

English 260: Introduction to English Literature
CRN: 18087

Prof. Michael Leslie
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Class Meets: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 1:00-1:50 pm

Buckman 309

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 2:00-3:00 p.m.; and by appointment.

In this course, ladies and gentlemen, I am not concerned with generalities, with ideas and schools of thought, with groups of mediocrities under a fancy flag. I am concerned with the specific text, the thing itself. We will go to the center, to the hub, to the book and not vague summaries and compilations.

Vladimir Nabokov

Text

Longman Anthology of British Literature, 3rd edition

Office Hours

My administrative role as Dean of *British Studies At Oxford* means that I sometimes have to be out of my office unexpectedly. I shall try to keep my Office Hours, but for your own convenience I recommend that you phone ahead before climbing all those stairs - usually, Ms Candace Williams, my assistant, will be there and will be able to confirm whether or not I am.

Grading

The final grade recognizes the quality of your work over the whole course. It is awarded for a course of study successfully pursued, not simply for a few pieces of written work, and you are expected to be intellectually engaged at all times. Provided that I am confident that that is the case, the exact final grade is normally determined according to the scheme set out below. However, there are two thresholds you must cross successfully before I will award a grade above "D".

First, this is a degree-level English course, and I expect any formal piece of work to be written with correct grammar and spellings. All students now have access to word processing programs with a spelling checker, so there is little excuse for handing in misspelled work. Grammar is fundamental to communication, and degree-level written work in English has to communicate accurately. Many WP programs also have a grammar checker, though these are of limited usefulness. If you have any doubts about the accuracy of your English usage, you should use the Writing Center to gain advice. Above all, I expect you to proof-read your work and spot errors before I do – if you present work to me that you could not be bothered to read over, you must expect me to feel that you are treating the task with contempt and grade accordingly.

Second, this course requires that you master some facts concerning the literary, cultural, and political history of the time during which these texts were being written. If I become concerned that you are not mastering the material or preparing adequately for class, I shall issue a series of unannounced tests, each based on factual material found in the headnotes and introductions in our anthology, in any study-guides I have made available to you, and in our set readings. You must achieve at least a 60% average on these tests to get above "D".

Once across these thresholds, the grade is determined as follows:

First response paper (10 September):	15%
Second response paper (24 September):	15%
Midterm (5 October):	15%
Final paper (19 November):	20%
Final exam:	15%
Participation:	20%

Everybody wants a top grade for all their courses, and – as Garrison Keillor says of society in Lake Wobegon – we think that we are all above average. But life isn't really like that. Before you complain of unfair grading, bear in mind that satisfactory performance in this College is rewarded with a grade of C. A grade of B recognizes performance well beyond the simply satisfactory. Grades of A for the course will be given to work that is genuinely and consistently outstanding, and that grade is rarely given. For your information, the median grade I gave for my courses in Fall 1999 (the last time I made the calculation) was between B and B-.

Requirements

Participation

Your assessment for this course includes a substantial component for participation and you should be in no doubt that I use the full range of grades. Participation is important because learning is a not a passive activity and one person's failure to be actively engaged in a class adversely affects the experience of others. Participation can take many forms; speaking-up is only one of them. A student who is comparatively silent, but who is also obviously attentive and committed to the class is making a contribution to the overall atmosphere. Conversely, students who attend, but don't bring the text, are visibly bored, wear hats or caps, fall asleep, talk among themselves, or who are repeatedly late ... such students cannot expect to be rewarded for participation even if they make the occasional contribution to discussion.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all the sessions of the course and any unjustified absence will affect your grade. With the fifth such absence, I shall assume you have withdrawn from the course, with an automatic F if your name continues to appear on the class roll. You are also expected to be on time, to remain in the classroom throughout the class, and not bring food or drink into it.

NOTE WELL: Absences to either side of a College Recess will count double against you. Tell your parents, grandparents, long-lost uncles and other mythical beasts as soon as possible not to make travel arrangements for you that conflict with the schedule – I am impervious to the argument that begins, “But my mother didn't know and has already bought the ticket ...”.

Papers

Completion of all written work is required to pass the course; failure to do so is an automatic F. All papers must be submitted by the agreed date. If you encounter difficulties, you must contact me before the agreed deadline. I shall deduct 10% per day for late papers up to one week after the due date; thereafter, although the paper is still necessary for the completion of the course, I shall record a zero as the grade.

The format of papers

- Please use Times New Roman 12 point and number the pages.
- Use the spell-check tool, but do so with care: some of the great virtues of the computer derive from the machine's “stupidity”. Make sure you check for appropriateness any corrections proposed by the machine.
- Use the grammar checker, but with even more attentiveness.
- When you have completed your paper, use the word-count utility and put the total number of words at the top right of the front page.

Length of Papers

I don't like assigning a “set length” for papers – some writers need to develop ideas over a considerable span, others achieve high-quality work in astonishingly few words.

