

English Literature from the Medieval Period and Humanism

Code: 106299
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
English Studies	OB	3

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

Students who take this subject are expected to have passed the first-year subject "Història i Cultura de les Illes Britàniques" and also to have a knowledge of English corresponding to the C1 and the C2 levels of English (advanced) of the Common European framework of the Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment, on the basis of which the student can express him or herself adequately, that is fluently and with some precision, both in contributing to discussion and offering presentations in class and in writing academic texts.

Objectives and Contextualisation

This subject offers a comprehensive introduction to the main genres of English literature from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. As such, it is based on detailed critical and textual analysis of some key texts written in the period. It also seeks to familiarize students with current trends in the critical reception of this literary corpus. In successfully completing the course, students will acquire the following skills:

Read and write about English medieval literature in a sufficiently sophisticated way to do justice to its complexities and subtleties.

Enrich their conception of the main literary genres and their uses in medieval and early modern England.

Improve their understanding of the intersection between literary text, historical context, and cultural values.

Learn how to take advantage of the resources of a modern university library to interpret and write about pre- and early-modern literary texts.

Competences

- Act with ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights and duties, diversity and democratic values.
- Apply scientific ethical principles to information processing.
- Demonstrate skills to work autonomously and in teams to fulfil the planned objectives.

- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Use digital tools and specific documentary sources for the collection and organisation of information.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analyse the fundamental aspects of ethical conduct and the challenges this poses to a culturally diverse environment.
2. Apply the work-organisation methodologies acquired to individual and group-based professional tasks.
3. Integrate knowledge and information from academic sources consulted for written work, citing, referencing and paraphrasing correctly.
4. Locate and organise relevant English-language information available on the internet, databases and libraries, and apply this to work and/or research environments.
5. Organise the autonomous component to the learning process in an effective manner.
6. Rigorously approach the values conveyed by the texts analysed, carrying out constructive criticism.
7. Understand the fundamental aspects of the rights and duties that construct values in a democratic society.

Content

1. *Orígens de la Literatura Anglesa* provides an introduction to the most significant literary genres of the Middle Ages and early modern period in England. It focusses on a reading of literary texts in historical context which takes into account the complex interaction between literature, culture and society.
2. This subject is indispensable to complete the undergraduate curriculum in the history of English literature.
3. On successfully completing *Orígens de la Literatura Anglesa*, students will be able to:
 - a) show good reading comprehension skills in both poetry and prose of the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period;
 - b) develop basic literary criticism skills through essays and class presentations;
 - c) be able to use the library resources as applied to this subject matter.

SYLLABUS

Unit 1: The origins and development of the Arthurian Romance: a reading of *Perceval* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Unit 2: Geoffrey Chaucer and narrative poetry: the *Canterbury Tales*.

Unit 3: Humanism and Reformation: Thomas More's *Utopia* and selected religious writing.

Unit 4: Renaissance Poetry: sonnet sequences (Wyatt, Howard, Sidney and Spenser)

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Practical classes (close reading)	20	0.8	6, 1, 7

Theoretical component (lectures)	30	1.2	6, 4
Type: Supervised			
Class discussion and debates	10	0.4	6, 4, 5
Type: Autonomous			
Reading	35	1.4	3, 4, 5
Study	30	1.2	3, 5

This subject seeks to combine conventional methodologies associated with the theoretical dimension of the course (lectures) with more dynamic approaches to the literary text that encourage students to get actively involved with class activities (group discussion and debate). Thus, the principal learning strategies will be as follows:

- Introducing the background to each of the main units covered in class (lectures)
- Critical and textual analysis involving the active participation of the students
- Class debates which reflect and stimulate diverging interpretations of the text
- Critical writing that synthesises the acquired knowledge and demonstrates the acquired skills

Please note that, within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

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Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Class participation	10%	5	0.2	6, 1, 2, 7
Exam 1	45%	10	0.4	6, 4, 5
Exam 2	45%	10	0.4	3, 4, 5

Erasmus students wishing to bring forward an exam or any other type of assessment activity must present the teacher with an official document from their home university.

ASSESSMENT of this course is based on the following percentages:

- Exam 1 = 45%
- Exam 2 = 45%
- Attendance and participation in class discussion, debates and other class activities = 10%

NB: Group discussion will be normal practice in this subject and students will be expected actively to contribute to class discussions.

Exam 1 will cover Units I and II; exam 2 Units III and IV. Exact dates for all evaluation activities will be confirmed at the start of the course by means of a course calendar published on the class Moodle.

