

## English 261: British Literature 1

**Section 02: CRN 11102. Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45, Brooks Hall 225.**

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**Office Hours:**  
TRs, 1:30-2:20  
and by appointment.

### **Course Description:**

This course serves as an introduction to the historical and growing canon of British literature from the Anglo Saxon Period up through the late eighteenth century. Our primary genres will include poetry and drama, though we will look at various prose forms as well, including memoirs, early fiction forms, and narratives. For the most part, we will take a depth rather than breadth approach, as we will read more complete works than selections. We will spend some time learning literary form as well as learning about the historical circumstances surrounding our literature.

British literature 1 attempts to meet the following content objectives in the English major curriculum:

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

### **Texts**

1. The Norton Anthology of British Literature, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Volume 1 (or Volumes A, B, C)
2. William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*. Norton Critical Edition (or equivalent volume)
3. Additional readings scanned and posted to eCampus.

Except as noted, all readings are in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Volumes A, B, or C divided into smaller books. The schedule is subject to change, with reasonable additions or subtractions announced ahead of time. Also please note that we will be reading several works in electronic form that I will post to eCampus—be attentive as to when these readings happen and feel free to bring those readings to class, whether by printing them or by bringing them in with laptops or tablets. Unless we have to cancel a class, I expect to adhere rigorously to this schedule (alas, we have little choice), by which I mean that we will at least begin the discussion of each work you are to read on the date specified.

**A Note on the Reading:** please note that the nightly reading load is intense. Because of the Tuesday and Thursday block, we have to cram more reading into less days than our Monday, Wednesday, Friday counterparts. I will often either give a quiz or a short writing assignment to test that the reading has been done. With that said, questions I will give will be oriented more toward broad themes rather than miniscule details. I encourage you to read the longer pieces ahead of time and try to stay on course rather than get behind on the material. **Dictum sapienti sat est!**

## Assignments:

**EXAMS:** There will be a mid-term exam (primarily dealing with historical context, identification, and a choice of short essays involving close reading) and a two part final-- the first part will deal with the last section of the course, the second will be synthetic, dealing with the whole period.

**PARTICIPATION:** For this class to work, it's integral that everyone, not just one or two people, participate in class discussion. You'll receive some credit for showing up and doing well on the work; however, A level participation involves doing well and being a class leader in discussing the readings with the class. B level participation involves offering some contributions while meeting attendance standards. C level participation involves minimal contributions but otherwise meeting attendance and other standards. To receive a D or F, the student will make minimal to no contributions and/or have trouble with attendance and/or other problems.

**POETRY IMITATION:** for this assignment, you will compose a poem incorporating one of the poetic forms we will study this semester. You should identify the genre you choose (alliterative poem, English sonnet, Spenserian sonnet, etc) and then compose your own poem paying close attention to the organization, rhyme scheme, and meter in the poem. I will evaluate these poems not based on how well the content universally exemplifies the human condition; rather, I will grade them based on how well they manage to imitate one of the forms we have learned in class.

**SHORT PAPERS:** this is an English class, so as always, we should work to sharpen our writing and analytical skills. I will ask for a roughly 2-3 page paper responding to a prompt I will give. These prompts may do any of the following: direct you to do a close reading of a text, compare/contrast themes from multiple authors, offer a reading using a critical lens (Psychoanalysis, gender studies, etc), or offer an ideas critique. Over the course of the semester, there will be four of these.

**QUIZZES:** We will often begin periods by taking a five question quiz on the reading. It's wise to jot notes down while reading so that important details are not missed. If you miss a short writing or quiz, you may not make it up (except for college-sponsored activity absences); however, I will drop one quiz when I calculate grades.

**Grades:** Grades will be calculated as follows: Midterm Exam, 15%; Final Exam, 25%; Short Papers, 20%; Quizzes, 20%; Participation 10%; and Poetry Imitation 10%. I anticipate that 90-100 will be an A; 80-89.9 a B; 70-79.9 a C; and beyond that all is darkness.

Short Papers: 20%

Midterm Exam: 15%

Final Exam: 25%

Quizzes: 20%

Participation: 10%

Poetry Imitation: 10%

## **Course Policies:**

**Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is described in the student handbook. I have a particular set of skills, skills which make me a nightmare for plagiarists. I have a strict Zero Tolerance policy for plagiarists, no matter how low the stakes of any particular assignment. If plagiarism happens accidentally, it might be forgiven once. If plagiarize purposeful, I will not hesitate to file sanctions up to an unforgivable F for the course. The same can be said about any other sort of cheating, including on exams.

**Attendance:** Attendance is essential to gaining mastery over the literature we will study. I will take attendance each day, either by a name call or a quiz. I will allow three classes without penalty. Absences 4 and 5 will each take a letter off the overall final grade, and absence six will result in an automatic failure of the course.

If you have to be gone from class for any reason, whether a university or a personal reason, for an extended amount of time (more than one day), please keep me informed as I will evaluate any of these extenuating circumstances on a case by case basis.

**E-Mail:** my e-mail is listed. I will answer e-mails as quickly as possible Monday through Friday and will check often on the weekends.

**Office Hours:** I will be in my office for about a hour before class each day. If you're having difficulty with the readings or would like to come by and chat about anything, please stop by and I will be happy to assist you. My office is in Colson Hall, Room G3, right across from the Writing Studio.

