



Chaucer – Spring 2020
ENGL02.440-Section 1
TR 11:00-12:15
Dr. Vitto

Why are we still studying Chaucer in the 21st century? Geoffrey Chaucer, 14th-century poet and author of the well-known *Canterbury Tales*, understood human nature and its intimate relation to social class, politics, religion, gender and sexuality, tradition and authority, material culture, folklore, and the creative imagination. (You will be able to add to this list by the end of the course!) Human nature has not changed during the intervening 700 years, and so studying Chaucer’s work allows us to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our world view. At the same time, learning about the differences between medieval and contemporary life will explain the origin of many of our own beliefs, customs, and biases.

Our “literary pilgrimage” will concentrate almost entirely on *The Canterbury Tales* to appreciate its artistry and its wisdom. We will learn the essentials of Middle English—not as difficult as it might appear at first glance—and will gain a basic understanding of Chaucer criticism that will serve as background for writing two short papers and one longer essay.