Madmen, Monsters, and Marvels: 
Disability and Difference in Medieval and Renaissance Literature

ENGL 303
MWF 2:30–3:20
Spring 2015
Angela Heetderks

Office hours: Mondays 3:30–4:45, Wednesdays 1:00–2:15, and by appointment
Office location: Rice 26  Class location: King 237
E-mail: aheetder@oberlin.edu (current year); angelaheetderks@gmail.com (long-term)

Course description: Medieval and Renaissance literature is full of madmen, monsters, and devils' sons. We will consider how such figures blur the lines between ability and disability. We will also ask how they challenge premodern and modern expectations about what it means to be human. No previous experience with Middle English is required.

Course goals: You will learn about competing representations of cognitive, physical, species, and social difference in medieval and Renaissance literature from Beowulf through Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, among others. You will consider how English writers use multiple literary forms and genres to shape their portrayals of the human and posthuman other. In your final research paper, you will situate your robust investigation of disability in a premodern literary text within the existing scholarly conversation. You will become a competent and confident reader of Middle English poetry and prose.

Required Texts ("It is extremely important that you use the editions below"):  
7. PDFs on Google Drive: Please set aside some of your textbook funds for printing. Bring a printed and marked-up copy of each PDF assignment to class. Please note that we will regularly refer to previous readings in the course, so you should keep your hard copies handy.
Assignments:
- Paper #1: Synthesis of critical perspectives (with oral presentation) 20%
- Paper #2: Analytical essay 20%
- Scene performance 10%
- Graded class discussion 10%
- Final exam 25%
- Quizzes, memorization, drafts, informed participation 15%

Weeks 1–2: Monsters and Boundaries
M 2/2  Introduction to disability and difference in premodern English literature
       *Richard III*, opening soliloquy
       Handout: Introduction to Middle English
W 2/4  *Beowulf*, pp. 3–14
       Donoghue, “Old English Language and Poetics,” pp. xv–xxii
       “Contexts,” pp. 81–2, 84–100
       Course syllabus
F 2/6   *Beowulf*, pp. 15–22
       Tolkien, “*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics” (pp. 103–30)
M 2/9   *Beowulf*, pp. 22–37
       Chance, “The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*: The Problem of Grendel's Mother” (pp. 152–67)
       Images in your edition (flip through and look at all of them)
W 2/11  *Beowulf*, pp. 37–56
       Hill, “The Christian Language and Theme of *Beowulf*” (pp. 197–211)
F 2/13  *Beowulf*, pp. 56–78
       Webster, “Archaeology and *Beowulf*” (pp. 212–36)
       Optional: Donoghue, “The Philologer Poet: Seamus Heaney and the Translation of *Beowulf*”

Weeks 3–4: The Devil’s Son and King Arthur’s Court

*memorization appointments this week*

M 2/16  The *Prose Merlin*: introduction, “Birth of Merlin,” “Vortiger's Demise,” “Uther and Ygerne” (pp. 1–12, 19–34, 47–71)
       Mitchell, “Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor” (online)
W 2/18  The *Prose Merlin*: “Arthur and the Sword in the Stone,” “Arthur at Tamelide,”
       “Merlin and the Young Squires,” “Merlin and Nimiane” (pp. 72–83, 137–147 [top of page],
       156–70, 180–7)
F 2/20   The *Prose Merlin*: “Arthur and Gonnore,” “The Begetting of Lancelot; and Merlin
       and Nimiane,” “Merlin and Grisandolous” (pp. 188–205, 216–41)
Metzler, excerpt from *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages* (online)

W 2/25  The *Prose Merlin*: “Merlin and Nimiane; and Arthur and the Giant of St. Michael’s Mount,” “The Defeat of Lucius, and Arthur and the Devil Cat,” “Merlin’s Imprisonment; and Gawain and the Dwarf Knight” (pp. 305–31)
Eyler, excerpt from *Disability in the Middle Ages* (online)

F 2/27  Thomas Chestre, *Sir Launfal* (online, with introduction)

