the ascension of children to European thrones. Broader scholarship on medieval children nevertheless continues to grapple with the legacy of Philippe Ariès' assertion that "in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist." In light of these tensions, papers in this session might consider:

- the deployment of child characters in texts such as Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* and *Man of Law's Tale* and their sources;
- conduct literature, curricula, and medieval children's reading;
- the influence of the Ariès thesis;
- how conceptions of childhood intersect with race, class, ability, or gender;
- texts that deal with adultification, infantilization, or age-related transformations;
- post-medieval adaptations of medieval texts for children.

## **69. Medieval Age II: Age & Ageing in Late Medieval Literature**

*Organizers:* Clint Morrison, Jr. ([clinton.morrison@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:clinton.morrison@austin.utexas.edu)) and Lucy Fleming ([lucy.fleming@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:lucy.fleming@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de))

*Session Format:* Short papers

This panel invites papers on the topic of age and ageing in late medieval literary culture, as well as the broader topic of age as it is applied to the Middle Ages as a stage of literary development. Chaucer, for instance, manifests in critical and popular discourse as simultaneously ‘Father Chaucer’ and ‘Child Chaucer’. Medieval texts, meanwhile, bring to life characters from across the human lifespan, and their readers have ranged in age from children to retirees, who may encounter medieval texts at various points over the course of their lives. Talks might investigate any of the various ways that late medieval literature discusses age or ageing, including:

- representations of life-stages gaining critical interest, such as transition, matrescence, peri/menopause, or retirement;
- how conceptions of the *puer senex*, middle age, or senescence intersect with race, class, ability, or gender;
- what it means for characters, authors, or texts to ‘age well’.

## 70. The Art of Complaint

*Organizer:* Brendan O’Connell ([OCONNEB2@tcd.ie](mailto:OCONNEB2@tcd.ie))

*Session Format:* Long papers

Lee Patterson suggests that the medieval fascination with complaint centres on the ways in which it poses two fundamental questions of literary scholarship: ‘Can language express the subject? Can it have an effect upon the world?’ (182). Complaint has proved oddly resistant to generic categorisation and formal analysis, in spite of the fact that it permeates the medieval imagination, traversing the boundaries of literature and law, and ranging across genres as diverse as erotic poetry, devotional lament, and the literature of social critique. In this session, papers are invited that consider any aspect of medieval complaint. How is emotion expressed and elicited in complaint? Does complaint challenge or reinforce unequal power structures? How does complaint transcend traditional generic boundaries, such as lyric and narrative? What can be learned by bringing medieval complaint into dialogue with contemporary considerations of complaint (for example, the work of Sara Ahmed)?

## 71. Translanguaging

*Organizers:* Ardis Butterfield ([ardis.butterfield@yale.edu](mailto:ardis.butterfield@yale.edu)) and Ruth Evans ([ruth.evans@slu.edu](mailto:ruth.evans@slu.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

How is “translanguaging” distinct from multilingualism? Recent, innovative work in medieval studies has focused on translanguaging as a way of describing a more fluid as well as plural approach to medieval language theory and practice. Translanguaging differs from the traditional view of the practices of bilingual and multilingual speakers: “rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, as has been traditionally thought, bilinguals, multilinguals, and indeed, all users of language, select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to negotiate particular communicative contexts” (Vogel and Garcia, 2017). We would like to consider the implications of this for the study of medieval literature, where literature is taken in a broad sense and may include modern creative writers. For example, attending to the work of the trans poet Jos Charles, who performs a trans critique of gender through a skilful manipulation of Middle and modern English, prompts new questions about language and identity.

