HISTORY
Chaucer to Caxton: Words! Words! … Print!
Julia Cruse PhD

Study morning 10am – 1pm
Tuesday 31 October
Course code: 17TON299 Course fee: £25

Arguably Chaucer brought the English language to life and Caxton brought it to the masses. Learn about their lives, discover the significance of these inspirational men, consider their impact on the development of language and literature, and discuss their influence on the Fifteenth century - a period of vibrant literate development.

Both Geoffrey Chaucer and William Caxton have influenced our understanding of the English language. The study of Chaucer’s poetry remains a mainstay of English literature and historically we recognise the importance of Caxton in bringing the first printing presses to England – but what of the men themselves? What were they like? What were the direct social and cultural influences on them? Conversely, how did they influence society?

Chaucer, an esquire of the king’s chamber and comptroller of the port of London understood efficient administration; in c.1386 he retired to Kent and became a justice of the peace. His writing is ‘infused with a great sense of diversity and dramatic life’ and the influence of his various occupations comes over in ‘the excellence of the individual narratives and the vividness’ of his characters.

Much admired by the higher echelons of society, who purchased his books, Caxton nonetheless came under criticism for making printed books widely available which might lead to the education of the lower classes; he is renowned to have stated: ‘If tis wrong I do, then tis a fine and noble wrong.’ He was a merchant and a diplomat, born in the Weald of Kent; it is argued that he ‘suffered from a feeling of inferiority in his career’ as his Kentish English was not ‘fashionable in contemporary London.’

During this study morning we will view them as individuals, examine their backgrounds and the professional roles they took and discuss: why do their powerful voices continue to resonate today?

Suggested reading
Additional information

- This short study morning is suitable for those with little or no prior knowledge of the subject, and for those at beginner or intermediate levels of historical studies.
- This course allows you to spend time exploring a subject for interest, among like-minded people, without formal assessment.
- There may be optional discussion activities during the course.

Intended learning outcomes

- To learn about these two influential men and to provide a biographical foundation to develop students’ understanding of their contemporary and subsequent historical importance.
- To learn about the development of English language through an appreciation of the lives of Chaucer and Caxton within the context of the late medieval period.
- To consider how the creative skills of these men continue to influence our culture and artistic undertakings.
- To lay a foundation from which to begin to understand how literacy and writing and reading developed during the fifteenth century.
- To enable students to embark on their own research and reading of medieval literature.

About the tutor

Julia Cruse has a PhD in Medieval and Early Modern Studies and has taught undergraduates at the University of Kent. As a mature student she graduated from the University of Kent with a degree in History; her BA dissertation focused on the Paston letters. Her doctoral thesis continued her research into late medieval letter-writing and looked at gentry identity and the politics of letter-writing. She is currently developing education packages to inspire school children and young people about medieval life and history.
Short Course Programme
General information, terms & conditions

How to book a place
These courses are usually very popular so you are advised to apply as soon as possible. Places cannot be held without payment of the course fee.

- **Online** Booking is preferred; Please visit www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge
- **By post** to us at the address below, using the application form in the programme booklet. Please note that you will not receive an acknowledgment of your paper application; your payment will usually be processed when the course becomes financially viable, otherwise we will notify you of cancellation approximately seven days prior to the course. A paper application affirms acceptance of our terms & conditions.

Course cancellation
As these short courses are self-financing, each course can only proceed if there are sufficient enrolments. Therefore, if a course is cancelled due to insufficient enrolments we aim to notify applicants approximately one week before the course start date; if there is no suitable alternative course, we will refund the appropriate course fee in full. The University of Kent reserves the right to cancel a course for this or any other reason in which case the relevant course fee will be refunded in full.

If you find it necessary to cancel your place on a course, please let us know as soon as possible. Refund requests, including the reason, should be made by email or in writing to us at the address below. We reserve the right to retain all or part of the course fee if you request a refund after 14 days of your online booking being made or paper application being received. Discretionary, partial refunds may be made, after the deduction of an administrative handling fee as follows:

- a course fee of up to and including £42 will incur an administrative handling fee of £10.00
- a course fee of £43 and over will incur an administrative handling fee of £12.50.

The University reserves the right to:

a) exclude any student if the student’s presence is making it difficult for the class to function properly
b) cancel or amend the length of any course if the circumstances so warrant.

Neither the University of Kent, nor its staff, can be held responsible for any damage, loss or injury, however sustained, suffered by participants attending courses. Insurance is the student’s responsibility.

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- Parking. There is plenty of public pay and display car parking locally, but please note that only selected car parks permit parking in excess of four hours; detailed information is available from www.tmbc.gov.uk. No parking is available here on site.
- Refreshments are not provided; food and drink can be purchased from any of the nearby café outlets - we are closely situated to the High Street and town centre. A hot drink vending machine is usually available on the ground floor of this building.

Mailing List and data protection
Those attending our courses are automatically added to our database and kept informed about new courses. This information is not released to outside organisations. Please write to us if you do not wish your details to be kept on our database.

*Please contact us if you have any queries or would like to register your email address to receive our course information updates. We look forward to welcoming you here soon.*

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