**Week 5a: The Mirror and the Self: The Poet Writes His Own Madness**
M 3/2  Hoccleve’s *Complaint* (online)
Garland-Thomson, “The Politics of Staring” (online)

W 3/4  Hoccleve’s *Complaint*, continued discussion (no new reading)

**Weeks 5b–6: The Blazon and the Deformed Mistress in Lyric Poetry**
F 3/6  Medieval lyric poetry (online)
Ziolkowski, “Avatars of Ugliness in Medieval Literature” (online)

M 3/9  Medieval lyric poetry (online)
Baker, “‘To make love to a Deformity’: praising ugliness in early modern England” (online)

W 3/11  Renaissance lyric poetry (online)

F 3/13  Allen Memorial Art Museum visit! We’ll meet in the museum.

**Week 7: Going Mad on the Renaissance Stage**
M 3/16  *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, scenes i–vi (pp. 2–40)
Chronology (pp. 101–6)
Beginning of introduction (pp. ix–xiii)

W 3/18  *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, scenes vii–x (pp. 40–72)

F 3/20  *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, scenes xi–xvi (pp. 72–97)

Sa 3/21–Su 3/29  **Spring break: no class meetings and no work!**

W 4/1  Peer-directed, in-class workshop. (I will be away at a conference.)
F 4/3  No classes: I will be away at a conference.

M 4/6  Middleton, *The Changeling*, acts 1–2, pp. 345–72
      Introduction (pp. ix–xii, xxi–xxiii, xxix–xxx)


**Weeks 10–11: Monsters, Spirits, and Power**

M 4/13  Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 1 (pp. 10–32)
        Montaigne, from “Of the Cannibals,” pp. 120–21
        de Las Casas, from “Letter to Philip, Great Prince of Spain,” pp. 136–41
        Marcus, “The Blue-Eyed Witch,” pp. 249–264 (begin with “We have much to lose by
        ‘Unediting the Renaissance’”)
        Optional: Brown, “This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine': *The Tempest* and
        the Discourse of Colonialism”

W 4/15  Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 2 (pp. 32–50)
        Wilson, “The Monster Caliban,” pp. 141–60
        Images of Caliban, pp. 161–68
        Recommended but not required: Barker and Hulme, “Nymphs and Reapers Heavily
        Vanish: The Discursive Con-texts of *The Tempest*,” pp. 292–309

Th 4/16  **Analytical essay due at 9:00 p.m. (no class meeting)**

F 4/17  Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 3 (pp. 51–64)
        “Responding to the Challenge” (pp. 320–21)
        Kastan, “The Duke of Milan / And His Brave Son”: Old Histories and New in *The
        Tempest*,” pp. 333–51
        Optional: Willis, “Shakespeare’s *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism” (pp.
        321–33)

M 4/20  Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 4 (pp. 64–74)
        351–87

W 4/22  **Allen Memorial Art Museum visit! We’ll meet in the museum.**

F 4/24  Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 5 (pp. 74–87)
        Césaire, from *A Tempest* (pp. 309–19)
        Loomba, from “Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama,” pp. 389–401
**Weeks 12–13: The Blind Hero and the Blind Poet**

**M 4/27**  Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, introduction through l. 177 (pp. 319–335)
Milton, “On Shakespeare” (pp. 34–5)


**F 5/1**  Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, ll. 652–1075 (pp. 349–61)

**M 5/4**  Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, ll. 1076–1758 (pp. 361–81)
*Graded class discussion*

**W 5/6**  Closing discussion: Milton, “On His Blindness” (156–8) [last day of class!]

**Final exam: Saturday, May 16, 7:00–9:00 p.m.**

This is good news for you! If you have been keeping up with the course, staying engaged with the materials, and reviewing what you’ve learned, you are likely to do well on the final. **This exam will not be re-scheduled.** Please make your travel plans accordingly.

