

Professor Francus
English 261: *British Literature I*
Fall 2016
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:45
306 Armstrong Hall
Office: 227 Colson Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00-11:15 and by appointment.
E-Mail: mfrancus@mix.wvu.edu (alternate: Marilyn.Francus@mail.wvu.edu)

Course Description:

Early British culture permeates our society, as films depicting the Anglo-Saxon and medieval-inflected cultures (like *Beowulf*, *Game of Thrones*, *Lord of the Rings*) make evident. Shakespeare's works circulate in their original and adapted forms, onstage and screen (*10 Things I Hate About You*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Much Ado about Nothing*) with astonishing frequency, as do stories about King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I (*The Tudors*, *Elizabeth*). More people know Milton's version of the Garden of Eden than the version in Genesis, and the film industry produces versions of *Gulliver's Travels* with regularity. By reading early British literature, not only will students in English 261 understand British literary history, but shed light on their own cultural experience.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to the genres and modes of early and early modern British literature.
- To study early and early modern British literature in the context of its history and culture.
- To introduce critical methodologies to guide students through literary and cultural texts.
- To provide practice in critical thinking and writing about literature.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify and analyze the primary modes of comedy, tragedy, satire, and romance.
- Identify and analyze a variety of literary genres, including epic, drama, sonnet, and novel.
- Develop a thesis about a literary text, and support that thesis with textual evidence.
- Analyze literary evidence in detail, paying attention to rhetoric, tone, characterization, and theme.
- Locate a text in social, economic, political, and/or literary history.
- Recognize and develop multiple analyses for a single literary text.
- Analyze a text in light of other literary and/or cultural texts.

English 261 fulfills the GEF Area 6 requirement (Artistic Expression). English 261 fulfills the General Education Curriculum (GEC) requirements for Objective 3 (The Past and Its Traditions) and Objective 5 (Artistic Expression).

English 261 fulfills requirements for the English major and minor.

Please note: English 101 and English 102 (or equivalents) are not prerequisites for English 261, but they will enable your success in this course.

Course Schedule:

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| August 18 | Introduction |
| August 23 | <i>Beowulf</i> |
| August 25 | <i>Beowulf, Judith</i> |
| August 30 | <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> |
| September 1 | <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> ; excerpt, <i>Monty Python and the Holy Grail</i> |
| September 6 | de France, “Prologue” and “Lanval” from <i>Lais</i> |
| September 8 | Chaucer, selections from “General Prologue” to <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> |
| September 13 | Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue” |
| September 15 | Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Tale”; excerpts from <i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i> Close Reading Essay Due |
| September 20 | Elizabeth I, poetry and prose Peer Review Response to Close Reading Essay Due |
| September 22 | Renaissance sonnets by Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare |
| September 27 | More, <i>Utopia</i> |
| September 29 | More, <i>Utopia</i> |
| October 4 | Class Cancelled |
| October 6 | Donne, selected poems |
| October 11 | Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> |
| October 13 | Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> Canon/Culture Essay Due |
| October 18 | Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , excerpts from Book 1 and Book 2 Peer Response to Canon/Culture Essay Due |
| October 20 | Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , excerpts from Book 3 and Book 4 |
| October 25 | Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book 9 |
| October 27 | Pepys’ <i>Diary</i> excerpts |
| November 1 | Behn, <i>Oroonoko</i> |
| November 3 | Behn, <i>Oroonoko</i> |
| November 8 | Election Day Recess |
| November 10 | Dryden, “MacFlecknoe”; Addison, <i>Spectator</i> #69 Criticism Essay Due |
| November 15 | Swift, <i>Gulliver’s Travels</i> , Book 4; “A Modest Proposal” Peer Response to Criticism Essay Due |
| November 17 | Pope, “The Rape of the Lock” |
| November 21-27 | Thanksgiving Recess |

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| November 29 | Haywood's <i>Fantomina</i> |
| December 1 | Gray, "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat," "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" |
| December 6 | Last Day of Class |
| December 9 | Take Home Final Due via email |

Changes in the course schedule at the instructor's discretion.

