# HL4015: ADVANCED MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

## *MAGIC, SCIENCE, AND MEDICINE IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE*

Katherine Hindley
khindley@ntu.edu.sg
HSS 03-77

Seminar: Wednesdays, 1430-1730, LHS-TR+68
Office hours by appointment

It's the year 1300, and you have leprosy. What do you do? Do you go to the doctor and eat the herbs he gives you? Do you go to a church and pray for a miracle? What if the doctor told you to pick the herbs by the light of the waning moon and sing charms over them? Would it be medicine or magic? Does it matter?

In this course we will explore medieval literary texts that deal with the themes of magic, science, and medicine. In order to contextualise what we read, we will also examine historical sources and digital facsimiles of medieval manuscripts. We will think about topics including the rationality of magic, the role of healing miracles, the fine line between magic and the university sciences, and the persecution of witches.

This course aims to teach you to analyse medieval literature in its historical context, by examining primary and secondary source material. You will also engage critically with literary debates. You will be able to pursue your own research questions, adding your voices to scholarly debates. This course will use of a number of digitised manuscripts: in order to view them, please bring a laptop or similar device to class.

Middle English texts will be read in the original language.

**Course Text:**

> Kieckhefer, Richard. *Magic in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.  Also available online through NTU Library.

Other readings will be available online or through NTULearn.

A (non-comprehensive!) bibliography of suggested further readings, academic databases, and tips for writing about medieval sources is available here.

**Assessment:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Essay   (3,000-3,500 words) | 50% |
| Presentations, including a poster session | 30% |
| Participation, including two short papers (500 words) | 20% |

Short Paper 1
Short Paper 2

The essay should be a substantial, polished, and fully referenced research paper, examining both primary and secondary sources and engaging critically with relevant scholarly debates.  It should make a clear and well-argued claim that is supported by close reading of the text and of relevant outside sources.  All paragraphs should be related to this topic and follow a coherent, persuasive structure.  As the major written assignment for this course, your essay will be submitted through Turnitin.  You must include proper academic references to all your sources.

You will present in class on the literary texts and historical sources under discussion, situating them within the broader academic field.  You will also present your own research in progress at a mock conference poster session.

The participation grade will reflect your commitment to the class as evidenced by attendance, preparation of readings, contribution to discussions, productive responses to others' ideas, and short written assignments.  Read the assigned texts thoroughly, keeping in mind the guiding questions and making notes as you go. Note questions and problems that occur to you, and be ready to share these ideas in class.

**Course Policies:**

Attendance and Participation: the success of any seminar depends on the active participation of all its members.  Barring illness or emergencies, you must attend every seminar.  You must arrive on time, having done the required readings and any assigned work, and be ready to participate in the class discussion.   Failure to do so will reduce your participation grade significantly.  If you need to miss a class you must get in touch with me *before* that week's meeting.

Late Work and Extensions: if your essay is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for each day that it is overdue (i.e. a paper that would have received a B will receive a B-).  No work will be accepted more than seven days late.   Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, including documented illness or   genuine emergency.

Seeking Help Outside Class: you are encouraged to use any form of legitimate aid to help you write papers and research topics that interest you.  Obvious

sources of legitimate assistance include me, the coaches at the LCC Communication Cube, and the subject librarians at the library.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: don't do it!  If I find that you have misrepresented someone else's work as your own you will fail the assignment and possibly the course.  If you are unsure of how or when to cite a source, please ask me or refer to the university's academic integrity resources [online](online).

Generative AI: generative AI (such as ChatGPT) is not designed for research and is inclined to make things up.  If you intend to use generative AI for your work in *any* capacity, you must get written permission from me first.  You must follow the university's prevailing policies about how to acknowledge the use of generative AI in your work.  Although it can be a useful tool, you must not use it to replace your own thinking or learning.

## Questions?

Feel free to come to me if you have any questions!  Most importantly, if you feel that you're falling behind in the course for any reason, please talk to me.  The sooner we discuss any obstacles to your success in this class, the more likely it is that we will be able to fix them.



