

ENGL 261
19th AND 20th CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE
Spring 2012, MWF 10:00-10:50, Palmer 211

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Office Hours: M, T, W 2-3 and by appointment

Overview

This course is a survey of major works of British and Irish writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We will be reading fiction, poems, and plays, as well as selections from philosophical, political, and autobiographical writing. We will be looking to see what sorts of historical problems and formal solutions these different genres of writing share across the broad patterns of literary and artistic production we now call “Romantic,” “Victorian,” and “Modernist.”

Required Texts:

Greenblatt, et al., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th Edition, Volume 2 (D, E, & F)

Course Objectives:

The two main goals of this course are, first, to gain a broader understanding of narrative, poetic, and dramatic forms as intellectually and socially significant activities, and, second, to learn how to effectively analyze and interpret major works and literary practices created by modern British and Irish writers.

The many voices and texts that will be the focus of our reading emerge out of a wide range of (often conflicting) ideas about art, literature, national identity, modernity, and the business of publishing. I will present key features and important backgrounds for these ideas in lectures, but the core of this course is designed to be exciting—but also exacting—discussion. The classroom should be your rehearsal space for the ideas and interpretations you will work out in more detail in your writing. Our goal is not simply to become “familiar” or “knowledgeable” about modern literature, but to see what it might feel like to find these texts *unfamiliar* and *problematic*—that is to say, as provoking us to think—and write—in response.

Course Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory. Your success in this course depends heavily on your actively engaging with the texts and ideas under discussion as well as reading the material. I understand that wonderful and awful things sometimes happen to make you miss class, so there is no penalty for up to three absences. I do not require an explanation, although it’s always appreciated. Beyond those three absences, *each* additional absence will cost your final course average one full letter grade, i.e. C to D, A- to B-, etc. If you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course. Please note that, barring emergencies, there are no excused absences in this arrangement,

including sports events and illnesses—so plan ahead. I will pass around an attendance sheet at the beginning of each class: if your signature is not there, you will be counted as absent. Chronic or unreasonable tardiness (i.e. more than once or twice, more than two or three minutes) will count as an absence.

1/ Three Essays: 5-6 pages for the first two essays, and 8-10 pages for the final essay. Each should analyze passages from the works we have read and concepts discussed in class. We will talk in detail in class about my expectations for these essays—if you have any questions, please email me or drop by my office hours. I will distribute suggested topics a week before papers are due, but you are also free to develop your own topics with my approval. The first two essays are worth 15% of the final grade, and the third is worth 20% (50% total).

I am happy to discuss your writing at any stage (from caffeinated epiphanies to polished drafts) in my office hours or by appointment.

2/ Two Critical Summaries: Both of these 1-2 page reviews should summarize a work of literary criticism taken from an approved book or scholarly article that discusses a text the class has been assigned to read. You should give your reader a useful account of the critic's main arguments and what examples they used. I will pass around a sign-up sheet for summary assignments in class. Each précis is worth 5% of the final grade (10% total).

3/ A midterm exam, consisting of identifying passages from our readings, writing short explications of those passages, and connecting them to concepts discussed in class. These will be variations of what you will be doing in class and in the essays: tracing conceptual trajectories and connecting text with context. Each exam is worth 10% of the final grade (20% total).

4/ Participation: I expect everyone to participate in class discussions, but there will also be various reading quizzes, and short in-class or online writing assignments. Some of these are meant to keep you reading, but many are designed to give you the opportunity to explore ideas and responses in ways that the to-and-fro of spoken conversation can sometimes make difficult. I consider quality as well as quantity of participation (15%).

5/ One in-class reading. You will have the chance to sign up for a reading in the second week of class. After selecting a 20-30 lines of poetry or 2-3 pages of prose from a class text, you should familiarize yourself enough with the passage to feel comfortable reading it out loud at the beginning of a class. You should be able to point out problems (including whether it was easy or difficult to read) or aspects of the passage that struck you, but informally, as an opening for class discussion (5%).

Use of Outside Sources:

Since you are being asked to read some critical essays, I assume you will, in some cases, make use of them in writing your essays. You are not required to do so. You can easily write the essays for this class without using any outside sources—and that's just fine. But if you use outside sources, you must clearly indicate which of your ideas derive from those sources and give full bibliographical information (author, title, publisher, place of publication, date of

publication, page numbers—or title, volume, year, and page numbers of journals—or web site urls) for every source on which you have relied.