The student's command of English will be taken into account when marking all exercises. It will count as 25% of the exam mark and will be assessed as follows:

- Grammar (morphology and syntax): 30%
- Vocabulary (accuracy and variety): 15%
- Cohesion (among sentences and paragraphs): 15%
- Organization (sound argumentation of ideas): 20%
- Style (expression and register): 15%
- Spelling: 5

Please note that

- The minimum pass mark is 5 for all exams and activities. Students who have failed one of the two exams but passed the other will have the opportunity of a resit examination ("recuperació"). In this case, the maximum final grade will be 5. Students who fail one of the two exams will have to retake it in order to pass the subject, even if their provisional average mark were 5 or higher. Students who fail one of the two exams will have to retake it in order to pass the subject, even if their provisional average mark were 5 or higher.
- All the subjects in this degree follow continuous assessment.
- All the exercises are compulsory.
- Students who take only one of the exams will fail the subject ('Suspens') and an 'NA' ('no avaluable' or 'no evidence') final grade will not be an option (see section below).
- The minimum mark for an exercise or exam to be considered for the average final mark is 3,5, although the minimum pass mark for the whole subject is 5.

NOT-ASSESSED AS FINAL GRADE: Students who submit more than 1/3 of the assessment items will be unable to obtain a "Not assessed/Not submitted" final course grade.

RE-ASSESSMENT: Students who fail the two exams are not eligible for re-assessment. Students who fail one of the two exams must retake it even if their provisional final grade were 5 or higher. Students who retake an exam will obtain a maximum final grade of 5. Students who have passed both exams cannot retake any of them in order to upgrade their marks.

Students will obtain a "Not assessed/Not submitted" course grade unless they have submitted more than 1/3 of the assessment items.

EXAM REVIEW: Students have a right to review their exercises with the teacher in a personal tutorial, on the set dates, never later than 2 weeks after the exercise/exam is marked, including re-assessment. Students forfeit this right if they fail to collect the exercise/exam within the period established by the teacher. On carrying out each evaluation activity, lecturers will inform students (on Moodle) of the procedures to be followed for reviewing all grades awarded, and the date on which such a review will take place.

SINGLE-ASSESSMENT OPTION: Students will be assessed on the basis of the following items:

- (1) An exam covering Units I and II that will take place in class on the same day on which the rest of the class takes examen 2 (50% of the final grade).
- (2) An essay about Units III and IV to be submitted on the day when the exam takes place (40% of the final grade). Instructions will be available on Moodle.
- (3) Class attendance and participation (10% of the final grade).

The same re-assessment method as in the case of continuous assessment will be used.

PLAGIARISM: In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject.

Irregularities refer, for instance, to copying in an exam, copying from sources without indicating authorship, or a misuse of AI such as presenting work as original that has been generated by an AI tool or programme. These evaluation activities will not be re-assessed.

Bibliography

USA OF AI (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE) TOOLS IS NOT ALLOWED IN THIS SUBJECT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE. ANY EXERCISE THAT INCLUDES FRAGMENTS OF THIS KIND WILL BE COUNTED AS A FAIL (0), NOT EXCLUDING OTHER CONSEQUENCES.

The following editions of the primary texts are recommended and will be used in class:

Helen Cooper (ed.), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, trans. by Keith Harrison, Oxford World's Classics, OUP, 2008.

Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. by Dominic Baker-Smith, Penguin Classics, Penguin Books, 2012.

UNIT 1 Chivalric romance: *The Story of the Grail* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Optional further reading: *Lancelot du Lac*, *Queste du Graal*, *La Morte D'Arthur* by Thomas Malory (1485).

UNIT 2 The poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales* (in particular, General Prologue, and The Miller's Tales. Optional further reading: *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Parlyament of Fowles*.

UNIT 3 Humanism and the Reformation. *Utopia* by Thomas More (1516); Selected texts from "Faith in Conflict", Norton Anthology I. Optional further reading: *A Dialogue of Comfort* by Thomas More (1534).

UNIT 4 Renaissance poetry. Selected sonnets by Thomas Wyatt, Isabella Whitney, Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser. Optional further reading: *A Defence of Poetry* by Sir Philip Sidney (1595); *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* by Edmund Spenser (1595)

Websites

The Internet Medieval Sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>

English Literature on the Web: <http://www.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EngLit.html> - The Norton Online: <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/>

Other recommended texts:

Aers, David (ed.), *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. David Aers, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

Boitani, Piero and Jill Mann, (eds), *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Glasscoe, Marion, *English Medieval Mystics*, (London: Longman, 1993).

Jost, Jean A., *Middle English Arthurian Romances: A Reference Guide*, (Boston, 1986).

Krueger, Roberta L., (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

Easting, Robert, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English*, (Rochester, NY, 1997).

Levi, Anthony. *Renaissance and Reformation: Intellectual Genesis*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

Mahoney, Dhira, (ed.), *The Grail: A Casebook*, ed. Dhira Mahoney (New York and London: Garland, 2000).

Mann, Jill. *Feminizing Chaucer*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2002).

Norbrook, David (ed.) *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse*, (London: Penguin, 2005).

Wallace, David, *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

Software

No specific software is required

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(PAUL) Classroom practices	2	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	2	English	first semester	morning-mixed