Textbook: *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, Fourth Edition, Volumes 1A, 1B, and 1C. Course texts are available at the WVU Bookstore.

Course Requirements: Three short essays (4 pages each), three responses to peer work, and a take-home final. You will be expected to keep up with the course readings, think and write about course texts, attend and participate in class, and to check your e-mail daily.

1. A Close Reading Essay. You will be asked to analyze a passage from one of the texts that we have read.
 - Your essay must include a thesis statement regarding the passage; take a position regarding the passage.
 - Your essay should include, and elaborate upon, at least three reasons in order to substantiate your thesis statement.
 - Use the details from the passage as your evidence. The more details that you use, and the more you analyze those details, the more convincing your argument will be.
 - You may use your knowledge of the rest of the text to analyze the passage at hand, but do not let contextual information lead you astray. Stay focused on the passage.
2. A Canon/Culture Essay. You will be asked to evaluate a film clip that refers to one of our course texts.
 - You must have a thesis statement regarding the clip; take a position about the clip.
 - Your essay should include, and elaborate upon, at least three reasons in order to substantiate your thesis statement.
 - Use your knowledge of the course texts to substantiate your position. The more detailed evidence you provide—from the text and the film clip—the better.
3. A Criticism Essay. You will be asked to respond to a comment from a scholar regarding one of the texts that we have read.
 - Your essay must include a thesis statement regarding the critic's comment; take a position regarding the critic.
 - Your essay should include, and elaborate upon, at least three reasons in order to substantiate your thesis statement.
 - Use your knowledge of the course texts to substantiate your position.
4. Three Peer-responses. For the canon/culture exercise, the close reading exercise, and the criticism exercise, you will submit a copy of your assignment to a fellow student (in addition to submitting it to me). You will write a brief response to a classmate's work (which you will submit to me as well), and receive a classmate's response to your work.

5. The take home final will consist of three parts: a close reading essay; a canon/culture essay; and a criticism essay. Your final, like your essays, should reflect careful reading and thinking about your subject. Do not summarize the plot of a work or rephrase your class notes in your course assignments.

Quizzes and in-class exercises at the discretion of the instructor.

Grading:

1. Each essay will count for 20% of your final grade (or 60% of the total grade), peer reviews in total will count for 15% of your grade, and the take-home final will count for 25% of your final grade.
2. Class participation will be taken into consideration for students with borderline grades. If a student's final grade falls between a B and a B+, and the student has been an active, insightful class participant, the student will receive a B+ for the course. This policy only holds for final grade calculations, and only raises the student's borderline grade to the next immediate grade level (so a B will not be raised to an A- or an A based on class participation).

Grading Criteria:

A (90-100) – Excellent work; the assignment has been completed in a professional and timely manner. The assignment has a clear, relevant thesis and organization, chooses compelling evidence to substantiate the analysis, and engages with the subject at hand in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner. Written work requires no substantive or stylistic revisions.

B (80-89) – Good work; the assignment has been completed in a professional and timely manner. The assignment has a viable thesis and shows substantial engagement with the subject at hand, but the analysis is partially incomplete, involving weak evidence, or manifests some difficulty with organization. Written work requires substantive revisions, but few or no stylistic ones.

C (70-79) – Average work; the assignment has been completed, but not necessarily in a professional or timely manner. The assignment shows effort by the student, but the analysis is incomplete, includes inappropriate evidence (or a lack of evidence), or shows significant difficulties with organization. Written work requires significant substantive or stylistic revisions.

D (60-69) - Less than average work; the assignment has not been completed in a professional or timely manner. The assignment shows a lack of effort on the part of the student, and a lack of engagement with the assignment. Written work lacks analysis, evidence, and organization; extensive substantive and stylistic revisions are needed.

F (<59) – Inadequate work; the assignment has not been completed. Work, when submitted, shows a significant lack of effort on the part of the student, and a lack of engagement with the assignment and the subject matter of the course. Such work is marked by the absence of analysis, evidence, and organization; engagement with the course materials is necessary before extensive revisions are even possible.