**What to expect and how to succeed in this course:**

**Expectations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You are responsible to:</th>
<th>You can expect me to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• complete the assignments punctually by the date listed in</td>
<td>• communicate our goals for each class;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the schedule below and in your assignment sheets,</td>
<td>• discuss analytical, writing, and learning strategies</td>
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<td>• be an active learner, annotating and/or taking notes on</td>
<td>that will help you develop skills you will need in this</td>
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<td>all reading and watching assignments,</td>
<td>and your other college courses;</td>
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<td>• come to class on time and prepared to discuss at least</td>
<td>• meet with you in office hours to discuss your ideas for</td>
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<td>two questions or observations you formed while reading or</td>
<td>projects, read any drafts you choose to show me, and</td>
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<td>watching the day's assignment,</td>
<td>work with you on argumentation and other aspects of your</td>
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<td>• seek help from me, your classmates, and the Writing</td>
<td>writing;</td>
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<td>Center—as appropriate—in honing the academic skills you</td>
<td>• offer detailed responses on the final versions of your</td>
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<td>will need in this course, and</td>
<td>papers with an eye toward your further development as a</td>
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<td>• use this course to discover and develop your own intellectual pursuits.</td>
<td>writer and reader;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• listen and respond to any comments you have about how</td>
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<td>our class is going; and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• create an environment that fosters learning.</td>
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Reading and Discussing Texts Well
When you read, do so carefully, critically, and with a pencil in hand. Bring your thoroughly marked-up hard copy of your reading(s) to class. The time you spend working on assignments outside of our classroom is not merely a prelude to learning; it is the core of your learning. Practice the art of active, curious investigation.

Attendance and Participation
Your regular attendance and active participation are vital to your own learning and to our classroom community. You may miss a maximum of two class meetings without incurring any penalty. Use these free absences wisely, as no other absences will be excused for any reason, including illness. Each subsequent absence will result in a reduction of your final grade. (In rare cases, exceptions may be made for documented emergencies.) Six absences will result in an automatic failure of the course.

Please respect your classmates and our learning environment by arriving and being prepared to start class punctually. Each tardy arrival will count as half an absence.

Religious exceptions: Absences for religious observance will be excused if you communicate with me in advance.

Office-hour meetings: You are required to meet with me during office hours at least twice during the semester. Come prepared to ask a question about your research-in-progress or about the course itself. You are most welcome to meet with me more often.

E-mail
I check e-mail between 3:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. During the week, you can typically expect a response from me within twenty-four hours.

Electronics
Please do not use electronic devices during class. If you require electronic devices to participate fully in class, please let me know.

Accommodations
Because we all learn differently, we will all need some accommodations during the semester. Please help to create a welcoming environment by respecting your classmates’ and instructor’s learning styles. If you have specific needs for accommodation, please let me know as soon as possible how I can help to make the course more accessible. You can also contact the Office of Disability Services for help finding the accommodations you need.

Punctuality and Deadlines
Completing work punctually is an invaluable skill in academia and most other areas of life. In this course, you are expected to practice that skill by submitting all of your assignments on time. Any major paper turned in late will be marked down one letter grade per 24-hour period. (For example, a paper due Sunday at 5:00 p.m. and submitted Sunday at 10:00 p.m. will be marked down one letter grade.) Shorter written assignments and paper drafts will not receive credit if they are submitted after the deadline.
Academic Integrity

Because integrity is an essential component of good character, we will practice it in this course (and, hopefully, in the rest of our lives and work). Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct constitute a serious breach of the academic community and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

In particular, please make sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid committing plagiarism in your work. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s ideas without proper attribution. If you quote or paraphrase material from anyone else—whether you copied words directly from a text, remembered a concept from something you read, heard an idea from a friend, etc.—you must cite your source accurately and in full.¹ If you have the slightest hint of a question about how to cite someone’s idea properly, please talk to me before turning in your work. I will be happy to help you!

¹ This section on academic integrity borrows ideas and language from Anne Curzan and Robin Queen at the University of Michigan, as well as Wendy Hyman at Oberlin College.
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Sun., 4/19  Film screening: Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*

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