CALL FOR SESSIONS
The 23rd Biennial New Chaucer Society Congress
Pasadena, CA, USA

The NCS Program Committee invites proposals for sessions for the Society’s 2024 Congress in Pasadena. Sessions may be directed at one of the thematic threads described below that seek to capture current movements in Chaucer studies as well as the wider concerns of the field.

Please send session proposals to thread organisers by 30 April.

Session proposals should include a brief description of the session suitable for the Call for Papers (100 words), short proposer bio (2-3 sentences), and preferred session format(s). Please note that proposers should submit a maximum of two proposals each.

We encourage members to consider all session formats when designing a session proposal (please see session format descriptions below). We also hope to include at least one remote session in each thread. Further details about remote sessions and participation will be forthcoming in the Call for Papers. In the meantime, please indicate whether your proposed session would work particularly well as a remote session.

We warmly invite members to submit sessions on pedagogy in relation to all thread topics.

Following submission, the thread organisers and programme committee will consider session proposals and contact proposers to finalise session descriptions. The call for papers will follow shortly afterwards, likely in June 2023.

We look forward to reading your session proposals.
Andrea Denny-Brown and Aditi Nafde

THREADS

1. The Ethics of Reading Chaucer, Then and Now
Organised by Samantha Seal <Samantha.Seal@unh.edu> Carissa M. Harris <carissa.harris@temple.edu> Sarah Baechle <sebaechl@olemiss.edu>
This thread seeks panels interested in reflecting upon the ethical challenges of reading and writing about the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer, a flawed historical figure whom several centuries of critics have incorporated into their exclusionary theories of race, gender, sex, religion, and nationalism. We welcome panels on Chaucerian historiography (and particularly its intersections with the historiography of Medieval Studies); the contemporary complexities of working on Chaucer while also attempting to decolonize syllabi and foster a more equitable medieval English studies/envision more equitable futures for the study of English literature’; and new readings of Chaucerian texts informed by ethical reading practices, such as Black feminist or intersectional feminist approaches to Chaucer. In light of Euan Roger and Sebastian Sobecski’s recent Chaucer Review issue, we would welcome one panel in this thread explicitly addressing Cecily Chaumpaigne and how this astonishing archival discovery changes (or not) the ethical landscape of Chaucerian studies, particularly regarding consent, labor, and sexual violation.
2. Logistical Chaucer
Organised by Wan-Chuan Kao <kaow@wlu.edu> and Paul Megna <paul.megna@purchase.edu>

“Logistics is magic,” Clare Lyster proclaims. We see such magical thinking at work in the traffic in capital in the Shipman’s Tale, in racialized bodies in the Man of Law’s Tale, in romance sovereignties in the Squire’s Tale, in gendered and sexualized objects associated with the Pardoner, in captive bodies in Troilus and Criseyde, and in the bureaucratic poetics of Chaucer the logistician, among others. Though logistics, with roots in the military applied science of supply movements, is nothing new, the logistical turn in critical theory provides a new set of analytics and vocabulary for assessing flow, movement, circulation, and connectivity. As much as logistics is the science of loss, it is also one of control and governance. Or, in Deborah Cowen’s formulation, logistics as the social life of circulation is the entanglement of embodiment and desire. Queer logistics understands queer as a denaturalizing enterprise co-extensive with capital and possesses the capacity for “building different economies of (human) natures” (Cowen). This thread asks what constitutes a logistical hermeneutics and invites considerations of Chaucer’s logistical technologies, inclusive but also beyond Marxist and/or Foucauldian paradigms. Keywords may include racial capitalism, infrastructure, line, interface, cluster, modality, containerization, operation, speculation, flow, passage, fugitivity, tracking, (anti-)relationality, volatility, violence, and counter-logistics.

3. Surveillance
Organised by Tom Goodmann <tgoodmann@miami.edu> and Sylvia Tomasch <stomasch@hunter.cuny.edu>

Surveillance now suffuses every dimension of life. This thread invites inquiry into surveillance practices in the Middle Ages, challenging the technology-centered formation of contemporary Surveillance Studies. Potential subjects include literary representations of observation, visual and auditory; self-surveillance of penance and attendant externalization in confession; witness testimony in judicial proceedings; diplomacy and intelligence; religious disciplinary practices; buildings, objects, households, and gatherings that facilitate inspection and control; visualizations and in/visibility; modes of identity and identification, etc.