Submission of Assignments:

1. Your essays, peer reviews and take-home final should be typed (11 or 12 point font), with one-inch margins for comments. Papers should be double-spaced, stapled, and paginated, and include your name.
2. Please keep a copy or a back-up of every assignment that you hand in.

3. Hand in assignments on time. Late submissions will receive a lower grade unless the student has a viable reason (such as illness, familial emergency) for his/her lateness and notifies me in advance. Your grade will be lowered a fraction for every day your work is late (ex. B to B- for one day late).
4. Do not summarize the plot of a work or rephrase your class notes in your assignments. The assignments do not require external research. They require knowledge of the course texts, clear, careful thinking, and writing.
5. Please use the Editing Guidelines and Stylesheet attached to this syllabus. They will help you hone your critical thinking and writing skills, and strengthen your essays. Please keep in mind that in addition to yours truly, there are resources at the University to help with your writing, including the Writing Studio in Colson Hall.

Professional Responsibility:

1. Students who attend classes regularly tend to earn higher grades and have higher passing rates in courses. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. You are granted a maximum of three absences during the course of the semester before absenteeism affects your grade. If you accumulate more than seven absences (excused and unexcused), you will automatically fail the course.
2. It is your responsibility to contact me regarding your absences. If you disappear—if you miss class for three or four sessions in a row, or more—it is not my responsibility to find you.
3. If you send me an e-mail, I will respond within 24 or 48 hours. If I have not responded in that time, I have not received your posting. Please e-mail me again.
4. Please come to class on time. Do not leave in the middle of class; it is distracting and disrespectful. Do not schedule appointments (medical, advising, etc) during class time.
5. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during class.
6. You will be expected to read the assignment before coming to class, and to bring the relevant volume to class, since we will often be analyzing text in detail in class.
7. Should you need assistance during a time of difficulty or crisis, please contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall, 304-293-5811.

Adverse Weather Commitment:

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, everyone should use his or her best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Safety should be the main concern. If you cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions, you should contact me as soon as possible. Similarly, if I am unable to reach our class location, I will notify you of any cancellation or change as soon as possible, using MIX, Gmail, and/or eCampus to prevent you from embarking on any unnecessary travel. If you cannot get to class because of weather conditions, I will make allowances relative to required attendance policies, as well as any scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments.

Academic Dishonesty:

West Virginia University's definition of academic dishonesty is available in Student Conduct Code (<http://campuslife.wvu.edu/r/download/220286>), pages 6-7:

“Academic dishonesty. The term “academic dishonesty” means plagiarism; cheating and dishonest practices in connection with examinations, papers, and/or projects; and forgery, misrepresentation, or fraud as it relates to academic or educational matters.

1) The term “plagiarism” means the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment, including, but not limited to, the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another individual engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

2) The terms “cheating and dishonest practices in connection with examinations, papers, and/or projects” means (i) giving or receiving of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or any other assignment for a grade; (ii) depending upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in quizzes, tests, examinations, writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (iii) the acquisition or use, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff; or (iv) engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion.

3) The terms “forgery, misrepresentation, or fraud as it relates to academic or educational matters” means (i) wrongfully altering, or causing to be altered, the record of any grade or other educational record; (ii) use of University documents or instruments of identification with the intent to defraud; (iii) presenting false data or information or intentionally misrepresenting one’s records for admission, registration, or withdrawal from the University or from a University course; (iv) knowingly presenting false data or information or intentionally misrepresenting one’s records for personal gain; (v) knowingly furnishing the results of research projects or experiments for the inclusion in another’s work without proper citation; or (vi) knowingly furnishing false statements in any University academic proceeding.”

WVU Academic Integrity Statement:

“The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Catalog at <http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification/#academicintegritytext>. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.”

Please note the WVU’s Sale of Course Material Syllabus Statement: “All course materials, including lectures, class notes, quizzes, exams, handouts, presentations, and other materials provided to students for this course are protected intellectual property. As such, the unauthorized purchase or sale of these materials may result in disciplinary sanctions under the Campus Student Code.”

