

English 261: British Literature to 1800

Professor Farina, Fall 2011
Tu/Th 1:11-2:15

This course attempts to capture the diversity of British literary traditions in their first 1000 years, when “English” literature was profoundly shaped by a variety of influences: invasion and conquest, religious schism, continental humanism, civil war, and contact with the New World. Throughout this period, British society was dynamic and often caught in conflict; its writers and readers looked to literature for both guidance and consolation, using it as a means of confronting social upheaval. Readings for the course emphasize the creativity with which they adapted literary forms to meet pressing social needs. We will look in particular at works that portray imaginary “Otherworlds,” or alternate societies that invite comparison with British custom. The imagination of “foreign” world or different reality allowed writers to comment on their own. When they did, they touched on topics such as: the perception of class and gender, the relation of individuals to their communities, and the reconciliation of entertainment and education.

Note: This class requires that you do a substantial amount of reading, often of quite difficult works in their original language. You must do this consistently and on schedule and be prepared to actively participate in class discussion.

Textbook:

Masters of British Literature, Vol. A. Ed. David Damrosch, et al. (Longman).
Three Early Modern Utopias, Ed. Susan Bruce. (Oxford Classics)

A few additional readings will be placed on electronic reserve.

Coursework:

You are first and foremost required to read the assigned texts before we discuss these in class. In addition to this fundamental responsibility are:

- your active participation in class (20%)
- 6 unscheduled quizzes or short writing assignments (25%)
- mid-term exam (25%)
- final exam (30%)

You must complete both exams to pass the course. The mid-term exam may be rescheduled if there is good cause; the final exam cannot be rescheduled. Quizzes cannot be rescheduled if missed; to allow for chance absence, I will drop one quiz grade from the final average. Note that there will be no extra credit options in this class.

Attendance:

You are allowed two absences with no penalty, after that, your class participation grade will suffer. At six absences, you will fail the course. In general, I do not care why you are absent or late and do not want to see any notes. The only exceptions to this are if a condition or situation requires that you be absent for more than a week at a time or for an exam.

Contact Info:

I encourage you to take advantage of my drop-in office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:30-12:30, in 335 Colson Hall. You can also make an appointment to see me at other times. You can email me at either my MIX address or at Lara.Farina@mail.wvu.edu. Check your MIX account for notifications: if I make any important announcements in class, I will also email these.

Please note that I cannot email grades. This is against the University's privacy policy. To ask about your grades, you will have to see me in person.

Conduct:

I expect all members of the class to be respectful of each other and me, regardless of religious, social, or political differences. I will not condone discriminatory remarks regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, health, economic status, etc. Disruptive behavior may impact your class participation grade and, if egregious enough, result in your expulsion from the class. Be mindful that the best way to participate in class is to *both talk and listen* to what others have to say. I don't expect class members to agree, but I do expect that you will acknowledge other points of view.

Schedule:

Tu. 8/23	Introduction
Th. 8/25	<i>The Wanderer; Wulf and Eadwacer; The Wife's Lament</i> (+ pp. 3-10)
Tu. 8/30	<i>Beowulf</i> (to line 1606)
Th. 9/1	<i>Beowulf</i> (to line 2796)
Tu. 9/6	<i>The Tale of Taliesin; Pwyll and Rhiannon</i> (e-reserve)
Th. 9/8	Marie de France, <i>Lais</i> (+ pp. 10-20)
Tu. 9/13	<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i>
Th. 9/15	<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i>
Tu. 9/20	Chaucer, <i>General Prologue</i>
Th. 9/22	Chaucer, <i>The Wife of Bath's Prologue</i>
Tu. 9/27	Chaucer, <i>The Wife of Bath's Tale</i> ; Christine de Pizan, <i>City of Ladies</i>
Th. 9/29	Chaucer, <i>The Nun's Priest's Tale</i>

Tu. 10/4 Exam Review
 Th. 10/6 **Midterm Exam**

Tu. 10/11 More, *Utopia*, pp. 1-48, (+ *Masters* pp. 411-420)
 Th. 10/13 *Utopia*, pp. 49-97, 106-123

Tu. 10/18 Wyatt, Lanyer (all poems) (+ pp. 422-426)
 Th. 10/20 Shakespeare, *Sonnets* 1, 18, 20, 29, 87, 130, 138, 144, 152

Tu. 10/25 Marlowe, (+ pp. 420-422), *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*
 Th. 10/27 *Dr. Faustus*, cont'd., excerpts from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Tu. 11/1 Donne, all poems
 Th. 11/3 No Class

Tu. 11/8 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1 (+ pp. 427-430; 1017-1022)
 Th. 11/10 *Paradise Lost*, Book 2

Tu. 11/15 *Paradise Lost*, Book 9, 12
 Th. 11/17 Cavendish, *Description of a New Blazing World*

Thanksgiving Recess

Tu. 11/29 Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Book 4
 Th. 12/1 Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*

Tu. 4/28 Final Review
 Th. 4/30 No class—office hours

Final Exam during Exam Week