

# Middle School Medieval, Renaissance, Reformation Literature

2023-2024 SYLLABUS

## ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

Students in grades 6-8 who read independently at or above a seventh-grade level, compose complete sentences, and write focused paragraphs with a theme. They should also possess basic computer skills, be capable of narration and explanation, willingly participate in discussion over historical and literary ideas, and assume responsibility for their work. Students should also demonstrate a teachable spirit and a willingness to discover how men and women lived, learned, and worked in the past.



**Class Dates:** Tuesday, September 5, 2023 through Thursday, May 23, 2024.

**Class Times:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:45 PM EST

**Office Hours:** By request

**Instructor:** Phaedra Shaltanis

**E-mail:** [pshaltanis.scholeacademy@gmail.com](mailto:pshaltanis.scholeacademy@gmail.com)

## OBSERVED SCHOLÉ ACADEMY HOLIDAYS (NO CLASSES)

Monday, September 4, 2023 (Labor Day)

Monday, November 20 – Friday, November 24, 2023 (Thanksgiving)

Monday, December 15, 2023 – Friday, January 8, 2024 (Christmas and New Year's)

Monday, February 19 – Friday, February 23, 2024 (winter break)

Monday, March 25 – Friday, March 29, 2024 (Holy Week/Easter)

## REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS

*NOTE ON ASSIGNED TEXTS: Not every chapter in every book will be assigned. Only the chapters most relevant to course material will be required. I also sometimes supplement the readings with primary sources and excerpts from other books. PDFs of additional texts used will always be provided. Students are responsible for obtaining only required books.*

Kevin Crossley-Hollan (Translator). *Beowulf*. New York: Oxford World Classics, 2008.

ISBN # 9780199555291

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford World Classics, 2011. ISBN # 0199599025

Tolkien, J.R.R (Translator). *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 2021. ISBN # 0358652979

Dante, *The Divine Comedy*. New York: Oxford World Classics, 2008. 0199535647. (excerpts)

Mallory, Thomas. *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript* (Oxford World's Classics) Annotated Edition. ISBN # 0199537348

Assorted poetry, epics, and other writings provided by instructor via PDF.

### COURSE MAP

This course will explore the literary works chronologically so they can be viewed in their broader historical context. Though some translators are from the modern era, these timeless tales were born in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation epoch.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the students to the great stories, ideas, characters that molded the literature of the Medieval, Renaissance, and Reformation world. This class is paired with a corresponding history class, taught by the same teacher, and scheduled back-to-back in a "block." Students who take both courses receive a discount. Either course may also be taken as a stand-alone course. Because of this arrangement, and the nature of history and literature, there will necessarily be overlap between the two classes. This integrative experience of history and literature is one of the benefits of the classical model.

The literature section of the humanities block aims to introduce students to several of the "great books" of classical literature. Classes will consist of seminar-style discussions of the readings, with the instructor serving as the facilitator. The instructor may occasionally open class with a brief lecture on the author or historical background of a book. The goal is to encourage a deeper understanding and appreciation for the readings and their timeless truths through thoughtful dialogue on a book's characters, plot, themes, and cultural context. Students are expected to participate actively in these discussions by formulating thoughtful questions and interacting with their peers.

Because the course texts are rich and complex, we could spend many classes plumbing the depths of these stories. However, given Scholé Academy's focus on restful learning, this course is structured to give students a guided first taste of these classic works, consistent with the middle school level. It is assumed that this will not be the last time that students read books like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but that they will pick them up again and attend to them with deeper understanding. The hope is that students come to love and appreciate these stories both as artifacts and as beautiful works of timeless art.

A tentative reading schedule will be provided at the beginning of the school year to give students and parents an idea of the kind of workload to expect. However, the instructor reserves the right to adjust the reading schedule throughout the year in order to maintain a deep, yet restful approach to learning in accordance with Scholé Academy learning philosophy.

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS (EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS)

Students enrolled in British Literature should expect to progress in their reading, writing and speaking abilities as they utilize classic modes of thinking and discussing. They should aim for:

### **1. Respectful and Compassionate Discussion**

Students are mindful of their peers during dialectic periods and strive to maintain a balance between pensive listening and thoughtful responding. Compassion is evidenced through gracious conversation even as significant disagreements occur. Honoring others in a Socratic setting allows the guests (students) to restfully seek understanding in the realm of truth.

### **2. Informed Responses and Preparedness**

Students are prepared to participate in discussion concerning the assigned readings. They ruminate on themes and generate questions throughout their reading processes; they weigh comments adequately and are comfortable making annotations and responding to class questions and conversation.

### **3. Self-Motivation**

Students are able to determine appropriate pacing measures to thoroughly complete all readings. They are managers of their time, seeking quiet, unpressured opportunities to delight in the text; they allow themselves to consider the many dimensions of a literary work without simply rushing through the reading; they pursue knowledge by conducting research if necessary, looking up new vocabulary, and asking questions.

### **4. Aptitude in Writing**

Students exhibit aptitude in the grammar and mechanics of writing and display a suitable eagerness for advancing their skills. As students study writing devices and techniques, they aim to weave them into their own writing and actively search for examples in classic and modern texts. Additionally, students are receptive to peer and teacher critiques that aim to illuminate errors or graciously provide feedback. They are willing to scrutinize their own work and revise their final papers.

