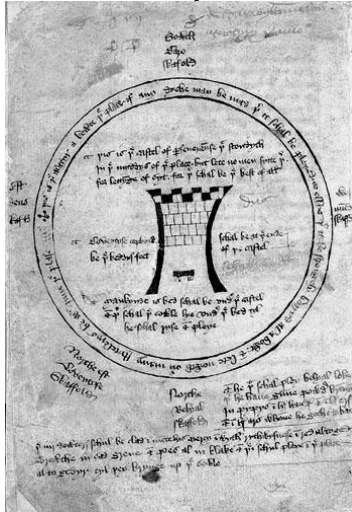


ENGLISH 312: Medieval Drama Course Syllabus



**The Castle of Perseverance (ca.1440) Folger MS V.a.354
(Image Credit: The Folger Shakespeare Library 2002)**

Instructor: C. Fee
Meeting Time: MWF 1:10-2:00
Meeting Place: Breidenbaugh 209
Office: Breidenbaugh 406
Office Hours: MWF 2:00 PM-3:00 PM, and by appointment
Office Phone: x6762
Home Phone: 528-4799 (Call before 10:00 pm)
E-mail: cfee@gettysburg.edu
Peer Learning Associate: Laura Rogers
E-mail: rogela03@gettysburg.edu
Cell Phone: 484.695.0034

Required Texts:

Beadle, Richard, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
Bevington, David, ed. *Medieval Drama*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1975.

Course Objectives and Structure:

Medieval Drama: the summer-stock theater of late Medieval Europe! Once considered merely the poor (and distant!) relation of Shakespearean Theater, Medieval drama has now emerged as a vibrant field of study in its own right. We will explore conflicting theories concerning the origin and development of Medieval drama, examine its social roles, discuss issues of text and performance, and compare the relative merits of “good literature” and “good drama”. We will read examples drawn from a variety of genres of drama, and we will view performances of several plays on videotape and DVD. This course will combine classroom lecture and discussion, independent research, a great deal of collaborative work, and the staging of a Medieval play. As they were generally held outdoors, Medieval productions were staged at Whitsuntide (read: “around midsummer”), both because the weather was nicer and due to the length of the day. We will continue in this tradition by staging our own version of a side-splitting yet thought-provoking production during the final week of the term; this year’s hilarious theme is *memento mori*! *The Castle of Perseverance* is a play about the struggle between good and evil within the individual soul, but with a twist: It’s a battle royale with no-holds-barred, complete with preaching angels and farting devils, and the Seven Deadly Sins march to war with the Seven Cardinal Virtues at the very gates of the Castle of the Soul. It’s a fight to the death like you’ve never seen before! Book your tickets now!

Course Requirements and Assignments:

Daily Preparation & Participation:	10%
Group Presentation & Short Individual Paper:	10%
Short Thematic Paper:	15%
Final Synthesis Paper:	10%
Participation in Production:	20%
Midterm Exam:	15%
Final Exam:	<u>20%</u>
	100%

ALL ASPECTS of this course must be completed in order to pass the course, regardless of the overall percentage earned.

Preparation & Participation:

You are expected to be present, prepared, and ready to participate in each and every class period. Some find participating in class discussions to be fun and easy, while others find it threatening and uncomfortable. You need not be a big talker to do well in this class (although it usually doesn't hurt!), but you **do** need to be prepared to answer an occasional question, articulate intelligent confusion, or voice the odd query (about the subject matter at hand rather than, say, grading procedures!). This class also requires a great deal of group work and the collaborative class activity of putting on a play; full participation in all required activities is presupposed.

Group Presentation & Papers:

We all will participate in the final production of our play at the end of the term, but rehearsals and performances make up only a part of the work that goes into any theatrical production. In order to tackle successfully the task of producing a Medieval play, we will divide into a number of groups, each of which will be responsible for a particular set of preliminary activities and functions. These groups will include the following: 1) Scenery/Staging and Final DVD production and copying; 2) Props and Costumes and Webpage Construction; 3) Translation and Filming of Final Production on Digital Video; 4) Direction and Final Editing of Digital Video in preparation for DVD production. These groups will be responsible for researching and implementing their aspects of the production, and each member will write a short (4-6 page) paper describing his or her personal portion of the research and final product. Each group also will give a detailed report to the class; this report should take the form of a slideshow or webpage, complete with pictures and suitable for inclusion on our course webpage.

