



In 1465, Benozzo Gozzoli completed his series of frescos based on the life of St. Augustine. Here, Augustine is baptized by Ambrose. The text above the scene is the famous medieval hymn, "[Te Deum](#)," which was believed to have been composed by Augustine and Ambrose, improvising antiphonally at just the moment portrayed here. The "Te Deum" is traditionally sung on occasions of public rejoicing such as the coronation of kings, proclamation of bishops, consecration of a virgin, or canonization of a saint.

English 661: Public Literature in the Medieval Period

Patrick W. Conner, Eberly Centennial Professor in English

[<pconner@wvu.edu>](mailto:pconner@wvu.edu)

COURSE POLICIES



- Click [HERE](#) for current course policies statement. Please read carefully.

TEXTS

- Elaine Treharne, Editor. *Old and Middle English C. 890 - C. 1400, An Anthology*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004. [REQUIRED]
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought), MIT Press, 1991. [REQUIRED]
- [It will also be necessary to download and print some texts for use in class.]

SCHEDULE

- **Jan. 10:** Introduction. A discussion of Cædmon's "Hymn"
- **Jan. 17:** Geoffrey Chaucer, "General Prologue," *Canterbury Tales*. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Section I (Chapters 1-3).
- **Jan. 24:** William Langland, *Piers Plowman*; King Alfred, *Preface* to the translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*; King Alfred, translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Section II (Chapters 4-7).
- **Jan. 31:** Conner's "Parish Guilds and the Production of Old English Public Poetry;" Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Section III (Chapters 8-10).
- **Feb. 7:** *Ancrene Wisse*; Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Section IV (Chapters 12-15).
- **Feb. 14:** *Wynnere and Wastoure*; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Section V (Chapters 16-18).
- **Feb. 21:** First Essays Due; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Section VI-VII (Chapters 20-21, 25).
- **Feb. 28:** Discussion of First Essays
- **Mar. 7:** Conner's "Religious Poetry"; Habermas, "[Faith and Knowledge – An Opening](#)"; *Hymns* of St. Godric; "[Liturgy of the Mass](#)" from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*; [The Cornish Ordinalia](#).
- **Mar. 21:** [Medieval Drama](#) (a variety of resources are linked here). Read "[The Croxton Play of the Sacrament](#)"; [The Chester Cycle](#), looking at the cycle and the distribution of plays and reading specifically "The Harrowing of Hell" and "The Anti-Christ" plays; [The York Cycle](#), looking at the cycle and its distribution of plays and reading specifically the "Noah and the Flood" and "Harrowing of Hell" plays.
- **Mar. 28:** Preaching: AElfric, "Prefaces" to the *First Series of Catholic Homilies* and to *The Lives of the Saints*, and to his homily on the Nativity of the Innocents

and *The Passion of St. Edmund*; Vercelli Homily X; Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*.

- **Apr. 4:** Chronicle: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; *The Battle of Maldon*; *The Peterborough Chronicle*; *The Ormmulum*; Layamon's *Brut*.
- **Apr. 11:** History: *Beowulf* and *Judith*
- **Apr. 18:** Romance: *Apollonius of Tyre*; *Sir Orfeo*; *Ywain and Gawain*; *Athelston*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.
- **Apr. 25:** Second essays due and discussion thereof. Review of Course

On Preparing for Class: Each week, except for the meetings on February 21 and April 25 when papers are due from everyone, one or more persons will be asked to participate actively in the following week's meeting, usually to present the salient ideas in theoretical readings or to organize a point of discussion. Such persons are exempt from any other preparation. The rest of the members of the course will be asked to submit at the beginning of each class a paragraph a speculative paragraph or two (no more than 500 words) that attempts to comment on how assigned theoretical and primary texts maybe be read productively against each other.

Essays Due: First essay due February 21; second essay due on April 25. The minimum length of each paper should be about eight pages (1 inch margins all around; 11 or 12 point font size; 1.5 leading of lines); the maximum should be 10 pages. Topics must be drawn from a list to be provided. Do an appropriate bibliographical work-up, and start soon enough to guarantee that you have time to obtain any necessary secondary materials via ILL. It's not enough to cite the literary text and your critical authority, *e.g.*, Habermas. You need to be able to exploit the appropriate scholarship as well as critical theory to write a good paper about material as "different" as medieval texts are. Documentation may follow MLA or *Chicago Manual of Style*, but must be consistent with the standards of the style.

Grades: One should not have to chase after grades in a graduate class; on the other hand, the student is expected always to demonstrate due commitment to the material in the course and to his/her colleagues. I expect you to try hard and to be good. If you're in the dark about a text, about a commonplace of medieval textuality, history, or spirituality, use the library. Your short papers will each count 1/3 of your final grade, and your participation (including the weekly paragraphs, presentations, and discussion) will count for 1/3. If you feel a need to try to raise a flagging grade, you may elect to undertake a more complex second paper. You must see me privately to choose this option.

Office Hours and Appointments: You may schedule a conference with me by calling my office (293-8400 x4500 or x4505) or e-mailing my assistant, Ms. Downey (fdowney2@wvu.edu), who handles my schedule. When working with Ms. Downey to set up an appointment, be sure to explain in your note that you are a student in my class, and indicate the nature of our business, if you can, so that I can be prepared to help you.

SELECTED ONLINE RESOURCES

[Online Reference Book for Medieval Studies](#): an excellent collection of items of interest to new students looking for contextual materials for the period. Paul Hasall's [Internet](#)

[Medieval Sourcebook](#), a growing repository of essays and materials for teaching medieval subjects, is also an excellent resource for general information on medieval subjects. The webpage of the [Teachers of Old English in Britain and Ireland \(TOEBI\)](#) is a good general source of much material developed for students, as is the [Labyrinth](#) page located at Georgetown University but no longer kept up. Also see the [Medieval section](#) of [Luminarium](#), which offers texts, links, and criticism.

Jame's O'Donnell's excellent [webpage](#): a collection of much professional, original research on the most influential persons in the Early Christian period, including Augustine, Apuleius, and Boethius. Stephen Harris maintains an excellent site for Bede at [Bede.net](#).

[The Catholic Encyclopaedia](#), although published in 1908, is still a useful source for information about religious conventions, biographies of people whose lives touched the church, which includes most Medieval writers, and other historical data. It assumes an educated, but non-specialist audience. Furthermore, the writing of the Church Fathers (e.g., St. Jerome, St. Gregory the Great, St. Augustine, etc.) are to be found at [The Fathers of the Church](#) website. (These are adequate translations, but they are a part of the New Advent project, whose interest is the promulgation of the Roman Catholic tradition. If you find yourself drawing on these works, it is important that you check the non-sectarian scholarship concerning them, and that you not confuse dogma with scholarship.)