

Course Information:

Medieval English Literature: Chivalry (English 321) - Cornell College

Professor Shannon Reed and Consulting Librarian Mary Jo Langhorne

This course is taken primarily by 3rd and 4th year students. They examine texts that scrutinize the chivalric code. It includes texts in translation and in Middle English.

Type:

Annotated Bibliography
Research Paper
Individual Assignment
Info Literacy Quickwrites

Level: 300

Block Plan Context:

	S	M	T	W	R	F	S
1							
2							
3							
4							

Important Features of the Assignment:

- Gains familiarity with one or more disciplines through use of **discipline-specific resources**
- Encourages **critical thinking** through use of appropriate analytical tools
- **Interpretation and insight are generated** through explaining how the information deepened the understanding of the text
- Requires **proper documentation and citations**
- Demonstrates understanding of **scholarly and popular sources** in the annotated bibliography.
- Requires **integrating and synthesizing information**

Description of Assignments:**Information Literacy Quickwrites (20%)**

Information literacy means knowing when to seek information, where and how to seek necessary information, and how to evaluate and utilize information once you have found it. Information Literacy quickwrites take the place of a traditional quiz; I have designed this assignment so that you:

- gain familiarity with information literacy resources in the library
- deepen your understanding of the reading material in this class
- prepare thoughtfully for class discussion
- prepare for future research in this course

You will be responsible for handing in 7 Quickwrites (dates indicated on schedule). To receive credit:

You must hand in the Quickwrite at the beginning of class

The Quickwrite must be on the reading due for that day (except where noted otherwise).

I will not accept late Quickwrites. However, during one week I allow any student to hand in one additional Quickwrite as a make-up or for extra credit.

* Each Quickwrite is worth 5 points: 1 point for identifying what you investigated, what source you used, and for explaining what you found; 4 points for explaining how this information influenced your reading of the text.

* You may use each source only once for quiz credit. (Thus, while you're welcome to continue to re-use sources for your own benefit, you may only use a source once as a quiz answer.)

* Explain only one source each day, even if you used multiple sources.

Process:

1. While you're reading your assignment, identify something about which you'd like more information: the author, another work or word or place mentioned in the text, an allusion to another literary work (including the Bible), a place, background ideas, artwork, etc.
2. Refer to the resources on the back side of this handout and identify the best source for finding your information.
3. Write down what you looked up and where, what you found, and explain how this information contributed to your reading of the text. 4 of the 5 possible points are for your explanation of how the information deepened your understanding of the text.

Example:

As you're reading Lancelot, you notice on the first page of the reading, that Chrétien refers to "my lady of Champagne," and the footnote indicates this is Countesse Marie de Champagne, oldest daughter of King Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine. You decide that you want to know more about Marie de Champagne because this might help you understand why Chrétien attributes his motivation for writing this tale to her. You go to the library, find the Dictionary of the Middle Ages in the reference section, and look up Marie de Champagne. You find an entry, but it gives only very general information. You search through a few other dictionaries and encyclopedias and still don't find what you want. So you go to Chrétien de Troyes, the Man and His Work, a book on reserve. This tells you the information you wanted.

For your assignment, you write:

I looked up Marie de Champagne in Chrétien de Troyes, the Man and His Work. I found out that Marie de Champagne was a patroness of the arts; specifically, she was the patroness of several works about courtly love. It's possible that Chrétien attributed the poem to her just as a convention, because she was a patroness. Some have speculated that she and Chrétien were lovers, though most think this is unlikely. It's more likely that Chrétien attributed his work to her to distance himself from the adulterous subject matter of the poem. None of Chrétien's other poems deal with adultery and he seems rather to have celebrated marital love. Knowing that Chrétien might have been uncomfortable with his own poem provides an interesting subtext. As I continue to read, I wonder if his discomfort might explain why he humiliates his own character Lancelot by making him ride in a cart. It is possible, though, to allow such biographical information too much influence; it's also possible that Chrétien uses the cart to highlight the ridiculousness of courtly love—or of that genre. Riding in the cart dramatically highlights Lancelot's dilemma: follow Love or the conventions of chivalry. When he sacrifices his reputation by riding in the cart, Lancelot chooses his love over his chivalry—but his actions seem so ridiculous, that Chrétien seems to be critically evaluating both codes.

List of Resources for Quickwrite Assignments in the pdf on the last page of this assignment)



Acrobat Document

Paper 1: Research Project (30%)

Length: 8-10 pages

Format: 1 inch margins, double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman. Citations should be in MLA style. The annotated bibliography should be single-spaced in hanging paragraphs, with double spacing between entries.

Readers: Well-educated peers whom you wish to inform about your topic.

Purpose: to demonstrate your ability to define a research question, to locate and distinguish among various types of source materials, to synthesize several sources, to communicate your findings effectively and to prepare for the critical analysis paper

This paper will give you the opportunity to explore a topic related to medieval literature through secondary sources of information. You'll work to locate credible sources and evaluate the material you discover. You'll use that information in judicious ways to create new knowledge.

First, you'll choose a topic, narrow it, and define your research questions.