Day	Date	Assignments
Wednesday	January 11	Introduction
Friday	13	Wordsworth & Coleridge, from <i>Lyrical Ballads</i>
Monday	16 (MLK)	No class
Wednesday	18	Wordsworth & Coleridge, from <i>Lyrical Ballads</i>
Friday	20	Wordsworth & Coleridge, from <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> ; Preface
Monday	23	Scott, “Wandering Willie’s Tale”; Wordsworth, selections
Wednesday	25	Austen, “Love and Friendship”
Friday	27	Shelley, “The Mortal Immortal”
Monday	30	Shelley, “The Mortal Immortal”
Wednesday	February 1	Keats, “The Eve of St. Agnes”
Friday	3	Keats, “The Eve of St. Agnes”
Monday	6	Wordsworth, from Prelude [ESSAY 1 DUE]
Wednesday	8	Mill, “What Is Poetry?”; from “Autobiography”
Friday	10	Barrett Browning, “The Runaway Slave on Pilgrim’s Point”
Monday	13	Gaskell, “The Old Nurse’s Story”
Wednesday	15	Mayhew, from <i>London Labour</i> ; Dickens, “A Visit to Newgate”
Friday	17	Darwin, from <i>Origin</i> ; Tennyson, from “In Memoriam”
Monday	20	Browning, “Caliban Upon Setebos”
Wednesday	22	Ruskin, from <i>Stones</i> ; Browning, “The Bishop Orders His Tomb”
Friday	24	[MIDTERM EXAM]
Monday	27	Tennyson, “Opening of the [...] Exhibition”; Mukharji, “A Visit...”
Wednesday	29	Kipling, “The Man Who Would Be King”
Friday	March 2	Kipling, “The Man Who Would Be King”
Monday	5	Kipling, “The Man Who Would Be King”
Wednesday	7	Eliot, “The Waste Land”
Friday	9	Eliot, “The Waste Land”
Monday	12	Spring Break
Wednesday	14	Spring Break
Friday	16	Spring Break
Monday	19	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
Wednesday	21	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
Friday	23	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
Monday	26	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> [ESSAY 2 DUE]
Wednesday	28	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
Friday	30	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
Monday	April 2	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
Wednesday	4	Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
Friday	6	Easter Recess
Monday	9	Yeats, selections
Wednesday	11	Yeats, selections
Friday	13	Auden, selections
Monday	16	Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i>
Wednesday	18	Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i>
Friday	20	Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i>

Monday	23	Lessing, "To Room Nineteen"
Wednesday	25	Rushdie, "The Prophet's Hair"
Friday	27	Coetzee, from <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> ; Evaluations
Monday	30	[ESSAY 3 DUE]

1801	Acts of Union create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland
1803-1815	Napoleonic Wars demolish aristocratic remnants, modernize warfare, incite nationalisms
1832	Great Reform Act reduces corruption, increases the franchise
1839-42	First Opium War; First Afghan War
1844	Engels, <i>The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844</i>
1845-52	Famine in Ireland reduces population 20-25% by death and emigration
1851	The Great Exhibition attended by Brontë, Darwin, and Eliot
1853-56	Reports from the Crimean War arrive to London newspapers by telegraph
1856-60	Second Opium War
1857	Indian Rebellion against the British East India Company; Crown takes the "Raj"
1860	Construction begins on the Metropolitan Railway, underneath London
1875	Disraeli buys control of the Suez Canal from Egypt
1878-80	Second Afghan War
1880-81	First Boer War
1882	British forces occupy Egypt
1880s-1907	British and Russian Empires play "The Great Game" in Afghanistan and Tibet
1886-1916	Celtic Twilight, Irish Renaissance, and Revivals lead to counter-revivals and experiments
1899-1902	Second Boer War
1902	Marconi's radio transmission crosses the Atlantic; the Curies isolate radium chloride
1909	Blériot flies across the English Channel
1914-18	The Great War
1921-23	Partition and Civil War in Ireland
1926	Trades Union Council calls a General Strike across the UK
1929-40s	The Great Depression
1936-39	Spanish Civil War pits international brigades against fascist coalitions
1939-45	World War II
1947	Indian Independence and partition from Pakistan
1948	Partition of the Palestinian mandate and the creation of Israel
1950s	Libya, Egypt, Sudan, and Ghana gain independence
1956	Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal
1960s	Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados gain independence in the Caribbean; Nigeria, Cameroon, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Gambia, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Swaziland, and South Africa gain independence in Africa
1960s-70s	"Troubles" in Northern Ireland
1997-98	Hong Kong returned to China; devolution plans in N. Ireland, Scotland, and Wales