

## Sophister Module Description Template 2023-24

**Full Name:** Reading Chaucer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Short Name:** Reading Chaucer

**Lecturer Name and Email Address:** Brendan O'Connell (oconneb2@tcd.ie)

**ECTS Weighting:** 10

**Semester Taught MT/HT:** Hilary Term

**Year JS/SS:** Senior Sophister

### Module Content:

Since his death in 1400, Geoffrey Chaucer has been one of the most influential authors in the English canon, but the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen enormous changes in which the 'Father of English Poetry' is viewed and studied. In this module, we examine the influence of Chaucer's works by reading them through a range of contemporary critical and creative responses. We will examine a selection of his remarkably varied literary output, from the dream visions and *Troilus and Criseyde* to the *Canterbury Tales*, and will explore how these medieval classics speak to contemporary concerns with issues such as economic and social inequality; gender and sexuality, the rise of nationalism; racial and religious intolerance; as well as the relationship between art, truth, power and corruption. We will examine the highly charged role Chaucer has played not only as a 'father' of English literature, and also how his central place has been challenged in debates about the nature and future of English literary canon. We will also explore how modern and contemporary rewritings of his works by writers such as Patience Agbabi and Zadie Smith have made bold claims for the continued vibrance and relevance of his works in the present day.

### Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Assess the evolving significance of Chaucer and his works for a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience
- Identify a representative range of genres, styles and themes that characterize the canon of Chaucer's works
- Apply a range of contemporary critical theories and approaches to the works of Chaucer
- Comment on the ways in which modern writers have adapted Chaucer to suit the concerns of the current time

**Assessment Details:**

- Number of Components: 2
- Name/Type of Component(s): Essay 1 (creative response or commentary) Essay 2 (critical essay)
- Word Count of Component(s): Essay 1: 1200-1500; Essay 2: 3500-4000
- Percentage Value of Component(s): Essay 1: 30%; Essay 2: 70%

**Preliminary Reading List:**

A full reading list will be provided at the start of the module. All students should purchase a complete edition of the works of Chaucer. Particularly recommended is:

- *The Norton Chaucer*, ed. David Lawton (New York: Norton, 2019). [Not to be confused with the Norton edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, which does not include the dream visions and *Troilus and Criseyde*]
- Or**
- *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.