

MWF 2:00-2:50
Palmer 207

Prof. S. Uselmann
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Palmer 310
Office hrs: MW 3:00-4:00

English 260: British Literature Survey I

This course is a survey of British Literature from its earliest years through the Restoration and the eighteenth century. It is intended to provide a broad sense of the history of English literature written in the British Isles from the very first texts which exist until about the year 1800. Because of the span of the material, we will focus primarily on major texts and authors such as the *Beowulf*-poet, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton and Swift. In our effort to develop an appreciation for the formal and aesthetic qualities of these works we will also focus on mastering the tools necessary for writing literary analysis.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

Beowulf, trans. Dick Ringler. Hackett Publishing.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson. Norton Critical Edition

Edmund Spenser's Poetry, ed. Hugh Maclean and Anne Lake Prescott. Norton Critical Edition.

Metaphysical Poetry, ed. Collin Burrow

John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays*, ed. Rene Weis

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Scott Elledge. Norton Critical Edition.

Jonathon Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*. World's Classics.

*** NOTE: You must have these editions of the texts unless you have checked with me.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Participation, Quizzes, In-Class Writing. This class comes with a heavy reading load and will be run primarily in a lecture/discussion format. It goes without saying that I expect you to come prepared with your book and having done the assigned reading for the day. Regular, active participation is also required, and I will periodically give quizzes or informal writing assignments that will count as part of this grade.

Moodle Notes. As part of your class participation, you will also be required to respond to the readings by posing a question or series of questions to the class at least TEN (10) times over the course of the semester. The postings are due by **2:00 on Monday (i.e. by the time of class)** and should be in the form of a 100-word (i.e. about paragraph) observation about the text that struck you as you read – for example some incident, passage, framing device, etc. that struck you as strange, unfamiliar, or problematic. The best responses will refer to the language or literary aspects of the text and reference specific page and line numbers. You may also, if you like, offer a brief answer to the issues you raise, but this is not required.

Group-Led Discussion and Close Reading. In addition to the required readings, each member of the class (together with a partner[s]) will be responsible for leading a discussion on ONE particular work that we are reading this semester. This assignment is 15% of your final grade, and consists of four parts:

1. Read up on the literary concept or movement you have been assigned, as well as the "literary background" reading that has been assigned to the class.
2. Choose a passage from the week's reading of no more than 25 lines (I would be happy to provide some suggestions) that you think engages with or illuminates some aspect of the , and look up any interesting words in the Oxford English Dictionary (*OED*): What are the various meanings that these words assumed during the time of the author? What is the etymology of the word, and how do its various resonances play out in the passage? What does the author's use of language illuminate about the literary concept and/or literary backgrounds being discussed?

3. Develop 4-5 questions based on your OED findings to ask the class. Highlight the author's choices in literary devices and ask the class "how" and "why" questions that help draw out the key themes of the week. Be sure to email me to let me know your passage **by 4:00 on the day before your presentation.**
4. Writing a 3-4-page close reading of the passage that focuses on particular literary devices and develops an interpretation of the passage in relation to the larger literary or conceptual questions. This is your own work, to be done apart from your group work. The essay is **due in class one week following your presentation.**

All four parts must be completed in order to receive a passing grade on the assignment. If you have any questions about the readings or the assignment, or just want to run some ideas past me, please don't hesitate to email or come by to see me.

Absences. Regular, punctual attendance is required. Arriving more than 15 minutes late three times counts as an absence. Failure to bring your book to class or to pass the day's quiz also counts as an absence. Absences for extracurricular activities, religious holidays, or illness may be excused as long as you have contacted me in advance and completed the necessary homework/make-up work on time. You are allowed three (3) absences free-of-charge; each additional absence will cost your *final course average* two tenths of a point. If you miss more than 6 classes, you will fail the course.

Late Paper Policy. There will be NO extensions on any assignments in this class. Instead, you will be allotted three (3) "free" days at the beginning of the semester, which you may use when and as you wish. Each day is worth 24 hours (e.g. a paper due on Friday may be handed in by Saturday by 3:00), and you are free to use them up all at once or space them throughout the semester. It's up to you, but be aware that once these three days are used up, your letter grade on any given essay will drop 1/3 grade *for each day it is late.*

Assignments, Essays and Exams.

There will be one language "glossary" assignment, and 3 short, formal essays (as well as, for those interested, a 4th optional essay – to be explained later in the semester). Essays in this class will focus on the art of textual analysis and close reading. More detailed explanations of assignments will follow. There are two exams in this class.

Grading.

