Department of English
Suggested Readings for the Comprehensive Examination
In Medieval Literature and Language
(Revised April 2004)

The Medieval Section’s Comprehensive Examination on medieval literature and language is intended to evaluate your expertise as a professional in medieval studies. Its content does not reflect coursework, but rather demands that the examinee be familiar with the primary texts and current and developing issues in the scholarship. The following is a list of primary authors, works, and a selection of relevant secondary materials, designed to represent the broad concerns of the field. Although exhaustive knowledge is expected in some areas, the examinee should be able to write and converse as a professional in all areas. Our hope is that the student who has mastered these works and can speak and write fluently and cogently about them will do well on the medieval examination.

**Contextual European and Latin Texts** (To be read in translation)

- Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*
- St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions; Selections from City of God; On Christian Doctrine*
- Boccaccio, *Decameron*
- Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*
- Andreas Capellanus, *On Courtly Love*
- Marie de France, *Lais*
- Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*

**Old English—Primary Texts**

- Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
- The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles (compare versions)
- Riddles
- Wulfstan, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*
- Ælfric: selections from *Homilies* and *Catholic Homilies*, *Lives of the Saints*, *Colloquy on the Occupations*
- *Anonymous homilies* (Blickling or Vercelli)
- Alfred’s translation and preface of Pope Gregory’s “Pastoral Care”


- *Dream of the Rood*
- *Judith*
- *Battle of Maldon*
- *The Wanderer*
- *The Seafarer*
- *The Ruin*
- *Genesis A and B*
- *Exodus*
- *Juliana*

**Old English—Secondary Works**


**Middle English — Primary Texts**
King Horn
Havelock the Dane
Sir Orfeo
Harley Lyrics, selected
*Wynner and Wastour
Parlement of the Thre Ages
Ancrene Riwle
The Book of Margery Kempe*. Ed. Barry Windeatt
Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*
The “Katherine Group”
*Mandelville’s Travels*. Ed. M. C. Seymour
*Middle English Political Writings*. Ed. James M. Dean
Piers Plowman, William Langland, B-text Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt
Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, *Pearl, Cleanness, Patience*
Thomas Malory, *Morte D’arthur*
John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*
John Lydgate, selected verse
Thomas Hoccleve, selected verse
Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid*

**Middle English — Drama**
Selections from Wakefield Master, Chester and York cycles
*The Croxton Play of the Sacrament
Everyman, Mankind
Medieval Drama*, Ed. Bevington, Latin church drama
*The Treatise of Miraclis Pleyinge*. Ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1993)

**Middle English — Secondary Works**
Boitani, *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, 1983
Dinshaw, Carolyn. *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics*
Donaldson E. Talbot, *Speaking of Chaucer*
Dronke, Peter, *Medieval Lyric*, 1968
Kolve, D., *Play Called Corpus Christi*, 1966
Robertson, D.W., *A Preface to Chaucer*