

# English 261: British Literature I

FALL 2022

Section 002 (CRN 80702)

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:30 AM – 12:45 PM

Building: Clark Hall, Room 317

Google Classroom Code: **j7qdwk**

Office Hours: Wednesdays on Zoom,  
10:00 AM–12:00 PM, or by appointment.

Instructor: Nicole M. Stahl (née Chambers)

Email: [nmc0021@mix.wvu.edu](mailto:nmc0021@mix.wvu.edu)

Office: Colson Hall 309

## REQUIRED TEXTS

*The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (Tenth Edition): Volumes A, B, and C; available at the WVU Bookstore.

Other readings, links, and resources will be made available on Google Classroom.

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to English 261: a historical introduction and survey to English literature from the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century. This fall, we will cross these thousand years through a myriad of genres: the Olde English heroic epic, the medieval Romance, the Elizabethan drama, the pre-Romantic georgic. Many of these stories will share a spirit of Exploration. Our protagonists will embark on distant journeys, by land and sea, to new worlds and realms—Edenic gardens and mysterious islands—and to meet the fantastic creatures who live there. Other landscapes will appear more familiar (the chivalric court, the English countryside), but not all journeys are physical in nature. Here their authors have breathed new life into their inhabitants through the intellectual curiosity of the ages: the emergence of English as its own language, the Reformation, the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, and the evolution of historic literary genres.

## COURSE FULFILLMENT & LEARNING OUTCOMES

English 261 fulfills the GEF Area 6 requirement (Arts & Creativity). English 261 also fulfills the older General Education Curriculum (GEC) requirements for Objective 3 and Objective 5: The Past and Its Traditions (3), and Artistic Expression (5).

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.*

This class will give students the chance to practice several academic skills:

- Apply knowledge, methods, and principles of inquiry to understanding the past and artistic expression.
- Identify and interpret different literary and artistic techniques across a wide range of genres.
- Practice critical thinking in a variety of academic modes, including close-reading, compare/contrast, and cultural context (historic and contemporary).
- Develop and defend a written argument through research and critical thinking.
- Develop and sustain a subject-matter interest across different periods and texts.

## OFFICE HOURS & E-MAIL

Office hours are an excellent opportunity to talk one-on-one about the texts and your writing, and to ask questions about the course and your progress. You can also use the email address on this syllabus to ask quick questions or notify me of any urgent matters that need attention. I will typically respond within 24 hours on weekdays. **Please note: all class announcements will be posted on Google Classroom, so make sure that you have email notifications turned on in your settings.** To join: sign into your MIX account (and out of other Gmail accounts). Go to [classroom.google.com](https://classroom.google.com). Click the “Join Class” + at the top of the page and enter code **j7qdwk**.

## GRADING

The English 261 will be graded on a scale of 0–100 points:

A: 90–100

D: 60–69

B: 80–89

F: 0–59

C: 70–79

Your total grade will be divided into three categories (Exams, Essays, Participation) and calculated twice this fall: once at the midterm, and again at the finals. The midterm grade will account for 40% of the final grade: 20 points possible for Exam 1, 15 for Essay 1, and a 5-point evaluation of your midterm participation. (These 5 points will be replaced with a cumulative 10-point final participation grade.) The remaining 60% will be added to your midterm points at the end of class.

**All exams and essays will be collected in person (physical copies) during class time; grades will be posted to Google Classroom (you do not need to submit anything electronically) and paper copies will be returned in class.**

**Exams (60%):**

There will be three closed-book exams (each worth 20%), corresponding to the texts from the three *Norton Anthology* volumes and the historic periods they represent. Each exam will include a combination of short- and long-form questions: passage identification, short-answer, and essay prompts based on the discussions we have in class.

**Essays (30%):**

This semester, you will complete two essays; each essay will be worth 15% of your final grade and should be four pages in length (approx. 1000 words). Below are instructions for four genres of literary and research analysis—you will choose two of the four options (one reading, one research).

