

English 261: British Literature to 1800

Professor Farina, Spring 2015

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 guidance, consolation, and inspiration. 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.

This class requires that you do a substantial amount of reading. You must do this consistently on schedule and be prepared to actively participate in class discussion. Our aim is to use class discussion to arrive at demonstrable interpretations of textual elements such as theme, characterization, imagery, style, and rhetorical positioning. The exams for the course require you to articulate and defend these interpretations.

Textbooks:

The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: Concise Edition, Volume A (2nd Ed.)
ISBN # 978-1-55481-048-2.

The Blazing World and Other Writings, by Margaret Cavendish (Penguin edition)
ISBN # 978-0140433722.

You must have print copies of these books, not an electronic or kindle version. In addition to these, there will be some readings available online, which you should print out and bring to class as hard copy. If, by the second week of the semester, you do not have a print copy of the reading with you in class, I will ask you to leave and mark you as absent.

Coursework:

You are first and foremost required to read and take notes on the assigned texts before we discuss these in class. The remaining requirements are:

- active participation in class (15 points)
- 6 unscheduled quizzes or short writing assignments (25 points)
- mid-term exam (25 points)
- final exam (25 points)

The 10 remaining points are dependent on your attendance.

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.

Grading:

Grades are based on a 100 point scale.

For class participation, you get a point for every day you say something about the reading, respond to another student's remarks, or verbally contribute to small group discussion (up to 15 points).

Quizzes are worth five points each. The grade will reflect your familiarity with the content of the assigned reading, your use of specific textual evidence to support your answer, the thoroughness of your answer, and the clarity of your explanation.

Grades for exams will consider your ability to discuss the various elements (theme, characterization, imagery, language choice, tone, etc.) of the passages given in relation to the larger concerns of the work from the passage is taken. Your grade will reflect the thoroughness of your analysis as well as the clarity and precision of your answer.

You have 10 points given to you for attendance. You can be absent twice without penalty. After two absences, each additional absence will deduct one point from your 10.

Academic Integrity/Ethics:

All written work submitted for credit in this class must be produced by you for this class and must be in your own words. Any language you use from other sources, including your own previous work, must be properly cited. Familiarize yourself with WVU's plagiarism policy: <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>.

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 will not accept any notes. The only exceptions to this are for military service or university activities such as class field trips. If you are more than 5 minutes late, this will count as half an absence.

If you miss a class, do not ask me if you missed anything important. You did. You missed class. Read the text assigned for that class, and, if you have questions about it or want to discuss your interpretation, come to my office hours to talk with me.

Disability Accommodation:

Students requiring specific kinds of support should discuss these needs with me at the beginning of the semester. Exams will require writing by hand, without access to laptops, tablets, or cell phones. If this is a problem for you, let me know at the beginning of the semester, so we can make alternate arrangements.

Contact Info:

I encourage you to take advantage of my drop-in office hours: Wednesday 1:00-3:00, 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.

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:

* Check your university email regularly for announcements and study questions.

Th. 1/15	Introduction
Tu. 1/20	(5-12); the Exeter Book Elegies (The Wanderer, The Wife's Lament, The Ruin)
Th. 1/22	<i>Beowulf</i> (to line 1622 & pages 106-110)
Tu. 1/27	<i>Beowulf</i> (to end)
Th. 1/29	(12-20); <i>Lanval</i>
Tu. 2/3	(20-27); <i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i> , Parts 1 & 2 (157-189)
Th. 2/5	<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i> , Parts 3 & 4 (189-227)
Tu. 2/10	<i>Canterbury Tales</i> , General Prologue (translation of CT texts: http://english.fsu.edu/canterbury/)
Th. 2/12	CT, <i>The Wife of Bath's Prologue</i>
Tu. 2/17	CT, <i>The Wife of Bath's Tale</i> ; excerpt from <i>City of Ladies</i> (ecampus)
Th. 2/19	CT, <i>The Nun's Priest's Tale</i>
Tu. 2/24	<i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i> (365-380); Margery Baxter (396-398)
Th. 2/26	Midterm Exam

- Tu. 3/3 (465-475, 484-493); *Utopia*, Book 1
 (<http://sites.broadviewpress.com/bablonline/sample-page/concise-volume-a>)
- Th. 3/5 (475-478); *Utopia*, Book 2 (online)
- Tu. 3/10 (478-482); poems of Amelia Lanyer
- Th. 3/12 (482-484); Shakespeare's *Sonnets* 1, 18, 20, 23, 29, 87, 93, 130, 138, 144
- Tu. 3/17 (510-514); *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*
- Th. 3/19 Svankmejer, *Faustus* (video)

Spring Break

- Tu. 3/31 (494-499); *Paradise Lost* (920-946)
- Th. 4/2 *Paradise Lost* (946-966)
- Tu. 4/7 *Paradise Lost* (966-997)
- Th. 4/9 (499-506); Cavendish, *Description of a New Blazing World*
- Tu. 4/14 Cavendish, *Blazing World*, cont'd
- Th. 4/16 *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 1
- Tu. 4/21 *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 2
- Th. 4/23 *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 4
- Tu. 4/28 Final Review

Final Exam –during scheduled exam period