**Participation:** Except for a few brief points in which I lecture to establish some context, this will be a discussion class. I will guide the discussion to some extent, in order to get in some points which I consider essential, but there will be room for student interests to set our agenda. This is essentially a class designed to make us better readers, and we achieve that by talking about our reading experiences and hearing about those of others. For this reason, participation will figure importantly in your grade.

**Social Justice:** be adults. I will have a Zero Tolerance Policy for disparaging remarks on race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, or appearance.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented learning disability, a serious hearing or vision problem, or any other special need that might affect your performance and participation in class, please inform me. Also, please be aware of the support services available to you through the Office of Accessibility Services in Suite 250 at 1085 VanVoorhis Rd (beside Applebee's and across from the Mountaineer Station transportation center). The phone number is 304-293-6700, and email is [access2@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:access2@mail.wvu.edu). Access the website at <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>.

**Technology:** I encourage everyone to bring readings on laptops, tablets, or smart phones, especially on eCampus reading days. Taking notes on them is fine, but know that I frequently walk around the room and can tell who is listening to the conversation. If a device becomes distracting because of their lamentable use, I reserve the right to tell

ask to put devices away and then dock participation, or, even worse, snarkily call on the offender to answer a question.

**University Counseling Services:** The Carruth Center provides resources to help manage stress, improve relationships, make healthy lifestyle choices, and face new challenges and transitions. The Center is in the newly constructed Health and Education Building, 390 Birch Street, located on the Evansdale campus adjacent to the Student Recreation Center. Its website is <http://well.wvu.edu/ccpps>, and its phone number (answered 24 hours) is 304-293-4431.

## **Schedule of Readings (Subject to Change According to Progress)**

### **Anglo Saxon & Middle English Literature:**

**T Jan 12:** Syllabus & Policies, Lecture: literary schools w/ handout, Early British history

**R Jan 14:** *Beowulf*, Part 1, Lines 1-1383 (Pgs. 41-72)

**T Jan 19:** *Beowulf*, Part 2, Lines 1383-3172 (Pgs. 72-108)

**R Jan 21:** *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Part 1, Lines 1-1126 (Pgs. 183-209)

**T Jan 26:** *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Part 2, Lines 1127-2530 (Pgs. 209-238)

**R Jan 28.** Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, “The General Prologue” and Summary of Knight’s Tale (242-63)

**T Feb 2** Chaucer, “Miller’s Prologue and Tale” (264-79); “Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale” (282-310) Chaucer’s Retraction (342)

**R Feb 4.** Selections from Julian of Norwich (412-24); Selections from Margery Kempe (424-38)

**T Feb 9.** *The York Play of the Crucifixion* (440-47); *Everyman* (508-29); **SHORT ESSAY #1 Due Today**

### **Early Modern England:**

**R Feb 11** Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (1127-64)

**T Feb 16.** Selections from Edmund Spenser, “The Shepheardes Calender” (769-74); *The Faerie Queen*, Cantos 1-2 (781-806)

**R Feb 18** Tudor Poetry & its Influences: Petrarch (**eCampus**), Sir Thomas Wyatt (646-60), Amelia Lanyer (1430-40)

**T Feb 23.** Sonnets: **Shakespeare:** 1 (1171), 18 (1172), 29 (1174), 116 (1182), 127-30, 135, 138, 144, 146, 147, 152 (1183-86); **Spenser,** Sonnets from “Amoretti” (985-89)

Midterm Review

**R Feb 25: Midterm Exam**

**T Mar. 1.** Elizabethan History Play, Shakespeare, *King Richard the III, Acts 1-3* **SHORT ESSAY #2**  
**Due Today**

**R Mar 3.** Elizabethan History Play, Shakespeare, *King Richard the III, Acts 4-5*

**T Mar 8** Jacobean Comedy, Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, Acts 1-3*

**R Mar 10:** Jacobean Comedy, *Twelfth Night, Acts 4-5*

**F Mar 11: POETRY IMITATION DUE on eCampus by 5 PM**

T Mar 15: Jacobean Tragedy: Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi, Acts 1-3*

R Mar 17: Jacobean Tragedy: Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi, Acts 4-5*

**T March 29** John Donne (Pgs. 1370-91) & (1410-15); Robert Herrick, “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” (1762); Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress” (1796).

**R March 31** Milton, *Paradise Lost, Books 1-2.*

**T April 5** Milton, *Paradise Lost, Books 3-4.* **SHORT ESSAY #3 DUE TODAY!**

**R April 7:** Milton, *Paradise Lost, Books 5-6*

**T April 12.** Milton, *Paradise Lost, Books 7-8*

**R April 14.** Milton, *Paradise Lost, Books 9-10.*

### **Restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> Century:**

**T April 19** John Gay, *The Beggar’s Opera* (2789-2833)

**R April 21.** 18<sup>th</sup> Century Poets:

**Pope**, “The Rape of the Lock” (2686-2704); **John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester**, “The Disabled Debauchee” (2297-2300) & “The Imperfect Enjoyment” (2298-2300); **Aphra Behn**, “The Disappointment” (2310-13); **Swift**, “The Lady’s Dressing Room” (2767-70); **Lady Mary Wortley Montagu**, “The Reasons That Induced Dr. Swift to Write a Poem Called the Lady’s Dressing Room” (2770-72)

**T April 26** Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, “Part 4: A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms” (2587-2633)

**R April 28** Transatlantic Slave Narrative: Olaudah Equiano (3033-43); Final Exam Review, SEIs.  
**SHORT ESSAY #4 DUE TODAY!!**

**M May 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Final Exam, 3 to 5 PM.