Short Thematic Paper:

Any examination concerning the nature of good and evil and the battle for the soul of the individual raises a number of fruitful thematic questions, both about Medieval drama and audiences and about our own 21st century perceptions of these issues; this is perhaps more evident than usual in this particular election cycle. Indeed, one could clearly envision a staging of the *Castle of Perseverance* as a spoof of the political process; a less global approach might see in the play an early pre-cursor for a teen comedy such as *Saved*, which likewise is concerned with the confusing path to personal redemption. A more somber possibility might be the battle to save the environment from the threat of global warming, while a still darker vision might recast the play in the garb of the War on Terror. Drawing such imperfect parallels is a process fraught with perils, to be sure, but it is important that we attempt to identify that Medieval material which speaks most eloquently to Modern concerns. To this end, you are to research and to write a 6-8 page paper comparing and contrasting the concerns and approach of *The Castle of Perseverance* with any recent film or documentary which seems to you to deal with similar themes. This paper should draw upon several (3-5) published reviews and critiques of your chosen film from major news sources, as well as a like number (that is, another 3-5) of critical articles on Medieval Drama in general and/or on *The Castle of Perseverance* in particular. We'll discuss appropriate sources in class. No more than a third of this essay should comprise necessary plot summary; the balance should represent a serious attempt to find common ground between Medieval and Modern concerns. Critical analysis calls for sensitivity, to be sure, but it also demands a rigorous attempt to interrogate our own preconceptions, as well as those of others; take this opportunity to say something substantial about the subtexts (Medieval and Modern) of dramatic attempts to deal with larger moral issues.

Final Synthesis Paper:

Your final paper will give you an opportunity to explore the significance of your role within the larger framework of the production, and to discuss how your experiences relate to and differ from those of Medieval participants in such plays. In other words, why do we put on such a production, what might be learned from such an endeavor generally, and what did you, specifically, get out of your participation? This paper thus will blend the results of scholarly research with those of practical experience. This paper need not be long, but drawing as it does upon two very important resources, I expect it to be 4-6 pages in length.

Participation in the Production:

Participation in the production is a fundamental component of the course. This participation should be interesting and fun, but it also requires extracurricular commitment in the form of rehearsal time, personal time devoted to memorizing lines, time and energy spent tracking down props and costume parts, etc. This class will be a lot of fun, but don't take it if you can't commit the extra time and energy.

Exams:

There will be two exams, each of which will combine short-answer identification of key terms and concepts with essay questions. The purpose of the exams is to give you an opportunity to display how well you have absorbed the reading and discussion material. I will distribute extremely detailed review guidelines closer to the dates of the exams.

Syllabus and Schedule Subject to Change

ENGLISH 312: Medieval Drama
Course Schedule

Reading assignments are in **Bold Face**

Reading Assignments should be completed **before** the class period for which they are listed.