## 72. ‘And Gladly Teche?’: Emotion and Affect in the Classroom

*Organizer:* Brendan O’Connell ([OCONNEB2@tcd.ie](mailto:OCONNEB2@tcd.ie))

*Session Format:* Short papers

Glenn Burger and Holly Crocker have argued that ‘medieval writings offer a unique opportunity to reassess the importance of feelings – their physical

and rational elements – because medievals did not think about affects or emotions in the same way that we do.’ Emotion and affect occupy a central role in medieval literature, but they also play a key role in pedagogic practice, often informing decisions we make about what and how we teach or study. This session invites short papers that consider the role of affect in the classroom: in what ways is teaching informed by affect theory or the history of emotion? How are the values, attitudes and practices we bring to the classroom shaped by emotion and affect? How can teaching methods and technologies contribute to a constructive affective environment? Carissa Harris has examined the role of rage in scholarship and teaching: what role is played in the classroom by emotions such as disgust, sadness, fear, hope, joy, and awe?

### **73. *New Medieval Literatures* Presents: Chaucer and the Unexpected ...**

*Organizers:* Laura Ashe ([laura.ashe@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:laura.ashe@ell.ox.ac.uk)), Caroline Batten ([battenc@english.upenn.edu](mailto:battenc@english.upenn.edu)), Philip Knox ([pk453@cam.ac.uk](mailto:pk453@cam.ac.uk)) and Wendy Scase ([w.l.scase@bham.ac.uk](mailto:w.l.scase@bham.ac.uk))

*Session Format:* Long papers

This session invites papers that showcase unexpected, provocative, and productive juxtapositions of Chaucer studies with other fields. Scholars are invited to propose papers that reflect on the position – or non-position – of Chaucer studies in their own areas, or that engage with the possibilities opened up by unexpected juxtapositions, for example, of Chaucer with apparently unrelated earlier or later English literature; or with other European and global literatures beyond his sources and direct influence; or with unexpected topics in history, philosophy, or art history not usually considered by Chaucerians. Reflections on how far such disciplinary juxtapositions are adequately supported in institutions and in journal publishing are welcome.

## 74. Piety in Late Medieval England

*Organizer:* R. F. Yeager ([rfyeager@hotmail.com](mailto:rfyeager@hotmail.com))

*Session Format:* Long Papers

What did “belief” really mean for Chaucer and his contemporaries? How, and to what purpose, did he and others draw on categories and practices of piety to shape an aesthetic response to the world around them? Can any form of piety, deep or shallow belief, be individuated against the backdrop of an established Church—or in the context of revisionary challenges to its traditional authority? Are there discernibly “English” pieties that mirror, or stand in contrast to, what transpired across the Channel—and if so, can these be linked to subsequent developments, either at home or abroad?

Responses to this thread might consider Chaucer uniquely, or in company of one or more poet contemporaries potentially including, but not limited to, Langland, Gower, Lydgate, Hoccleve, Usk, Dechamps, Christine de Pizan, Oton de Granson, Philippe de Mézières, Petrarch, Boccaccio. Other responses might take up definitional questions—the applicability of categorization, as suggested by “affective piety” as a distinct type, or contemporary understandings of “the pious” in literary and/or socio-political usage. Can it be said that concepts of “piety” influenced late medieval English writers to develop what might be called a social conscience, and if so, of what kind, and to what end(s)? How did they respond/reply to a piety of a new sort, such as Lollardy offered?

## 75. Comparative Work in Medieval English and German

*Organizers:* Sarah Salih ([sarah.salih@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.salih@kcl.ac.uk)) and Sarah Bowden ([sarah.bowden@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.bowden@kcl.ac.uk))

*Session Format:* Short papers

What can be gained by reading medieval English and German literature together? This is an area of comparative study that is rarely considered – the francophone world tends to get in the way, for perfectly good reasons – yet



can yield fruitful results, often reading against the grain. This session would invite researchers engaged on comparative studies of medieval English and German literatures and cultures to present examples of their current work. Participants will be encouraged to comment on the methodology and the institutional contexts of their work and to assess the state and the future prospects of the critical field.