**COURSE SCHEDULE**

### 1. Introduction to Magic, Science, and Medicine (16 August)

Questions: *What are we talking about when we talk about magic, science, and medicine and the relationship between them (or lack thereof)? What sort of questions can we answer when we study medieval depictions of magic and medicine? How does Pliny distinguish magic from science?*

- Jacalyn Duffin, 'The Doctor was Surprised, or How to Diagnose a Miracle'. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 81, no. 4 (2007): 699-729.
- Richard Kieckhefer, 'The Romance of Magic in Courtly Culture'. In *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 95-115. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 30, chs 1-8 and any five other remedies that strike your fancy.

Please read these texts before class.

### 2. Late Antiquity and its Influence (23 August)

Questions: *What traditions of magic and ideas about the natural world were circulating in the period before the Middle Ages? How far do these ideas and sources lay the groundwork for medieval developments?*

- Richard Kieckhefer. 'The Common Tradition of Medieval Magic'. In *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 56-94. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- I Samuel 28 (The Witch of Endor). Use Douay-Rheims version.
- Extracts from the Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament (stanzas 592-5).
- From the 'Sorcery and Witchcraft' section in Book 6 of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, read the introduction (ll.1261-1390), the Tale of Ulysses and Telegonus (ll.1391-1788), and the Tale of Saul and the Witch (ll.2384-2400).

### 3. Medicine, Miracle, and Magic (30 August)

Questions: *How and to what degree are medicine, miracle, and magic distinguished? Were they hostile to one another? How do we know? Is this relationship consistent in this week's article and primary sources?*

- Richard Kieckhefer, 'The Classical Inheritance'. In *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 19-42.
- Valerie Flint. 'The Early Medieval 'Medicus,' the Saint - and the Enchanter'. *Social History of Medicine* 2, no. 2 (1989): 127-45.
- Ælfric of Eynsham, 'The Passion of St Bartholomew the Apostle' (read in modern English translation).
- Extracts from *The Siege of Jerusalem*. Read the section 'Overview of the Poem' from the introduction to Michael Livingston's edition for TEAMS Middle English Texts Series. Read ll.1-188 and 801-868 (or more, if you'd like)!
- Selection of miracle accounts.
- Thomas Fayreford (fl. 1400-1450), amulet for epilepsy (p.195).

### 4. Magic in Medieval Romance (6 September)

Questions: *How did medieval authors represent magic and the users of magic? What different kinds of magic appear?*

- *Amoryus and Cleopes* (ll.430-688, 1807-2100).
- *Sir Orfeo*.

## 5. Speech and the Power of Words (13 September)
**Short paper (500 words) due by e-mail before class**

Questions: *How were words used in medieval magic (i.e. as units of meaning, symbols, etc.)? How did they exert magical power?*
- Extracts from Al-Kindi, 'On the Rays of the Stars'
- John 1.1-14. Use the Douay-Rheims version.
- Selection of spoken charms from medieval England.
- Claire Fanger, 'Things done wisely by a wise enchanter: Negotiating the Power of Words in the Thirteenth Century'. *Esoterica* 1 (1999): 97-131.
- Jonathan Roper, 'Towards a Poetics, Rhetorics and Proxemics of Verbal Charms'. *Electronic Journal of Folklore* (2003).

## 6. Text and the Power of Words (20 September)

Questions: *Did books themselves have any power, independent of or in addition to the words on their pages? What kinds of words had power?*

- Extracts from Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* (Bk II, ll.1212-1246; 1303-1351; 1569-1596).
- Extracts from *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Bk 1, ch. 14). Compare this with Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS C 814, fol. 7r in the selection of textual charms.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II.ii, q.96, art. 4.
- Klaassen, Frank. 'The Ars Notoria and the Sworn Book of Honorius.' In *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 89–114. Penn State University Press, 2012.
- Selection of textual charms from medieval England
- Look at digital images and translation of New Haven, Beinecke Library, Takamiya MS 56, a manuscript 'birth girdle', and of New Haven, Beinecke Library, Mellon MS 1, a copy of the *Ars Notoria*. An alternate link to Mellon MS 1 is here; another copy of the text in London, British Library, Sloane MS 1712 is here].