- F 1/18: Introduction to Course. Discuss Syllabus & Assignments.
- M 1/21: Introduction to Medieval languages; how to read Middle English. **Bevington** xvii-xxii.
- W 1/23: Introduction to Medieval Drama: **Bevington** 3-8; **Plays** A1-A8.
- F 1/25: Tenth-Century Versions of the Visit to the Sepulchre: **Bevington** 21-24; **Plays** B9-B12.
- Beadle** Chapter 1: Introduction.
- M 1/28: Early Easter Drama: **Bevington** 31-33; **Plays** C13-C16. VIDEO: *Quem Queritis?*
- W 1/30: The Evolution of Christmas Drama: **Bevington** 51-55; **Plays** D17-D19.
- F 2/1: Twelfth-Century Church Drama: **Bevington** 75-80; **Play** 1 (*Adam*). **Beadle** Chapter 2: Theatricality.
- M 2/4: Twelfth-Century Church Drama: **Bevington** 137-138; **Play** 3 (*Daniel*).
- W 2/6: Twelfth-Century Church Drama: **Bevington** 202-203; **Play** 8 (*Passion*). TODAY IS ASH WEDNESDAY: THE FIRST DAY OF LENT. *Memento Mori!* What better day?
- F 2/8: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 227-241; **Play** *The Banns* (N Town). **Beadle** Chapter 6: The N-Town Plays.
- M 2/11: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 274-275; **Play** *The Killing of Abel* (Wakefield).
- W 2/13: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 308; **Play** *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (Brome). VIDEO: *Abraham and Isaac*.
- F 2/15: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 383-384; **Play** *The Second Shepherds' Pageant* (Wakefield). **Beadle** Chapter 5: The Towneley Cycle.
- M 2/18: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Play** *The Second Shepherds' Pageant* (Wakefield). VIDEO: *The Second Shepherds' Pageant*.
- W 2/20: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 409; **Play** *The Offering of the Magi* (Wakefield).
- F 2/22: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 437; **Play** *Herod the Great* (Wakefield).
- M 2/25: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 569; **Play** *The Crucifixion of Christ* (York). **Beadle** Chapter 3: The York Cycle.
- W 2/27: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 580; **Play** *Christ's Death and Burial* (York). VIDEO: From *The Passion*.
- F 2/29: The Corpus Christi Cycle: **Bevington** 637-638; **Play** *The Last Judgment* (Wakefield).
- M 3/3-F 3/7: **NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK**
- M 3/10: **MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE.** **Play** *Noah* (Wakefield). VIDEO: GB 1999 *Noah*. Watch Toronto *Noah* video on reserve.
- W 3/12: Morality Plays: **Bevington** 791-795 & 796-799; **Play** *The Castle of Perseverance*.
- F 3/14: Morality Plays: **Play** *The Castle of Perseverance*. **Beadle** Chapter 9: Morality Plays.
- M 3/17: Read-through: *The Castle of Perseverance*.
- W 3/19: **SHORT THEMATIC PAPER DUE.** Read-through: *The Castle of Perseverance*
- F 3/21-M 3/24: **NO CLASS: EASTER BREAK**
- W 3/26: **SCRIPT DUE FROM TRANSLATION GROUP:** Read-through: Script. **FULL OUT-OF-CLASS REHEARSALS BEGIN.**
- F 3/28: Read-through: Script.
- M 3/31: Saints' Plays: **Bevington** 661-665; **Play** *The Conversion of St. Paul* (Digby).
- W 4/2: Saints' Plays: **Play** *The Conversion of St. Paul* (Digby). **Beadle** Chapter 10: Saints' Plays.
- F 4/4: **Beadle** Chapter 11: Modern Productions; **Xerox** Peter Meredith.
- M 4/7: Xerox Readings TBA by Translation Group.
- W 4/9: **PRESENTATION:** Translation Group.
- F 4/11: Xerox Readings TBA by Direction Group.
- M 4/14: **PRESENTATION:** Direction Group.
- W 4/16: Xerox Readings TBA by Staging Group.
- F 4/18: **PRESENTATION:** Staging Group.
- M 4/21: Xerox Readings TBA by Costuming Group. **T-SHIRTS DUE.**
- W 4/23: **PRESENTATION:** Costuming Group.
- F 4/25: **IN-CLASS REHEARSAL. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE DUE.**
- M 4/28: **IN-CLASS DRESS REHEARSAL. PRODUCTION PROGRAMS DUE.**

W 4/30: IN-CLASS DRESS REHEARSAL

TH 5/1: **(MONDAY SCHEDULE)** IN-CLASS DRESS REHEARSAL

F 5/2: **NO CLASS: FINAL PRODUCTION**

FINAL SYNTHESIS PAPER DUE THE MONDAY AFTER THE PRODUCTION

FINAL EXAMINATION IN DESIGNATED SLOT