Inclusivity Statement:

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

Editing Checklist

1. Evaluate your thesis.
 - is your thesis clearly stated at the beginning of your essay?
 - is your thesis appropriate for the writing assignment?
 - does your thesis “make sense”?

2. Evaluate your argumentative strategy.
 - are you using logical and rhetorical strategies that build the most convincing case for your thesis? (and remember, you may use more than one in an essay; if you choose multiple strategies, make sure that they work together)
 - do you have the appropriate data to support your argument? (and if not, can you justify its absence?)
 - is the data cited properly? (check the content and the form of your notes)

3. Evaluate your essay structure.
 - does your essay structure lead the reader through your argument clearly?
 - does your essay structure work with/reinforce your argumentative strategy?
 - does your introduction suggest the structure of your argument? If so, does the body of your essay follow through on the structure suggested by the introduction?
 - are the transitions between the parts of your argument clear?
 - does the conclusion pull your argument together? (try to avoid repetitive, summary conclusions)

4. Evaluate your paragraph structure.
 - does each paragraph function as a unit of your argument? (i.e. is each paragraph unified in its purpose?)
 - is the topic sentence clear?
 - does the body of the paragraph follow through on the subject of the topic sentence?
 - are the transitions from paragraph to paragraph clear?

5. Evaluate your sentence structure.
 - is each sentence an independent unit of thought? (i.e. avoid repeating yourself in successive sentences)
 - does one sentence lead to the next? Are the transitions between sentences clear?
 - check the grammar of our sentences
 - make sure that every sentence has a subject and a verb (avoid fragments!)
 - check for subject-verb agreement
 - check for tense consistency
 - check that you are varying the grammar of your sentences (so that not every sentence begins with a prepositional phrase, for instance)

6. Check your spelling and punctuation.
 - and remember the distinctions between their/their/they're; it's/its; are/our; etc.

Some General Comments on Writing Style and Grammar

- a. Please note that “it’s” is a contraction for “it is” or “it has.” “Its” is a possessive, which makes life confusing, but it is important to learn this distinction.
- b. Please learn the distinctions between possessive, plural, and plural possessive. “Knight’s” is singular possessive (belonging to a specific knight); “knights” is plural (more than one knight); “Knights’” is plural possessive (belonging to more than one knight).
- c. Try to avoid wordiness. Phrases like “The point the speaker is making is” or “What this means is that” are generally unnecessary. Such phrases are like long wind-ups before the pitch, and they often clog your prose.
- d. Try to avoid “talking” writing. What “sounds” right to a readerly ear does not necessarily read properly or grammatically to the eye. People do not speak grammatically (and sometimes without punctuation). Therefore, writers should avoid writing as they speak, unless they are writing dialogue in fiction. Talking writing also frequently leads to tone drops and diction that generally is not appropriate for academic/professional prose. (Ex. “ she doesn’t stick up for herself”).
- e. Please avoid freestanding quotations. Every quotation should be integrated into a text, preferably with a lead-in phrase, rather than placed alone in the middle of a paragraph without any connection to anything around it.
- f. Try to avoid “we” and “you” in your essays. Both terms tend to include the reader in the argument without convincing the reader. (In other words, these terms usually signal strategies of collusion on the part of the writer).
- g. When referring to words as words, please use quotation marks. (I.e. if you are discussing the use of the word “man” in a particular passage, then “man” should be placed in quotation marks).
- h. “It” and “This” are weak sentence starters. Any noun in the previous sentence can serve as a referent for “it” – and if the previous sentence has a number of nouns in it, havoc results. “This” has a similar effect as the first word in a sentence, but if a noun is added after “This,” the problem of reference is usually solved.
- i. “Thing” is a very vague word. Try to find a specific noun whenever possible.
- j. “He himself” is an unnecessary and ungrammatical doubling. “He” will generally do.
- k. Try to avoid using “is” (or “was”) as a main verb. Choose a stronger, more precise word.
- l. “A woman”—not “A women.” “Woman” is singular; “women” is plural.
- m. Remember that a semicolon connects two highly related sentences.
- n. Avoid “how” and “what” at the beginning of subordinate clauses—depending on your meaning, use “which,” “that,” “who,” or “where.”