

# ENGL 365 | Medieval Object Ecologies

Dr. Myra Seaman | Fall 2014

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### **CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION [15% of course grade]**

10% for daily in-class participation [including 1 required out-of-class meeting]

5% for daily in-class writing

An important feature of the experience of this course will be your ongoing conversation with your peers and with the scholars whose work we will be engaging. The course schedule and assignments will, to some extent, structure the discussion that we have in this class, but how that discussion happens and the various directions it takes are determined by you, collectively. This, needless to say, requires your active presence and engaged participation in the discussion each class meeting. Don't imagine yourself preparing to come to class to respond to my questions and prompts, but instead come prepared to influence the direction of the discussion yourself. Your texts should be filled with your notes and responses before you arrive, and you should have generated some questions and comments that you think might encourage productive conversation in class. Ideally, I should be able to participate in the daily discussion to the same extent that each of you does.

A completely optional opportunity for the class will be the three "after-parties" where those who are available and interested will head out in the evening for some food and drink and relaxation

together, to extend our classroom experiences and relationships beyond the confines of Maybank.

Before coming to class each day, you should do the following:

- **Read** the assigned material listed on the schedule.
- **Respond:** Read the two blog questions for that day, select one, and post your response ([see details below](#)).
- **Prepare for textual engagement in class:** Bring to class the book(s) from which you did the day's reading.
- **Prepare to write in class:** [Be ready to write for 7 minutes](#) at the start of class. Preparation should be mental and physical, with pen and paper or, alternatively, with a laptop or tablet from which you can submit your response to me immediately on OAKS.

I realize that there may come a time when you will need to miss class. My compromise: you are granted three absences for the semester, no questions asked (I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences). Beginning with your 4th absence, you will lose 5% of your course grade—that is, one half of a letter grade—*per absence*. If you miss a class, you are responsible for that day's work, including turning in (on time) any work due, understanding assignments, and getting the gist of class discussion. Needless to say, if you're not in class, you're not accruing participation points. Make sure you are in class, ready to begin discussion, when class is scheduled to start. Because I take roll at the very beginning of class, tardiness gets recorded as absence unless you approach me after class to confirm your attendance.

**In-class writing:** At the start of each class, you will perform informal writing in response to a question I will present on the day's assigned reading. You will have 7 minutes to respond to the question. Your main goal will be to call on your recollection of the reading (these will *not* be open-book) to respond directly and specifically, demonstrating your understanding of what you read. These daily writings will get your thoughts flowing for the day's classroom discussion. While the *blog comments* are aimed at encouraging discussion *outside of class*, the *in-class writing* is aimed at encouraging discussion *in class*.

In-class writing will be graded the same way the blog comments are graded (see below). Only I will see your timed in-class writings, which will provide me a good sense of the class' progress throughout the semester and allow me to better help you all through the course material.

For both blog comments and in-class writings, if you'd like to improve the quality of your responses (and of your grade), please see me during office hours for personal assistance.

**Required meeting:** Many of you will find yourselves coming to meet with me regularly outside of class, but for those of you who wouldn't automatically do so, I am requiring an out-of-class meeting early in the semester so you can discover how painless and even—if I do say so myself—enjoyable it is. As part of your in-class participation for the course, you will need to meet with

me by September 15. The meeting is informal and has no specific content. Simply show up and chat with me for 10-15 minutes. This can happen spontaneously during my office hours (office hours: TR 11-12 & R 3-4). If those windows don't suit your schedule, then you'll need to email me to arrange an alternative meeting time. Consider this meeting a substitute for the days I need to miss class for a conference.

### **BLOG PARTICIPATION [15% of course grade]**

12% for daily posts, 3% for scheduled questions

**Blog questions + comments:** Before every class for which you are assigned a reading, you will post a response on the course blog. Most weeks, this will mean you will post twice: before Tuesday's class, and before Thursday's class. Frequent and informal student writing has a number of goals:

- to prepare everyone for a productive in-class discussion of the material;
- to encourage both written and spoken informal discussion of the material;
- to allow for those who are less active in-class participants the opportunity to participate in alternate ways;
- to provide low-stakes opportunities for students to experiment with a range of types of written responses to the material.

Here's how the blog post system works: Each week, two students will be in the driving seat, posting a question to suit each day's reading. (See instructions below.) The questions must be posted 24 hours (or more) before the class meeting. This means for the week you are the question-poser, you will need to do the reading well in advance.

**Blog questions:** Each week, 2 students will be responsible for posting to the blog a question on each day's reading for all of the other students in class to respond to. Such questions should not have a single, "correct" answer. Instead, they should offer students the chance to discuss further an idea or issue raised in the reading, more like a prompt you would have for an essay assignment. All students in class will respond to just two questions, so each question will need to offer many possible responses.

