

# Syllabus

Fall 2006

**Course:** Medieval Drama – ENGL-342-001  
**Instructor:** Dr. Linda Marie Zaerr  
**Office:** LA 211G  
**Telephone:** 426-1213 Office and Voice Mail  
384-5801 Home  
**E-mail:** Lzaerr@boisestate.edu  
**Web site:** <http://english.boisestate.edu/Lzaerr/medieval1.htm>  
**Office hours:** 10:40-11:30 MWF  
and by appointment

## Required text:

Bevington, David, ed. *Medieval Drama*. Boston: Houghton, 1975.  
*Silence*. Trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1999.

**Course objectives:** Most humanities students know something of Greek and Roman drama and its music, and something of drama and music from the Renaissance on, and they are aware of some significant differences. This course will fill the gap of several centuries and examine how theater and its music developed through the Middle Ages and shaped Western European drama. But the material is not simply useful as background. Many of the medieval plays are significant literary and musical works in their own right, developing some complex ideas and techniques that cannot be found in subsequent drama.

While the readings do provide a survey of medieval drama, they are designed to provide depth as well. By focusing on a narrative text in performance, we will explore what constitutes a performance text and how medieval perceptions of drama may have differed from our own.

The best way to gain an in-depth understanding of medieval drama is to participate in a production which is as close as practical to medieval productions. By becoming involved in the music and literature in this personal and interactive way, by sharing the same light with your audience, you will deepen your understanding of drama in general, and come face to face in a memorable way with the problems and delights of medieval drama.

**The Medieval Drama Guild:** The Medieval Drama guild consists of members of the Medieval Drama class together with members of the larger university and the community. Because drama was an integral part of the community in the Middle Ages, participation in a community entertainment is vital to understanding of the discipline. Community members will participate in the production, and the audience will be composed of members of our community. Furthermore *The Adventures of Silence* explores issues of gender and class, providing a community forum for topics of considerable relevance today.

**Fall 2006 Production:** Merlin prophesies that only a woman can capture him, so people are surprised when the young knight Silence compels Merlin to court. But they are even more surprised when Merlin reveals that Silence is a woman.

Dragon fights, feast music, and battles will resound through the stacks when Albertsons Library teams with the Medieval Drama Guild in *The Adventures of Silence* from thirteenth-century France.

*The Adventures of Silence* brings to life the story of Cador and Eufemie, brought together by love, and their child Silence who is born a girl but brought up as a boy because of unjust inheritance laws. Silence becomes a famous minstrel and then a valiant knight, facing perilous challenges in both roles.



Startlingly relevant and complex, the story of Silence tackles challenging questions of gender identity, and heredity versus environment, against a vivid background of medieval court life.

Drawing on medieval ways of thinking about entertainment, this production turns away from a formalized stage setting, turning instead to the library, a medieval center of both ideas and entertainment. Students in the Medieval Drama class will partner with community actors and musicians. Director James Orr, drama teacher at Crossroads Middle School, brings extensive experience reshaping medieval material to make it accessible for modern audiences.

**Grading:** Final grades will be determined on the basis of two quizzes on the reading assignments and lectures, an exam, a brief research prospectus, a written project, and participation in the stage production (this need not mean acting). Grades will be calculated as follows:

- 20 % Two Quizzes (10% each)
- 20 % Exam
- 30 % Participation in Production
- 5 % Research Project Prospectus
- 10 % Project Paper
- 10% Journal Entries
- 5% Summative Essay

# Schedule

Fall 2006

|           |    |   |                                       |
|-----------|----|---|---------------------------------------|
| August    | 21 |   |                                       |
|           | 28 | Bevington 3-13, 18-26, 57-66<br><i>Silence</i> production script                      |                                       |
| September | 4  | NO CLASS (Labor Day)  |                                       |
|           | 11 | Bevington 75-77, 137-154<br>Hildegard von Bingen's <i>Ordo virtutum</i> (on web site) |                                       |
|           | 18 | Complete <i>Silence</i> book  | <b>Quiz</b>                           |
|           | 25 | 13 <sup>th</sup> -century Marian texts (handout)                                      | <b>Project Prospectus</b>             |
| October   | 2  | Bevington xvii-xxii, 243-257, 290-307   | <b>Journal</b>                        |
|           | 9  | Bevington 569-579   | <b>Quiz</b><br><b>Lines Memorized</b> |
|           | 16 | Bevington 383-408   | <b>Project Paper</b>                  |
|           | 23 | Bevington 970-989   |                                       |
|           | 30 |   | <b>Exam</b>                           |
| November  | 6  |   |                                       |
|           | 13 |   | <b>Journal</b>                        |
|           | 20 | NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)   |                                       |
|           | 27 | <b>6:00-9:00 Dress Rehearsal in Library</b>   |                                       |
| December  | 2  | <b>2:00 and 7:30 Performances in Library</b>  |                                       |
| December  | 4  | <b>7:30 Performance in Library</b>  |                                       |
|           | 11 | Retrospective   | <b>Summative Essay</b>                |