HU212
Classics of the Western World II: Middle Ages and Renaissance
Winter, 1999-2000

Prof. (Dr.) Anne Erlebach
308 Walker Arts and Humanities Center
Office hours by appointment only.

To communicate with me outside of class:
e-mail: aerlebac@mtu.edu
The Erlepedia Web Site: Contains copies of the syllabus, essay evaluation form, assignments, and handouts: http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~aerlebac
Or, call me at home: 482-4139

Course Objective: To gain an understanding and appreciation of some of the principle literature of Western Europe during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and its importance to Western Culture; to gain an understanding of the chief ideas present in the culture of the period.

Text: (Bring the book to class each day.)

Course Requirements:
REGULAR CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSION. I take attendance every day; I deduct for excessive, unexcused absences. Those who regularly contribute to class discussion are rewarded at the end of the term.

THREE WRITTEN ESSAYS (about 2500 words, double-spaced, typed) on three assigned topics, each worth 150 points. (Specific due dates and topics to be assigned. Papers will be graded for content as well as style and correctness. The papers will each be a literary analysis of one or more of the works we have read. See attached grading sheet (do not lose it) as well as "Literary Analysis Essays: Information on Writing Your Essay"... and reading selections, BEFORE EACH IN-CLASS DISCUSSION AND SOMETIMES AFTER CLASS DISCUSSION. NO MAKE-UPS. Students with excused absences (verified illnesses, ill children, or university approved absences) will be excused from the quizzes, and his or her average quiz score will be substituted for the missing score, provided the student provides the instructor with a written explanation for his or her absence immediately upon returning to class, listing all the particular information relating to his or her absence, including the date. KEEP TOTAL ABSENCES (EXCUSES AND UNEXCUSED) TO A MINIMUM, or your grade will suffer a reduction. At the end of the term, each student's lowest score will be dropped.

Plagiarism
If any student cheats or plagiarizes work for this class, he or she will fail this course and the Dean of Students will be notified. "Plagiarism is the taking of writings, ideas, or thoughts of others and passing them off as one's own original work. Plagiarism is
not restricted to published material; if your submit an old paper written by your roommate, if you buy a paper from a so-called 'service,' or even if you base your paper on a lecture you heard in a course without acknowledging that lecture, you are still guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism is not restricted to long quotations; if you quote a sentence or even a phrase without acknowledging it, you are plagiarizing. You can plagiarize without even using the exact words of the original author; if you paraphrase a passage without crediting its author, you are plagiarizing.

Notice to All Students:
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).

I may amend this syllabus at any time during the term, either orally or in writing.

Order of Reading Assignments (A Quiz Will Precede and Sometimes Follow Class Discussion):

READING ASSIGNMENTS:
Quizzes will precede discussion of each reading assignment.
2. Due Tuesday December 7: Beowulf, introduction and lines 1-781 pp. 1186-1207.
8. Introduction to Dante, pp. 1377-1384.
10. Inferno, Cantos XVIII-end, pp. 1453-1550.
11. Inferno, Cantos XVIII-end, pp. 1453-1550.

Dates When Essays Due:
Essay One: 2PM, Tuesday, Nov. 21, 1999.

Essay 1 Assignment: 2500 words

Essay 1: Beowulf
DUE: 2 PM, Tuesday, December 21, 1991.
LENGTH: pages, double-spaced, typed.

Choose one of the following questions, and write a well-organized, well-supported essay about it.
1. In the last lines of Beowulf, four epithets are applied to the hero: "kindest," "most gentle," "most just to his people," and "most eager for fame." Looking backward through the poem, do you find these descriptions justified? (The most surprising may be "most gentle.")

2. The monsters are worth close attention. Look closely at how each is described. Does the poet seem to intend them symbolically to any degree? If so, what are their symbolic associations? How are they differentiated? Does Beowulf approach them differently? Why?

3. Any one of the "digressions raises basic questions of theme and narrative structure. The opening account of Scyld Scefing is part of a conventional genealogy, but it is developed far beyond what would be required by only that. How? Why? What themes of the poem are announced here? The same sorts of questions might be asked of the other inset narratives: the burning of Heorot, the fight at Finnsburgh, etc.

4. Describe the roles of women in the poem, both their realistic depiction and their apparent place in the symbolic structure. If we divide the poem into three, rather than two, parts, part two is especially rich in its treatment of women. Notice that Grendel's mother is introduced just after the scene in Heorot in which Wealhtheow figures prominently and during which we hear the story of another woman grieving for a dead child: Hildeburh. What links, if any, are there among these women, mythic, legendary, and real?

5. One of the peculiarities of the narrative structure of Beowulf is its use of what might be called "flash-forwards," the anticipations of future action, some of which is beyond the point at which the poem ends. In describing Heorot, for example, the poet tells us that "The hall towered high, lofty and wide-gabled—fierce tongues of loathsome fire had not yet attacked it, nor was the time yet near when a mortal feud should flare between father- and son-in-law, sparked off by deeds of deadly enmity (lines 81-85). Slightly different examples are those in which the poet seemingly destroys suspense by telling us the outcome of an event before it occurs. We are told repeatedly, for example, that Beowulf will not survive his fight with the dragon. Identify as many such passages as you can and comment on their purpose and effect.

6. J. R. R. Tolkien: Beowulf "is a heroic-elegiac poem; and in a sense all its first 3,136 lines are the prelude to a dirge." What is "elegiac" about Beowulf?

Staple a photo copy of the Essay Evaluation Form you received with your syllabus to the TOP of your essay.

Papers will be graded for content as well as style and correctness. See grading sheet and "Literary Analysis Essays: Information on Writing Your Essay" (on the Erlepedia) before you start writing. (150 pts.)