4. Viability: Access, Value, New Directions
Organised by Katherine C Little <katherine.c.little@colorado.edu>  Eva von Contzen <eva.voncontzen@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de>  Candace Barrington <barringtonc@ccsu.edu>  Lisa Lampert-Weissig <llampert@ucsd.edu>

Chaucer studies, and Medieval Studies more generally, are facing a global decline in resources and opportunities, but the decline is, of course, playing out locally in the contexts of particular institutions, whether teaching-oriented or research-based, whether Anglophone or non-Anglophone. This thread will ask about challenges to and arguments for the viability of Medieval Studies both globally and locally. We welcome proposals for panels of all kinds. Topics might include access (who has access to medieval courses, jobs, texts, research funds, professional activities?); value (how do we articulate the value of old books in a world of social media and in the face of political, ecological, and economic threats to higher education?); and new directions (how do we re-frame faculty research goals, graduate study, and job paths to respond to the shrinking of certain sectors of higher education?).
5. Code(x)
Organised by J.R. Mattison <j.r.mattison@rug.nl> Hannah Ryley <hannah.ryley@ell.ox.ac.uk> J.D. Sargan <James.D.Sargan@ul.ie> and Chelsea Silva <chelsea.silva@okstate.edu>

Code(x) seeks sessions that engage with any aspect of the history of the book and literary studies. In 2024, the Code(x) thread will build on events held in the Huntington Library, one of the largest collections of British medieval manuscripts in the Western Hemisphere and home to the Ellesmere Chaucer.

Prompted by recent high-profile archival discoveries and publications that interrogate the processes and goals of such work, this thread is particularly interested in issues of method. We ask, what does book history look like now, and what could it look like in the future? Panels that attend to archival access, manuscript collecting, fragments and fragmentology, processes of digitization, librarianship, the rare book market, and related topics are especially welcome. Questions might include: What kinds of collections and books have been neglected by previous study? How have our practices enabled or restricted access to primary materials? How can manuscript studies become more inclusive? What does the future of teaching paleography, codicology, and manuscript studies look like?

6. Ecologies and Consumption
Organised by Adin Lears <alears@vcu.ed> Harry Cushman <hcush@email.unc.edu> and Spencer A. Strub <spencer.strub@princeton.edu>

This thread investigates late medieval cultures of consumption, broadly construed, as well as the ecologies and systems of relation that emerged from and surrounded them. How do medieval metaphors of listening or reading as consumption open space for new ways of considering the human self in relation to others? What role did late medieval texts play in the control of natural resources, and how did concerns about resource management affect late medieval writers’ attitudes toward consumption and preservation? How did literature in the age of Chaucer fit into emerging consumer cultures and patterns of labor, production, trade, sale, and use? How did ascetic, penitential, and devotional discourses shape consumers’ ideologies and practices? How did late medieval readers understand their consumption of texts, and how did the logic of the book market shape literary production? How did medieval conceptions of the human both shape and emerge from the uses of animal skin in manuscript culture? In what ways did embodied textual and reading practices put pressure on conceptions of ecological relation grounded in rigidly hierarchical constructs like the scale of nature?

We welcome proposals that address these and other questions about consumption and ecological structures of relation from a variety of methodological approaches including but not limited to ecocriticism, critical animal studies and the posthuman, Marxism, and book history.

7. Materialities & Performance
Organised by Clint Morrison, Jr <morrison.679@buckeyemail.osu.edu> and Jeffery G. Stoyanoff <jxs2323@psu.edu>

This thread seeks sessions that engage the intersection of performance studies and material culture. The recent work of Seeta Chaganti, Lynneth Miller Renberg, and Matthew Sergi has transformed our discussions of premodern performance. Medieval performance — particularly drama — has long been a subfield that has taken pride in its meticulous textual approach to what, for all intents and purposes with some exceptions, were multimodal media. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the lines between performance and “text”
are less distinct than we once thought. For example, Matthew Sergi in his recent book *Practical Cues and Social Spectacle in the Chester Plays* explains how he sees the relationship between text and performance — what he calls “practical cues” — as referring “simultaneously to the physical, tangible work of drama practitioners—performers, organizers, designers, devisers, producers, and the text-makers who work alongside them—and to Bourdieu’s sociological theories of practice, public acts including and extending beyond dramatics, signifying within a localized system of significances taken for granted but rarely articulated (or even articulable), which is what makes them legible among locals but difficult for outsiders to understand” (6–7). Reflecting on Sergi’s channeling of Bourdieu, we might add that such an approach may be used for texts that we once thought purely meant to be read — Gower or Lydgate, for example — which now seem to have significant performance aspects to them. Additionally, we might look at the material record of performances — props, costumes, staging, etc. — in exploring the relationship between the material and performance.