### **5. Organization and Responsibility**

Students employ organizational techniques that increase success: notes are taken during class, annotations marked while reading, writing practices and activities are maintained and consolidated. Students are adept at using a keyboard and submitting assignments; they are timely and punctual; they are familiar with the required technology and take ownership in their academic pursuits by monitoring their own progress.

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION

Students enrolled in this Literature course should be able to:

- Maintain dialectic notebooks and reading journals. (*To be introduced and guided throughout the course.*)
- Read independently, using annotations and underlining to highlight important or unclear information. (*A skill we will cultivate throughout the course.*)
- Receive and apply teacher critiques.
- Adhere to deadlines.
- Be responsible for class and project preparedness.
- Take initiative to ask questions for understanding and comprehension.

All assignments will be due into the appropriate Canvas Assignment folder prior to the start of class each day. Late assignments will not receive full credit, though exceptions can be made with proper communication between student and instructor. Students will submit their work by scanning their homework pages and uploading it into the Canvas assignment window.

**Photographs of completed assignments will not be accepted as they are incredibly difficult to read.**

### STUDENT EVALUATION (GRADING)

Scholé classes strive to be restful, but we also recognize the need to provide grades for students who will be using this course as part of their prepared college transcript. Achieving both restful learning and excellent academic performance is a delicate balance, and a specific grade should not overshadow achievement goals for mastery of this discipline. Students should strive to appreciate constructive feedback and authentic learning.

The study and enjoyment of Literature is a key component in a student's complete education. It will not only lay a foundation for the lifelong pursuit of seeking but also expand the student's academic scope. Due to the dialectic nature of the course, students will examine their thoughts and synthesize them into reflective presentations, conversations, and projects.

In addition to traditional percentage grades, I will provide assessment marks to your student's level of achievement as follows: *magna cum laude* (with great praise); *cum laude* (with praise); *satis* (sufficient, satisfactory) and *non satis* (not sufficient). Ideally, every average student working diligently should do praiseworthy work (*cum laude*). Those who excel beyond this expectation will be the *magna cum laude* students. Students who do adequate but not praiseworthy work be designated *satis*. *Non satis* means lacking sufficiency or adequacy.

Traditional grade marks:

92-100% A

82-91% B

72-81% C

62-71% D

Below 62% Unsatisfactory

## MASTERY PORTRAIT

Students who are prepared to take this class are typically early to late teens, adolescents approaching young adulthood. This developmental stage is an interesting one, brimming with lots of new characteristics. It is imperative, then, that this course not only provide the academic components necessary to achieve mastery of the content of the class (knowledge) and skills associated with analytical thought; but to also help engage the student in development of their moral virtues. These three aspects of the course would comprise the “learning target.”

Mastery in this course will go beyond just reading and recalling content.

At the completion of this course *cum laude* students will be able to see and explain how these major ideas and beliefs (about life and death, virtue and vice, humanity and the divine, etc.) are expressed through the literature.

Apart from articulating the stories, *cum laude* students should be able to discuss the major themes and topics that they read in class. In short, they should not just recall, but understand, analyze, and apply what they have learned and see how it applies to the broader scope of western history, as well as to their own lives. Additionally, students should be able to consistently improve in their reading ability (comprehension, speed, annotation skills, etc), note-taking ability, and critical thinking ability (especially in a verbal communal setting). Students will be guided in truth, goodness, and beauty throughout the course and to see the various topic both in their own light, and in the greater context of Christianity.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Mrs. Shaltanis will communicate with students regarding assignment feedback and grading through Scholé’s learning management system Canvas on the *Medieval, Renaissance and Reformation Literature* course page.

Student’s grades will be comprised of:

1. Exams: 20% (four, fifty-point exams spread out over the course of the year)
2. Class Participation: 25 %  
(This includes consistent reading quizzes, reading logs, and discussion grades).
3. Homework & Response Papers: 35 %
4. Projects: 20 %

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students will sometimes take assessment privately at home. They will be on their honor to abide by [Scholé Academy’s Learning Philosophy](#) which assumes the personal cultivation of Student Virtues described in the Student-Parent Handbook.

## THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

We will be using the free online “virtual classroom” software provided by Zoom, one of the leading companies that provides such software. The virtual classroom will provide students with interactive audio, text chat and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will provide students with a link (via email) that will enable students to join the virtual classroom.

Specific information regarding the technology used by Scholé Academy (including required technology) can be found by visiting the [Technology in the Classroom](#) section of the Student Parent Handbook. Students will submit documents by scanning and uploading them to their personal computer, then attaching those files as pdfs to an email. They will submit their work to the *Medieval, Renaissance and Reformation Literature* Schoology assignment page (access granted after enrollment is secured).

### ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR



**Phaedra Shaltanis** has taught in private and classical schools for over 25 years and has educated her four children in the classical tradition, which has been the monumental joy of her life. After college graduation, she began teaching high school Writing, Literature, Spanish, and Art in classical schools. Her involvement with Scholé Academy includes teaching American Literature, British Literature, Western History, Rhetoric I, Formal Logic and *Well-Ordered Language Levels 1 and 2*. She is enthused to serve as the Humanities department chair and appreciates guiding parents and teachers toward restful education. In her Dallas community, she currently directs a high school university-model program, trains and mentors teachers, conducts seminars on classical education, builds curriculum, supports parents, and provides fine art instruction at a classical high school. She and her husband hope to support classical education as avenues present themselves.