

15% (15 points)

There are two parts to the exam. For the first, you are asked to choose one of the topics and write a short essay. I will not be evaluating you on the basis of grammar and mechanics except insofar as they detract from my understanding of your prose. I will be looking for your use of specific detail and supporting references from the relevant texts, as well as the thoughtfulness of your response and your ability to make connections among the various texts.

The second part of the exam is similar to the format of our midterm, making use of passages from the material we have read since then: you are asked to comment on the significance of the passages for the local context and their import for the texts from which they are extracted. I have already identified the sources of the passages.

This is a take-home final. You should not discuss this with anyone else; the work you turn in should consist entirely of your own effort. Since our exam period is Monday, December 12, 3:25-5:25PM, I will need to receive your final, via e-mail (**dmosser@vt.edu**), no later than 5:25PM (i.e., posted to the mail server by then) on Dec. 12. You may turn it in anytime before then. You should spend no more than the two hours allotted to the exam time writing the exam, though you may, of course, spend as much time as you like preparing for it.

I. Choose *one* of the following and write an essay of ca. 500-750 words. (10 points)

- i. When Chaucer says “Who so shal tell a tale after a man / He moot reherce, as neigh as evere he can, / Everich a word, if it be in his charge, /... Or else he moot telle his tale untrewe” (*General Prologue* 733-7), he makes a claim (leaving aside the question of his narrative intention in doing so) that changing a single word might make the retelling of a tale “untrue.” Comment on the significance of this premise for our readings of *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and 1 Corinthians 13 (i.e., the fact that in each case we are accessing a text in other than its original language or form of a language). You may, of course, make reference to other texts that you think will serve your purposes.
- ii. Samuel Johnson criticizes Shakespeare for omitting “opportunities of instructing or delighting”—(NAEL1c, p. 2729). Sir Philip Sidney (*The Defense of Poesy*) also comments on the necessity of literature to “teach and delight.” In the *General Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*, the Host’s criteria for judging the best tale in the story-telling contest is based on who “that telleth in this cas / Tales of best sentence and most solas” (799-800). Select two texts from our reading this semester that succeed best in your estimation in “teaching *and* delighting” and provide evidence to support your judgments.
- iii. Examine the function of journeys in two of the following: *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Faerie Queene*, and *Gulliver’s Travels*.
- iv. Examine how the issue of pride is treated in at least three of the following texts: *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Henry IV, Part 1*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Gulliver’s Travels*.

II. For each of the following passages, comment briefly on the passage's significance for its immediate context and for its relevance to the larger context (either the entire text from which it is extracted or as much as we have read of that text). (1 point each)

i. Donne, "The Flea"

Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,  
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee. (26-7)

ii. Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part 1*

"For every honor sitting on his helm,  
Would they were multitudes, and on my head  
My shames redoubled! For the time will come  
That I shall make this northern youth exchange  
His glorious deeds for my indignities.  
Percy is but my factor, good my lord,  
To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf..." (III.ii.142-6)

iii. Shakespeare, Sonnet 138

When my love swears she is made of truth,  
I do believe her, though I know she lies (1-2)

iv. Milton, *Paradise Lost*

"Look on me,  
Me who have touched and tasted, yet both live,  
And life more perfect have attained than fate  
Meant me, by vent'ring higher than my lot.  
Shall that be shut to man, which to the beast  
Is open?" (Book 9, 687-92)

v. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

But this description, I confess, doth by no means affect the British nation, who may be an example to the whole world for their wisdom, care, and justice in planting colonies; their liberal endowments for the advancement of religion and learning; their choice of devout and able pastors to propagate Christianity; their caution in stocking their provinces with people of sober lives and conversations from this the Mother Kingdom; their strict regard to the distribution of justice, in supplying the civil administration through all their colonies with officers of the greatest abilities, utter strangers to corruption: and to crown all, by sending the most vigilant and virtuous governors, who have no other views than the happiness of the people over whom they preside, and the honor of the king their master. (NAEL 1c, pl 2472)