

English 261: British Literature to 1800

Fall Semester 2012

Instructor: Lowell Duckert

Email: Lowell.Duckert@mail.wvu.edu

Meeting Time: 9:30-10:20 AM MWF

Meeting Place: Clark Hall 208

Office: Colson Hall 333

Office Hours: 2:00-5:00 PM W and by appointment

Office Phone: (304) 293-9700

This course introduces you to a wide variety of British literature from the medieval period to the eighteenth century. We will encounter recurrent themes: from monstrosity, gender, race, and the imaginings of identity, to the complexities of community, travel, and the in/outside. Our task is to explore these problematical (and indeed *pleasurable*) concepts through literature that is itself *exploratory*. We will examine works by authors that – physically and figuratively – travel outside prescribed borders (of the “British” nation, the “English” language, even of the “human”) to reveal how these boundaries are always permeable, fluid, and contestable. What communities, what *futures*, might past works of art lead us to desire, imagine, and create at present?

The learning objectives for this course follow the English B.A. Program Goals. After taking this class, you will be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts
 - a. by identifying genre conventions and analyzing their effects
 - b. by identifying and analyzing effects of complexity or ambiguity
 - c. by locating texts in social / economic / political / literary histories
 - d. by connecting texts to other literary or cultural texts
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies

Code of Courtesy

Arrive on time with your cell phone silenced. Bring the appropriate book to class. Give me your full attention. Laptops are allowed only for note-taking purposes. Remain in the room until the class ends. Conduct yourself in a manner respectful to all present. Never hesitate to ask a question, to express a doubt, or to request clarification.

Required Books (available from the WVU bookstore):

1. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (9th ed., volumes A, B, and C)
2. Thomas Harriot, *A Brief and True Report* (Dover Publications, 1972)

It is crucial that you have the specified editions in order to follow along—page and line numbers can vary widely.

Requirements:

1. *The basics:* complete readings on time; attend class; participate in discussions. I expect you to be prepared for every class – meaning that you need to pose thoughtful questions and ideas to the group. This is not a straightforward lecture class!
2. *Compose* in-class reading responses: while I will not be quizzing you, I will ask you to complete short (but thoughtful, textually-based) responses to questions I pose at the beginning of each class. I will collect your responses, grade them, (satisfactory or unsatisfactory), and then return them to you at our next meeting. I recommend keeping a notebook of some kind: your writing will be a valuable studying guide for the exams.
3. *Complete* both the midterm and the final exam.

Attendance Policy:

I will allow **two** absences—after that, your grade drops a letter for each additional absence (for example: an A becomes a B). At six absences, you fail the course. You may not take an incomplete. In-class responses and the final exam cannot be rescheduled, but the midterm may (with good reason). If you foresee a scheduling conflict, you must notify me as soon as possible. In general, though, I do not want to know why you are absent.

Contact:

I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours (information above), and feel free to email/call me at any time. Make sure that your MIX email address is operational; I will frequently notify you about what to read for a given day, and I will occasionally post documents online.

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty of any kind will be treated as a serious offense. In most cases, you will fail the course. You can find more on the Student Conduct Code at http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code

Disability Statement:

If you feel you need accommodations based on the impact of a disability, the Office of Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.wvu.edu>) is available to assist you.

Grading Rubric:

Your grade for the course will be determined by adding together the following:

Participation and attendance in class	20
In-class reading responses	25
Midterm examination	25
Final examination	30
Total	100

Schedule of Readings (subject to change):

Week One

M 8/20	Introductions
W 8/22	<i>The Wanderer</i>
F 8/24	Comparison of <i>Beowulf</i> 's opening lines in several translations (online; lines 1-85 recommended)

Week Two

M 8/27 *Beowulf*
W 8/29 *Beowulf*
F 8/31 *Beowulf*

Week Three

M 9/3 No Class: Labor Day
W 9/5 *Beowulf*
F 9/7 *Beowulf*

Week Four

M 9/10 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
W 9/12 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
F 9/14 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Week Five

M 9/17 Marie de France: *Lanval*
W 9/19 Marie de France: *Bisclavret* (online)
F 9/21 No Class

Week Six

M 9/24 No Class
W 9/26 Thomas More: *Utopia*
F 9/28 *Utopia*

Week Seven

M 10/1 *Utopia*
W 10/3 Midterm Review
F 10/5 Midterm Exam

Week Eight

M 10/8 Thomas Harriot's *A Briefe and True Report*; excerpt from Walter Raleigh's
The Discoverie of Guiana
W 10/10 *A Briefe and True Report*
F 10/12 *A Briefe and True Report*

Week Nine

M 10/15 William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*
W 10/17 *Twelfth Night*
F 10/19 *Twelfth Night*

Week Ten

M 10/22 *Twelfth Night*
W 10/24 *Twelfth Night*
F 10/26 No Class

Week Eleven

M 10/29 John Milton: *Paradise Lost*
W 10/31 *Paradise Lost*
F 11/2 *Paradise Lost*

Week Twelve

M 11/5 Aphra Behn: *Oroonoko*
W 11/7 *Oroonoko*
F 11/9 *Oroonoko*

Week Thirteen

M 11/12 No Class: Veterans Day
W 11/14 Jonathan Swift: *Gulliver's Travels*
F 11/16 *Gulliver's Travels*

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving Recess

Week Fifteen

M 11/26 *Gulliver's Travels*
W 11/28 *Gulliver's Travels*
F 11/30 *Gulliver's Travels*

Week Sixteen

M 12/3 Class Conclusion
W 12/5 Final Review
F 12/7 Office Hours

T 12/11 Final: 8-10 AM