I recommend each question consist of 2-3 sentences: the first one making clear the subject matter (the central issue or concept that the question focuses on), and the next sentence or two presenting the question clearly. Further, the question should not simply ask for student opinion in general, but should instead require respondents to interpret and analyze the text in order to respond. If our subject matter for class happened to be, for instance, the short poem "I never saw a purple cow. I never hope to see one. But I can tell you anyhow, I'd rather see than be one," unproductive questions would be, "Why did the poet choose to make the cow purple?" or "Would *you* rather be or see a purple cow?" These simply ask for student opinion in general, rather than encouraging detailed analysis. A productive question would ask, instead, "What kinds of cultural values does this poem pass on to the young audience it addresses?" or "What does

the ‘anyhow’ seem to add to the meaning of the poem—that is, how is it more than filler added to maintain the beat of the poem’s meter?” Successful blog questions might also draw students’ attention to confusing or ambiguous parts of the reading and seek clarification. Your questions will be graded based on how well they encourage a range of student responses (which depends on their being expressed clearly, needless to say).

**Blog comments:** When you are not scheduled to ask a question, you will select one of the two questions posted for each class and produce a response to that before coming to class. You will always have at least 24 hours to do this. Your response should take the form of a comment.

These responses should be 4-6 sentences long. Your comment should respond directly to the question and will be even more successful if it directs readers’ attention in new directions. This means you will need to read others’ responses before writing and posting your own. You will often find that your own response winds up responding not only to the original question but to the comments others have made. (This also means that the sooner you post, the less likely you are to find someone already having written what you would like to.) To receive credit, your comment:

1. must not repeat what someone has already said in a comment and
2. must make at least one specific reference to the reading on which the question is based (for instance, a direct quote of at least 2 words but no more than a complete sentence, with the line number [for a poem] or page number [for anything not a poem] listed in parentheses afterwards).

A successful response to the first appropriate question on the purple cow poem might be something like:

The repetition of the “I,” which is the subject for each verb, makes readers focus on the speaker, whose attitude toward purple cows is thus emphasized. When the speaker says, “I can tell you anyhow,” the audience is expected to care about the speaker’s values, and the speaker’s resistance to purple cows seems to value the “normal,” the “natural,” the way things are. The speaker wouldn’t even like to see such a thing, much less be so abnormal.

Blog **questions** *will* receive specific comments from me as part of the grading process. Daily blog **comments** will receive *only* a grade.

(For some help with the logistics of blogging, see [Get Blogging!](#))

### **CRITICAL WRITING [40% of course grade]**

10% for short midterm paper

30% for final project, which includes:

5% for annotated bibliography

3% for research paper proposal

1% for research paper draft

6% for creative project

15% for final research paper

The critical writing projects are different from the daily informal blog writing: in each project, you will present your ideas in much more depth, and with much more forethought, than you will generally do on the blog. You will receive detailed assignment instructions later in the semester. I will grade these critical writing projects in terms of grammar, style, and structure as well as in terms of analytical content. I'm always happy to discuss your ideas and implementation with you, so please make use of my office hours (and, of course, the Writing Lab).

Since the deadlines for formal written work are so clearly spelled out on the syllabus, late projects will not be accepted except in very extraordinary circumstances. Due dates for the critical writing projects are days when our class does not meet; these papers will be due at 11 p.m., in OAKS, on the indicated date.

### **EXAMS [30% of course grade]**

You will take two exams—a midterm (15%) and a final (15%), part of which will be cumulative. I will provide exam structure guides and study guides for each exam.

### **RESOURCES**

Office hours are reserved for you to drop in as suits your schedule, to discuss your writing and/or the course: T 11-12, R 3-4. Should that not work with your schedule, please email me to arrange an alternative time. Emailing is the most efficient way to communicate with me outside of class; I would discourage contacting me by phone except during office hours.

[The Writing Lab](#) is located on the first floor of Addlestone Library, within the Center for Student Learning. Here you will find many resources for your writing (for this and other classes): handouts, reference books, sample bibliographies, and consultants who have been trained to assist you in generating materials for your essay, organizing your ideas and materials, revising and editing your writing, and any step in the writing process. You can find information, including hours and schedule, at the link above.

Academic accommodation for a documented disability can be arranged through the [Center for Disability Services](#): (843) 953-1431, Lightsey Center, Suite 104. If you are approved for accommodations, you should let me know as soon as possible so we can organize appropriate arrangements.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All students, needless to say, must follow the College of Charleston's academic integrity policy, which forbids cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism. Any case of suspected cheating or plagiarism (on any written response for the course) will be sent to the College's Honor Board, and any student found guilty will receive a grade of XF, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty.

"Recycled" papers written for other courses are not acceptable in this class.

College of Charleston Honor Code and Academic Integrity, from the [Student Handbook](#):

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration—working together without permission—is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

## GRADING SCALE

A	94-100	4.0
A-	90-93	3.7
B+	87-89	3.3
B	84-86	3.0

B-	80-83	2.7
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C+	77-79	2.3
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C	74-76	2.0
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C-	70-73	1.7
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D+	67-69	1.3
<hr/>		
D	64-66	1.0
<hr/>		
D-	60-63	0.7
<hr/>		
F	0-59	0.0
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