The latter are rare indeed and I know I'm not one of them. As a guide, I would say that you are unlikely to achieve thorough, nuanced expression of an idea or topic in under 1,500 words for the first two papers and in under 2,500 words for the final paper. Brevity is a great virtue in writers, but only if it is achieved without damage to sophistication.

Rewrites

I encourage rewrites, but these must be substantive: merely changing a few words I've queried or deleting things I've found challengeable will not do. Indeed, if I find that I have wasted my time reading a rewrite that is not substantive, expect my frustration to be made manifest in the overall grade for the course. Bear in mind that the difference between, for instance, a paper that receives a B and one that receives an A is not the occasional error or infelicity but quality of thought. If you decide to rewrite a paper, you should expect to start almost from scratch, using your first version as the foundation for a complete rethinking of the topic and your approach. If you approach rewriting in this spirit, it can be one of the most powerful tools for your intellectual development.

For each paper one rewrite is permitted, and it should be presented within two weeks of the return of the original paper (within one week of the return of the final paper, for obvious reasons). The recorded grade will be the average of the first and second grades.

What are the characteristics of the different grades of performance?

Full description of what will lead to various grades is both impossible and unwise. Again, bear in mind that the satisfactory student should receive a C grade; a B recognizes performance well above satisfactory. A grade of A or A- is for outstanding work and is received rarely. Here are some of the characteristics of the excellent and the poor student:

Excellent students attend the class without fail; they have always prepared for the class well; they are self-motivated learners, using the library and other resources to discover additional materials for the subject; they are curious and enquiring; and they constantly reflect on the relationship between subjects under immediate discussion and earlier discussions in the class. Their writing is ambitious: they seek to grapple with substantial subjects, which they pursue with clarity, accuracy, determination, and rigour, and they reread and rewrite their work before submitting it. They are perceptive and make sophisticated, educated, and independent-minded enquiries concerning issues to do with literature, language, and culture more generally. They seek to present their work with professionalism and proof-read it carefully before handing it in.

Poor students have poor attendance records. They have put little into preparation for class and they are visibly disengaged. In their written work they are more concerned with “set length” than with intellectual substance, and they fail to observe obvious professional standards (spelling, grammar, getting simple things like authors’ names and quotations right). They produce only one draft of papers and fail to read their work through to ensure its quality and accuracy. They seek simple answers to complex questions and do the bare minimum, rarely bringing to bear any reading or thinking not explicitly required by the professor.

Active Learning

Here is a good statement for you to consider, in relation to this and every course you take at Rhodes:

Let me speak to you purely as a professor for a moment. Here is a bedrock truth. We can inform you, we can expose you to things you never heard of before, we can explain things, we can sometimes entertain you, we can often bore the hell out of you, we can set up good learning environments (or not), we can test you, we can grade you and credential you, and you can like us or hate us. But however well or badly we do those things, there is one thing that we absolutely cannot do, even if we stand on our heads—and that is: educate you. That is because the educational part of an education requires a personal investment from you that is not in the contract. If you do not make that investment of yourself, you can get a college degree without coming close to an education. By personal investment, I mean a kind of active mental engagement that falls largely outside the routine of going to school.

Theodore D. Nordenburg
Professor of Philosophy, Mercer University [October, 2002]

Cheating

Those I catch cheating, I fail.

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE

All schedules are the product of hope and ambition, so we shall probably have to adjust this in the light of experience as the semester goes on.

1	Wednesday, 22 August	Introduction
English and Scottish Medieval Literature		
2	Friday, 24 August	Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>The Nun's Priest's Tale</i>
3	Monday, 27 August	Marie de France, <i>Lanval</i>
	Thursday, 28 August	DROP/ADD ENDS
4	Wednesday, 29 August	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> Part 1 EXTENDED DROP PERIOD BEGINS
5	Friday, 31 August	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> Part 2
6	Monday, 3 September	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
7	Wednesday, 5 September	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> , Part 3
8	Friday, 7 September	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> , Part 4
9	Monday, 10 September	Sir Thomas Malory, <i>The Morte Darthur</i> FIRST RESPONSE PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
England meets the Renaissance		
10	Wednesday, 12 September	Sir Thomas Wyatt, (“The Long Love”, “My Galley”, “Whoso list to hunt”, “They Flee from me” and “The Lover showeth ...”), and the Companion Readings from Petrarch’s <i>Rime</i> ; Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (“Love, that doth reign”, “Wyatt resteth here”); and handout EXTENDED DROP PERIOD ENDS
	Thursday, 13 September	WITHDRAWAL PERIOD BEGINS
11	Friday, 14 September	continued
12	Monday, 17 September	Sir Philip Sidney, <i>Astrophil and Stella</i> (numbers 1, 9, 31, 39, 45, 8 th Song, 106, 108)
13	Wednesday, 19 September	Christopher Marlowe, <i>Hero and Leander</i>
14	Friday, 21 September	continued
15	Monday, 24 September	Edmund Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i> , Book 1, Canto 7, Stanzas 1-19; Book 3, Cantos 1 and 6 (handout) SECOND RESPONSE PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
16	Wednesday, 26 September	John Donne, Donne “The Canonization”, “Air and Angels”, “A Valediction: Of Weeping”, “The Apparition”, “The Funeral”, “The Relic”; John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book 4, lines 358-535; Book 9, lines 960-1098
17	Friday, 28 September	continued