This thread seeks proposals that query the ambiguous areas between the ephemerality of performance and the materiality of texts — after all, the nature of performance itself resides in an ephemeral repository despite our desire to privilege archival records. We invite a number of theoretical approaches, and we are especially excited at the possibilities of presenters reimagining medieval performance and material culture through critical race, (trans)gender and queer, and ecocritical approaches. We see a number of potential subtopics that could fit within this theme:

Dramatic Performance
Premodern Dance
Playbooks & Dance Manuals
Theoretical Performance Approaches
Chaucerian Voices & Theatricality
Oralities/Auralities
Religious Ritual & Gesture
Performance in Medievalism

8. The Quadrivium
Organised by Tekla Bude <budet@oregonstate.edu> Kara Gaston <kara.gaston@utoronto.ca> and Shazia Jagot <shazia.jagot@york.ac.uk>

This intentionally capacious thread hopes to capture session proposals on any of the quadrivial arts (music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy) and their relationship to the work of Chaucer, Chauceriana, and other related texts from the late medieval period.

We are particularly interested in comparative methodologies between the quadrivium and the trivium. What techniques of reading and writing do quadrivial texts allow, encourage, and inspire? What are the aesthetics and creative impulses of the quadrivium itself? How does medieval literature present the quadrivium as a regime of knowledge, and how does literature perform the quadrivium as an aesthetic form? What were the implications, for medieval readers and writers, of taking quantitative approaches to the interpretation of literary texts (and what might have been the implications of reading quantitative texts as works of literature)? In what ways does thinking about the quadrivium necessitate thought on the Arabic-Latin translation movement? How can we approach the translations of Arabic mathematics and astronomy within explorations of the aesthetics of the quadrivium in vernacular literature? In what ways can we connect and compare medieval English Literature to a wider Islamicate world? For instance, by thinking about the quadrivium cross-culturally with other classifications of the sciences such as Al-Farabi’s *Kitāb Ihsa’ al-ʿUlam*? And even further still, a global perspective?
This thread welcomes proposals that focus on quadrivial texts themselves (speculative or practical music theory, texts of geometry and arithmetic, astronomical treatises and star-charts) as well as literary texts.

9. Translation and Experimentation
Organised by MeganCook<mlcook@colby.edu> Elizaveta Strakhov
yelizaveta.strakhov@marquette.edu> and R.D. Perry<R.D.Perry@du.edu>

Formal and linguistic experimentation in late medieval literature often arises out of experiments in translation and adaptation, frequently prompting meditations on authorship, self-authorization, and literary history. This is apparent in those "loose baggy monsters" of the late fourteenth century—Piers Plowman, the Confessio Amantis, the Canterbury Tales—but it is also the case with works that supposedly have a more stable generic mode—lyrics, romances, or what Chaucer means by "tragedy" in Troilus and Criseyde. This thread seeks sessions that deal with transformations in and within form broadly understood and at different scales, from the smallest unit of a work to works as a whole. Sessions might engage with linguistic translation, translation between different media, translatio studii et imperii, and the innovations produced by bringing across stories, books, and other objects between different linguistic, cultural, and social spheres.

If you wish to submit a session proposal that falls outside these threads, please send it to Andrea Denny-Brown<andreadb@ucr.edu> and Aditi Nafde<Aditi.Nafde@Newcastle.ac.uk>.

SESSION FORMATS

Paper sessions showcase scholarly work in the form of extended presentations of 20 minutes each. A paper panel should include no more than 3 presenters in total (either 3 papers or 2 papers and a respondent) and should allow for at least 30 minutes of open discussion.

Lightning talk sessions feature up to 6 speakers in short presentations of 5-7 minutes, allowing at least 45 minutes for open discussion. Presentations may be scripted but need not be. They might precis a large project, highlight an element of research, or open a provocative line of inquiry.

Position paper sessions address a single, focused question through a panel of up to 5 speakers and are specifically intended to foster debate and to consider the state of the field. Papers should be 7–8 minutes to ensure time for discussion.

Conversation sessions feature two speakers who lead the audience in discussion. Each speaker offers a 2–3-minute provocation after which follows an open discussion.

Research Expo: The Research Expo will host research with strong visual or digital elements presented in a display or poster format. Presenters will discuss their display and the underpinning research during a single launch session. For this reason, separate proposals for Expo sessions are not invited as part of this Call for Sessions, but the Research Expo will be fully advertised in the upcoming Call for Papers.
A note on pedagogy sessions: A pedagogy session may take any of the forms above or may propose an alternative form. It should address topics or questions relevant to teaching medieval literature and culture at a variety of academic institutions.

Please note that session organisers are not permitted to present work in their own session, though they may chair the session and may present work in another session at the conference.