## 7. Medicine in Medieval Romance (27 September)

Questions: *Does medieval romance represent medicine realistically? What do authors gain by including scenes of medical treatment?*

- *Eger and Grime*
- Nancy G. Siraisi, 'Physiological and Anatomical Knowledge'. In *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice*, 78-114. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

**RECESS WEEK**

## 8. Alchemy (11 October)

Questions: *What did the medieval practice of alchemy involve, and what was its relationship to magic and science?*

- Chaucer, 'The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale'

- Lawrence M. Principe. 'Maturity: Medieval Latin *Alchemia*'. In *The Secrets of Alchemy*, 51-82. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Mark J. Bruhn, 'Art, Anxiety, and Alchemy in the 'Canon's Yeoman's Tale''. *Chaucer Review* 33:3 (1999) 288-315.
- Edition and description of the *Ripley Scroll*.

## 9. Technology and Magic (18 October)
### Essay proposal (500 words) due by e-mail before class
Questions: *In what instances and in what ways was technology considered magical? What do the examples considered in this session tell us about medieval explanations of "magical" phenomena?*

- Chaucer, 'The Squire's Tale'.
- Láng, Benedek. 'Natural Magic.' In *Unlocked Books: Manuscripts of Learned Magic in the Medieval Libraries of Central Europe*, 51-78. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.
- Look up images of the *Bellifortis* in the New York Public Library's Digital Gallery.
- William Eamon. 'Technology as Magic in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance'. *Janus* 70 (1983): 171-212.
- We will also think again about *Amoryes and Cleopes*.

## 10. Practitioners (25 October)
Questions: *Who practiced magic and medicine, and where did they learn their arts? How do medicine and literature intersect? Why write medical recipes in verse?*

- Klaassen, Frank. 'English Manuscripts of Magic, 1300-1500.' In *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, edited by Claire Fanger, 3–31. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998.
- Lydgate, *Dietary*
- Henryson, 'Sum practysis of Medecyne'
- Ch. 36 in Henry Lovelich, *The History of the Holy Grail*.
- Nancy G. Siraisi. "Practitioners and Conditions of Practice." In *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice*, 17-47. London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

## 11. Necromancers and Demons (1 November)
Questions: *What was necromancy, and why was it condemned? How would necromancers respond to these accusations, and how could they conceive of their activities as holy? Does the literary stereotype of the necromancer bear any relation to the evidence of magic texts?*

- Kieckhefer. *Magic.* Ch. 7, "Necromancy in the Clerical Underworld," 151-75.
- Chaucer, 'The Franklin's Prologue and Tale'.
- John Lydgate, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* (ll.18471-18924). Alternate link here.
- The story and moral of Emperor Felicianus from the English translation of the *Gesta Romanorum*.

- Necromantic ritual.
- Skim through Kieckhefer, Richard. *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth-Century.* Ch. 6, 'Formulas for Commanding Spirits: Conjurations and Exorcisms,' 126-53. Ch. 7, 'Demons and Daimons: The Spirits Conjured,' 154-69. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

## 12. Research Presentations: Poster Session (8 November)

Bring a physical copy of your poster to class. Please also submit a copy by e-mail.

## 13. Postscript: Witchcraft (15 November)

Questions: *What were witches thought to be, and how was their magic understood to be different from learned magic and necromancy? What similarities and differences are there between the healing practiced here and in the texts we've read before? What else can this trial record tell us as a source?*

- Ford, Dekker, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*.
- Henry Goodcole, 'The wonderfull discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch, late of Edmonton, her conviction and condemnation and Death.'
- Michael D. Bailey, 'From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages.' *Speculum* 76 (2001): 960-90.

*Malleus Maleficarum*, Part I, Question XVI, 'The Foregoing Truths are Set out in Particular, this by a Comparison of the Works of Witches with Other Baleful Superstitions.'

**--- Research Paper due 17 November, 11.59pm ---**