English Renaissance Drama

18	Monday, 1 October	Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i>
19	Wednesday, 3 October	continued
20	Friday, 5 October	continued MIDTERM EXAM TO BE HANDED IN AT BEGINNING OF CLASS
21	Monday, 8 October	Ben Jonson, <i>The Alchemist</i>
22	Wednesday, 10 October	continued
23	Friday, 12 October	Richard Brome, <i>The Weeding of Covent Garden</i> – a handout
24	Monday, 15 October	FALL RECESS – NO CLASS
25	Wednesday, 17 October	continued

Religious and Elegiac Poetry of the Early Seventeenth Century

26	Friday, 19 October	John Donne, “Holy Sonnets”; and George Herbert, “Easter Wings”, “Prayer (1)”, “Jordan (1)” [compare with Sidney’s <i>Astrophil and Stella</i> 15 - handout], “The Collar”, “The Pulley”, and “Love (3)”
27	Monday, 22 October	continued
28	Wednesday, 24 October	MPL AWAY – NO CLASS
29	Friday, 26 October	John Milton, <i>Lycidas</i> WITHDRAW PERIOD ENDS
30	Monday, 29 October	continued
31	Wednesday, 31 October	MPL AWAY – NO CLASS
32	Friday, 2 November	MPL AWAY – NO CLASS

Literature of the Civil Wars and Interregnum

33	Monday, 5 November	Robert Herrick, “Delight in Disorder”, “Corinna’s Going A-Maying”, “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time”, “Upon Julia’s Clothes”
34	Wednesday, 7 November	Robert Herrick, “The Hock-Cart, or Harvest Home”
35	Friday, 9 November	Richard Lovelace, “The Grasshopper”
36	Monday, 12 November	Andrew Marvell, “To his Coy Mistress” and “The Garden”
37	Wednesday, 14 November	Andrew Marvell, “The Horatian Ode”

Restoration and Early Georgian Literature

- 38 Friday, 16 November William Wycherley, *The Country Wife*
- 39 Monday, 19 November Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*
FINAL PAPER DUE
- 40 Wednesday, 21 November **THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO CLASS**
- 41 Friday, 23 November **THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO CLASS**
- 42 Monday, 26 November continued
- 43 Wednesday, 28 November Jonathan Swift, “A Description of a City Shower” and *A Modest Proposal*

Later Georgian Literature

- 44 Friday, 30 November Samuel Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes* – and handout
- 45 Monday, 3 December Thomas Gray, “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” – and handout
- 46 Wednesday, 5 December **FINAL CLASS**

Describing verbal art – a starting point

Vocabulary

What kinds of words are being used? The most obvious division – are the words derived from Germanic languages, particularly Anglo-Saxon, or are they derived from Romance languages (Latin, French, Italian, Spanish)?

What “register” of language? Formal, informal, pertaining to a particular profession, activity, or social context?

Diction?

What of the text’s “lexis”, its use of pre-patterned or associated words and phrases?

Rhythm and metre

In poetry, what is the metrical pattern? Prose uses rhythm too (all language does). What rhythms are there? To what degree does a piece of verse stick to its underlying metre? How and when does it depart?

Rhyme

Does it rhyme? What kind of pattern of rhyme - simple or complex, following a standard stanzaic pattern or doing something different?

Verse or prose?

Other sound qualities

Alliteration and assonance? Internal rhyme? Smooth or harsh?

Syntax and grammar

Are the sentences long or short, simple or complex? Is the grammar convoluted or obvious? If in a piece of verse, do they fit well with the line or stanza structure, or is there a tension between them?

Punctuation

How heavy is the punctuation? Where does it occur? Does it fit with the rhythmic, verse, or stanzaic structure?

Figurative language

Does the piece use lots of metaphors or similes?

Pattern

Are there linguistic patterns here?

Rhetoric

Is this text obviously conscious of having an audience and is it trying to influence that audience?

Department of English

Expectations and Policies

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. With this in mind, the Department of English has formulated a number of expectations and the policies that support them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to the syllabus for a particular course, you should address them to the instructor.

Attendance: The success of a course depends to a significant extent upon the presence of students alert and prepared to address the subject under discussion. Unavoidable absences should be discussed with the instructor, ideally before they occur. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of grade, in some cases to an F.

Deadlines: Writing assignments, test, etc., are carefully scheduled as stages toward the fulfillment of the course's goals and cannot be indefinitely deferred without frustrating those goals. Brief extensions for good reasons may be permissible with the instructor's prior approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized and may result in their not being accepted for credit.

Submission of all work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.