Preparation and Participation (includes quizzes and Moodle postings) – 10 %

Attendance (see above)

Group-Led Discussion and Close Reading Essay – 15 %

Language Exercise – 10 %

Essay # 1 – 10 %

Essay #2 – 15 %

*** OPTIONAL: Essay #3 – 10 % (exams in this case worth only 15 % each)

Two (2) Exams – 20 % each

Questions, problems, or concerns? Please always feel free to contact me. Most difficulties can be prevented from becoming serious problems fairly easily -- if the professor knows about them in advance.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

W 1/9

Introduction

F 1/11

Beowulf, pp. 3-39 (ll. 1-1418)

Old English Meter and Alliteration (intro, c-cix [100-109])

Week 2

M 1/14

Beowulf, pp. 39-117 (ll. 1419-4440)

W 1/16

No class – response paper on *Beowulf and epic due on Moodle by 5:00* (if you are unable to upload your file onto Moodle, then feel free to email the paper as an attachment)

F 1/18

Beowulf, pp. 117-166 (ll. 4441-6364)

Literary backgrounds: Bede's Story of Caedmon (available on Moodle)

* **Group-Led Discussion # 1:** *Beowulf* and Attitudes toward Poets (and Creators and Creating) in Anglo-Saxon Culture

Week 3

M 1/21

No class

W 1/23

Chaucer, *General Prologue*, pp. 3-23 (ll. 1-330; 545-66; 715-858)

Chaucer, *Miller's Prologue and Tale*, pp. 71-88

F 1/25

Reading on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (to celebrate the symposium)

Chaucer, *Miller's Prologue and Tale*, c'tued

Literary backgrounds: "The Three Guests of Heile of Bersele" (in Chaucer, pp. 341-343)

* **Group-Led Discussion # 2:** *Miller's Tale* and Fabliau

Week 4

M 1/28

Chaucer, *General Prologue*, pp. 14-15 (ll. 445-76)

Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, pp. 102-21

W 1/30

Chaucer, *Wife of Bath*, c'tued

F 2/1

Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Tale* (pp. 121-30)

Literary backgrounds: John Gower, "The Tale of Florent" (in Chaucer, pp. 386-96)

* **Group-led Discussion # 3:** *Wife of Bath's Tale* and Medieval Romance

DUE: Language Exercise (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

Week 5

M 2/4

General Prologue, ll. 331-60; ll. 669-714

Franklin's Prologue and Tale, pp. 212-233 (ll. 673-1624)

W 2/6

Pardoner's Prologue and Tale, pp. 233-48 (ll. 314-969)

F 2/8

Chaucer, *Pardoner*, c'tued

Literary backgrounds: Jean de Meun, from *Romance of the Rose*; "The Hermit, Death, and the Robbers;" and Thomas of Cantimpré (in Chaucer, pp. 431-438)

* **Group-led Discussion # 4:** *The Pardoner's Tale* and Medieval Exemplan

Week 6

M 2/11

Chaucer, *Retraction*, p. 306

Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, pp. 1-20 ("A Letter.."; l.i)

W 2/13

Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, pp. 20-31 (l.ii)

F 2/15

Spenser, c'tued

Literary backgrounds: "Allegory in Renaissance England" (Handout available on Moodle)

* **Group-led Discussion # 5:** *Spenser's Faerie Queene l.i-ii* and Renaissance Allegory

DUE: Essay #1

Week 7

M 2/18

Spenser, *FQ*, pp. 231-262 (lll.i-ii, lll.iv.1-44)

W 2/20

FQ pp. 278-92 (lll.iv.44-v)

F 2/22

FQ, pp. 293-311 (lll.vi.1-24)

Literary backgrounds: George Puttenham: Selections from *The Arte of English Poesie* and Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* (available on Moodle)

* **Group-led Discussion # 6:** *Spenser's Faerie Queene l.i-ii* and Renaissance Poetry

Week 8

M 2/25

FQ, pp. 312-374 (lll.vi.25-x)

W 2/27

FQ, pp. 375-400 (lll.xi-xii)

F 2/29 EXAM #1

NO CLASS -- Spring Break

Week 9

M 3/10 Shakespeare's sonnets, selections
Literary backgrounds: Renaissance Lyric Form (handout on Moodle)
*** Group-led Discussion # 7:** Shakespearean sonnet and Petrarchan Conceit

W 3/12 John Donne
F 3/14 Selections from *Metaphysical Poetry*: Herbert; Milton; Bradstreet; Crashaw; Marvell;
Vaughan; Philips
Literary backgrounds: Handout on Moodle
*** Group-led Discussion # 8:** The Metaphysical Poets and Metaphor

Week 10

M 3/17 Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*
Due: Essay #2

W 3/19 Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*
Literary backgrounds: Renaissance Humors (available on Moodle)
*** Group-led Discussion # 9:** Webster and Revenge Tragedy

F 3/21 No class (Easter Break)

Week 11

M 3/24 Webster, c'tued
Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I

W 3/26 *PL* Books II-III
F 3/28 *PL* Books II-III
Literary backgrounds: Milton and the Epic (available on Moodle)
*** Group-led Discussion # 10:** *Paradise Lost* and Renaissance Approaches to the Bible

Week 12

M 3/31 *PL* Book IV
W 4/2 *PL* Book VIII
F 4/4 *** Group-led Discussion # 11:** *Paradise Lost* and Renaissance Conceptions of
Psychology (and women)

Week 13

M 4/7 Milton, *PL* Books IX-X
W 4/9 Milton, *PL* Book XII.552-649
F 4/11 Milton, *PL*, c'tued
Gulliver's Travels, Part 1
DUE: Essay #3 (optional)

Week 14

M 4/14 *Gulliver's Travels*, Parts 1 and 2
Literary backgrounds: Hobbes and Locke

W 4/16 *Gulliver's Travels*
*** Group-led Discussion # 12:** *Gulliver's Travels* and Satire in the Eighteenth Century

F 4/18 *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 3

Week 15

M 4/21 *GT*, Part 4
W 4/23 **EXAM # 2**