## 76. Medieval Literature and Law

*Organizer:* Elizabeth Allen ([eallen@uci.edu](mailto:eallen@uci.edu))

*Session Format:* Long papers

Legal scenes appear across many genres in medieval literature: from Iseut's trial by ordeal to the legal judgment of Cupid ordering the penance of the *Legends of Good Women*, from the trial of Lady Meed in *Piers Plowman* to Marian lyrics that imagine the Virgin pleading on sinners' behalf at the bar of heaven. Of course, the law appears in literature in under many guises – metaphorical, as when the Host asks the pilgrim company to vouchsafe his storytelling rules; allegorical, as when Grosseteste's castle of love is besieged by the forces of evil that challenge its jurisdiction (Jahner). Further, legal and documentary texts can be susceptible to literary analysis just as literary texts can be illuminated by an understanding of legal practices (Alford; Steiner; Barrington and Steiner). What role do different genres play in conceptualizing legal issues? How might metaphorical or allegorical invocations of law not only put the law to social or spiritual use, but reflect upon the meaning of the law itself? To what extent do literary versions of the law reflect contemporary legal practice, versus harking back in time – and with what effects? How do extra-legal texts address legal problems in ways that exceed (or limit) the possibilities of more properly legal documents?

If legal authority and legal systems can be understood as under construction in the medieval period – and perhaps in any time – then how do lyrics, romances, chronicles, prayers, fabliaux, exempla, and other genres help us think about that process of construction? How, that is, might literary thought contribute to the law? This panel especially welcomes papers that consider ways in which literature (broadly construed) might be a site for idealizing, rethinking, criticizing, or theorizing law. It also welcomes responses to recent work in legal history that uses literary analysis, for example, to explore new interpretations of moral dilemmas faced by medieval judges (Byrne), new emphases on intention in felony under common law (Kamali), and new ways of understanding common law as penitential rather than punitive (Butler).

## 77. Chaucerian Origins

*Organizers:* Andrew James Johnston ([ajjohnst@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:ajjohnst@zedat.fu-berlin.de)) and Wolfram Keller ([kellerwo@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:kellerwo@zedat.fu-berlin.de))

*Session Format:* Long papers

Chaucer's works engage with questions of origins and beginnings in a broad variety of ways—the origins of collectives (Troy), the origins of various conflicts, the very origins of poetry itself. The proposed panel invites papers that study the ways in which Chaucer's texts construct and transform narratives of origins: What are the aesthetic and/or ideological (political, religious) contexts of Chaucerian stories of origins? What temporalities are at play in constructions of origins? What came before an origin? Can there be a beginning before the beginning? How are beginnings related to endings? And given Chaucer's (early modern) status as the 'father of English poesy': How do his works represent and reflect about the origins of poetry—and how does post-medieval English literature construct poetry's presumed Chaucerian origins?

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## **78. Research Expo (Open Topic)**

*Organizers:* Mary Flannery, R. D. Perry, and J. R. Mattison  
([ncs2026freiburg@gmail.com](mailto:ncs2026freiburg@gmail.com))

*Session Format:* Poster

This session is open to a range of formats and topics that may offer updates on work-in-progress, preliminary conclusions, experimental modes of presenting research data, and shorter summaries of material. Topics particularly suited to posters might include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Research on manuscripts or other aspects of material culture
- Image-heavy work that deploys visual analysis
- Updates on large-scale funded projects or other grant funded work-in-progress
- Data-driven work that is communicated in graphical forms
- Experimental digital methods
- Incorporate a hands-on or other interactive element

The printing for posters can be done in Freiburg before the conference, and more information will be given to presenters closer to the conference. Posters will be displayed in a hall where receptions will be held and a time will be reserved for researchers to talk about their work. A prize will be offered to one poster.

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## **79. Open Paper Thread**

*Organizers:* Mary Flannery and R. D. Perry ([ncs2026freiburg@gmail.com](mailto:ncs2026freiburg@gmail.com))

*Session Format:* Variable