The range of possible topics, questions, or problems for this assignment is quite large; anything is acceptable so long as it satisfies these conditions:

- the topic deals centrally with at least two works studied this term
- it serves to help you (and your readers) appreciate literary works more fully and deeply
- it effectively engages with the literature discussed in this course
- it involves effective library research

Next, you'll begin investigating your questions using print sources, search engines, and electronic databases—taking careful notes in a research log as you go. In this step, you'll have assistance from the Consulting Librarian for the Humanities and your Professor. Third, you'll write up a description of your process and the results of your search in the format explained below. The sections of your paper should be numbered and titled as described here.

1. **Introduction:** This section will explain your research questions and why the topic is of significance or of interest in medieval literary studies. Why does it matter? (For example, does it help us understand a specific text better? or does it help us understand medieval culture?)
2. **The Search:** This section will outline *in detail* what strategies you undertook to complete your work. It should note successes and problems you ran into, and explain how you overcame these problems. Your search narrative should demonstrate an understanding of smart searching and efficient problem solving.
 - What databases or search engines did you use and why were those the most appropriate for your topic?
 - In the library online catalog, databases, and internet search engines, what search terms did you use? What kinds of sources did they produce? How did you refine your search (or search terms) to improve it?

- What other resources were useful to you (e.g. bibliographies of articles or books, the reserve list, the librarian consultation, and so forth), and how?
 - If you were to redo the search, what would you do differently to be more successful or efficient, and why?
3. **The Findings:** This section will explain what you learned about your topic. It requires you to synthesize your various sources, and should make up the bulk of your paper (3-4 pages). It should be well-organized according to the logic of your topic. In other words, it should not simply discuss one source after another, but be organized according to the questions you explored.
 4. **Discussion:** This section of the paper (1 ½ - 2 pages) allows you to comment on your findings. For example, you could discuss how your expectations relate to what you actually discovered. Or, you could present your own opinion on the subject, based on your discoveries. Regardless, your commentary should consist of your own ideas and conclusions. In addition, you should address what you had trouble finding out, and what you want to know more about. What strategies would you undertake—if you had more time—to find out the answers to your remaining questions?
 5. **Annotated Bibliography:** Your bibliography will contain 6 to 10 sources, each annotated. The annotation will explain (1) the source's topic, and its theses or slant; (2) what type of source it is (whether a scholarly article, a popular magazine review, a commercial website, etc.); (3) whether you found it credible and why; and (4) how it served you in your investigation. The bibliography should include a couple of sources that you rejected as not credible, and at least four sources that you did find to be credible and used in your "findings" section. It should include at least one print source, at least one source found using a database, and at least one internet source.

Paper 2 – Critical Analysis (30%)

The basic assignment: a substantial paper of 9-12 pages on a literary subject derived from two or more of the topics we've discussed this block. Each essay must include a list of works cited of at least 4 secondary sources which were actually used in the preparation of this essay.

Guidelines:

As you begin planning for this assignment, remind yourself that it can be an opportunity to learn more about a subject that interest you, as well as a chance to create a piece of writing of which you can be proud. This means you should begin thinking about and research the paper sooner rather than later.

Ideally the Research Project will provide the ground work for your critical analysis. But this poses a disadvantage: you won't have read most of the material on the syllabus and thus won't know if the literature covered at the end of the block might offer an attractive paper topic. In order to overcome this difficulty, you might try reading ahead. Equally useful might be a conversation with me. If you can tell me about your interests, I should be able to help you find a topic or question which points you forward to works we have not yet studied.

Possible topics:

The range of possible topics, questions, or problems for this assignment is quite large; anything is acceptable so long as it satisfies these conditions:

- the topic deals centrally with at least two works studies this term
- it serves to help you (and your readers) appreciate literary works more fully and deeply
- it effectively engages with the literature studied this block
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Papers can take a theoretical approach, asking questions of the text that a feminist or an historian might ask. Example: what kinds of questions would a feminist theorist [n.b. what *kind* of feminist?] ask of Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale and Wyf of Bath’s Tale?

Papers can explore topics that span several works or authors, as for instance in tracing themes, or rhetorical techniques or genres. Example: you might focus on the tension between the chivalric code and courtly love in two or more of the texts.

Papers can concentrate on problems of interpretations. Example: you might analyze the function of the joust (or tournament) in two or more of these texts.

Papers can take an historical approach; political, social, intellectual (history of ideas), or literary history all offer possibilities. Example: you might analyze one of the literary texts with the help of a text which lays out the rules for chivalry (either text by Christine de Pisan); or you might analyze a contemporary versus a medieval literary representation of chivalry.

Timeline:

Wk	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Weekend</i>
1	Intro to Quickwrite Reference Tools – Librarian and Professor	Quickwrite # 1 due			Quickwrite # 2 due Email topic to professor & librarian by 3:00pm	
2	Quickwrite # 3 due Workshop paper ideas		Quickwrite # 4 due	Research paper due at midnight		
3		Quickwrite # 5 due		Quickwrite # 6 due		
4	Quickwrite # 7 due Workshop Critical Analysis		Critical analysis paper due.			