

Professor Francus
English 261: *British Literature I*

Fall 2012

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00-11:15

317 Clark Hall

Office: 227 Colson Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30 – 4:00 and by appointment.

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August 21	Introduction
August 23	<i>Beowulf</i> (Heaney edition, lines 1-1061)
August 28	<i>Beowulf</i> (lines 1062-3182); <i>Judith</i> (pp. 142-47, Longman)
August 30	de France, “Prologue” and “Lanval” from <i>Lais</i> (pp. 200-17); The Middle Ages, pp. 15-25
September 4	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> (pp. 219-65)
September 6	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> (pp. 266-77); excerpt, <i>Monty Python and the Holy Grail</i> (pp. 309-312)
September 11	Chaucer, “General Prologue” to <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> (pp. 312-57)
September 13	Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue” (pp. 375-94)
September 18	Class Canceled
September 20	Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” (pp. 394-403); excerpts from <i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i> (pp. 529-49)
	Canon/Culture Exercise Due
September 25	Introduction to the Renaissance (Historical Perspectives, The Humanist Renaissance and Early Modern Society, Writing for a New Age, History and Epic; pp. 628-39); excerpt from Fynes Moryson, <i>Observations of the Ottoman Empire</i> (pp. 1179-87); excerpt from Thomas Hariot, <i>A Brief and True Report of the Newfoundland of Virginia</i> (pp. 1191-93)
September 27	Elizabeth I, poetry and prose (pp. 1073-85)
October 2	More, <i>Utopia</i> (pp. 714-64)
October 4	More, <i>Utopia</i> (pp. 764-84)
October 9	Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> , Acts I-III (pp. 1359-1414)
October 11	Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> , Acts IV-V (pp. 1414-1444)
October 16	Renaissance sonnets by Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare (pp. 679-80, 684-85, 1204, 1211, 1213-14)
October 18	Donne, poems (pp. 1591-93; 1596; 1598; 1601-2; 1605; 1607)
	Close Reading Exercise Due
October 23	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , excerpt from Book 1 (pp. 1726-37) and Book 2 (pp. 1748-72)
October 25	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book 3 (pp. 1772-90) and Book 4 (pp. 1791-1814)

October 30	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book 9 (pp. 1886-1913)
November 1	Behn, <i>Oroonoko</i> (pp. 2135-78)
November 6	Election Day – No classes
November 8	Pope, “The Rape of the Lock” (pp. 2470-91)
November 13	Dryden, “MacFlecknoe” (pp. 2102-08); Addison, “The Royal Exchange” (pp. 2330-33)
November 15	Swift, <i>Gulliver’s Travels</i> , Book 4 (pp. 2381-2426); “A Modest Proposal” (pp. 2431-37)
	Criticism Exercise Due
November 20-22	Thanksgiving Break – No Classes
November 27	Sheridan, <i>School for Scandal</i> (Longman pdf)
November 29	Johnson, selections from <i>The Rambler</i> and <i>The Idler</i> (pp. 2687-91; 2694-2704)
December 4	Gray, “Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College,” “Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat,” “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (pp. 2667-2673)
December 6	Course Conclusion
December 11	Take Home Final Due (submit via e-mail)

Textbooks: *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, Fourth Edition, Volumes 1A, 1B, and 1C, and Seamus Heaney’s edition of *Beowulf*. Course texts are available at the WVU Bookstore. 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.

GEC Objectives: English 261 fulfills the General Education Curriculum (GEC) requirements for Objective 3 (The Past and Its Traditions: Apply knowledge, methods and principles of inquiry to understanding the past) and Objective 5 (Artistic Expression: Apply methods and principles of critical inquiry to the analysis of literary or 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 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.

Course Requirements: Three writing exercises (~3-4 pages each), 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 check your MIX e-mail account daily.

Course Assignments:

1. A Canon/Culture Exercise. You will be asked to evaluate a film scene that refers to one of our course texts. Please keep the following in mind:

- You must have a thesis statement regarding the scene. Some possibilities: "This scene presents a feminist reading of *Beowulf*..." or "This scene uses Arthurian legend in order to..."
- 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 website--the better.

2. A Close Reading Exercise. You will be given a choice from the texts that we have read, and you will write a short essay in which you provide a close reading of the passage or short poem. Please keep the following in mind:

- Your essay must include a thesis statement regarding the passage; in other words, take a position regarding the passage. Your position could be "This passage is significant because..." or "This passage is ironic..." or "This passage is atypical..." etc.
- 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 focus on tone, character, plot, imagery, etc.
- You may (and should) 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.

3. A Criticism Exercise. You will be given comments from scholars and critics regarding the texts that we have read. Your essay should respond to one comment. Please keep the following in mind:

- Your essay must include a thesis statement regarding the critic's comment; take a position regarding the critic. Your position could be "I absolutely agree with X...." or "I disagree with X because..." or "I think X is being unfair about..." etc.
- 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 detailed evidence you provide, the better.

4. The take-home final will consist of three parts: a canon/culture section; a close reading section; and a criticism section. Your final, like your exercises, 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 exercise will count for 20% of your final grade (or 60% of the total grade), class participation/attendance 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).

Submission of Assignments:

1. Your exercises and take-home final should be typed (11 or 12 point font), with one-inch margins for comments. Written work should be double-spaced, stapled, and paginated.
2. Please keep a photocopy or a back-up disk 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 primary course texts, clear and careful thinking, and writing.
5. Please use the Editing Guidelines and Stylesheet—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 Center in Colson Hall, and the Term Paper Clinic in Wise Library.

Academic Dishonesty

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 Student Conduct Code at <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. 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.

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, 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; there is an absence of analysis, evidence, and organization; engagement with the course materials is necessary before extensive revisions are even possible.

Professional Responsibility:

1. Students who attend classes regularly tend to earn higher grades and have higher passing rates in courses.
Attendance will be taken every class. You are granted a maximum of three absences 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—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. Should you need assistance during a time of difficulty or crisis, please contact Tom Sloane, Associate Dean, in the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall, 304-293-5611.

Social Justice Policy:

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration. 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 Disability Services (293-6700).

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; “knights” is plural; “Knights” is plural possessive.
- 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 even 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 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.

