

The Medieval Studies Program Presents a Lecture by
Maura B. Nolan
Department of English
University of California, Berkeley

“The Fortunes of Piers Plowman and Its Readers”

Thursday, 26 April 2007
4:00-6:00 South Hall 1415, UCSB



This lecture focuses on the role of Fortune in *Piers Plowman* and in two poems from the Findern manuscript that reference *Piers Plowman* but that have not been recognized as part of the Langlandian tradition. The Findern manuscript dates from the second half of the fifteenth century, and includes a wide variety of Middle English texts by Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate and Hoccleve, copied by a large number of scribes in a series of booklets. It appears to have functioned as a kind of “commonplace book” for an aristocratic family and its visitors, and illustrates the tastes and world views of late medieval gentry readers, who were especially concerned with the state of the realm and with possible solutions to its problems. The two Findern poems to be discussed are particularly concerned with Fortune, especially the way in which Fortune can or cannot be remedied by human action. Both ultimately rely on a Langlandian vision of will in order to experiment with the potentials for human agency that ill fortune creates and destroys.

Sponsored by The Medieval Studies Program, The Department of English and The IHC. For further information contact: english@history.ucsb.edu