***Reading Essay (Choose 1 of 2):***

Close Reading Essay:

In this essay, you will defend an interpretation of one of the texts through an in-depth analysis of a specific passage or component (character, theme, literary device like imagery &/or language choice). For example, you can defend or critique a character's action, or examine a distinct or recurring image and its purpose. You do not need to do any outside research for this essay option; instead, focus on using the text as evidence to develop and support your ideas.

Comparative Essay:

In this essay, you will choose two texts and examine their similarities/differences. You can focus on the way they address specific subject matter (character, theme, imagery), their literary form (genre conventions, style, language choice), or an aspect of their historical context(s). For example, you might compare the different terrains or settings in two stories, or the way that characters discuss an idea like love or heaven. (Note: the two works that you choose must both be different from the texts chosen for your other essay.) You do not need to do any outside research for this essay option.

***Research Essay (Choose 1 of 2):***

Historical Culture Essay:

In this essay, you will investigate a specific component of the era that a text was written in and how it provides context for that text. For example, you can choose anything of interest from within the text—the way it portrays music, agriculture, seafaring, medicine, fashion, etc.—and research that topic. Or, you can study and explain how an event from the author's biography or a specific cultural phenomenon (a historical figure or event, a discovery or invention, a unique community) intersects with the story you are reading. This essay option will require at least two outside sources (cited in MLA format).

Contemporary Culture Essay:

In this essay, you will place one of these historic English texts in conversation with the modern world by reading it alongside a contemporary media source: a news article, a modern story (literature, film), a cultural figure or event, etc. For example, you might recognize a character archetype or story trope from the Middle Ages in one of your favorite television series, or the portrayal of a public figure; or the eighteenth-century pastoral might remind you of a podcast episode about the environment or energy. What does exploring the literary origins of these modern narratives show us about their universal ideas? This essay option will require at least one outside source (cited in MLA format).

**The deadlines for each essay will be determined by the text you choose to write about—you must turn in your essay no later than one week after our final day reading a text.** For example, if you write Essay 1 on *Beowulf*: the final day we will be focusing on *Beowulf* is Thursday 9/1, so an essay on *Beowulf* would be due by Thursday 9/8. Essays will be collected at the beginning of the class. It will be your responsibility to honor the deadlines for each essay and to print them out beforehand; if you are absent on the due date (see attendance policy), I will still accept it if you email it to me before class. Essays that are turned in late will automatically lose 5 points. If you are struggling with an assignment, if you are unexpectedly ill, or if you have some other personal emergency, contact me immediately.

All writing should adhere to MLA formatting: 12-point font (Times New Roman), double-spaced, with a header and title. Some of the essay genres call for research, so make sure to cite your sources in accordance with MLA style. If you want to discuss topic ideas, or if you have questions about research or the essay genres, see me during my office hours or email me to set up an appointment.

**Participation (10%):**

English 261 is a discussion-based course; the discussions we have in class will become a resource for both the essays you write and the questions included in the exams. It is important that you attend class regularly, come prepared, and join in the conversation.

## Attendance Policy:

It is much better for you as a writer and as a student to take the course during a semester when your schedule allows you to be fully present and able to do your best work. That said, we know that sometimes personal situations and required university events make it impossible for you to be in class. That's why a few absences are allowed, but make sure you use them for emergencies.

- Students may miss **two days (1 week)** of class without penalty.
- Students who miss **more than two days (1 week)** of class may be penalized up to one letter grade for each additional absence.
- Students who miss **more than six days (3 weeks)** of class may be assigned a failing grade for the course.

If you have commitments or other circumstances that are likely to disrupt your full engagement with this course for an extended duration of time (one week of class meetings or more)—military service, family emergency, illness, etc.—please speak to me about a plan for successfully completing all required coursework.

## Preparedness & Engagement:

In addition to being present in class, it will be expected that you come prepared. Always plan to bring the text being discussed, something to write on, and something to write with. Having a designated notebook and folder for the class will help you to keep any handouts and resources together. Sometimes we will begin class with reflective writing on the topic; while I do not collect this writing, it will be useful to have when you are sharing your ideas and preparing for exams and essays.

In addition to lecture and reflection, the majority of class sessions will include a blend of small-group and whole-class activities and questions; be respectful to your peers during conversation by paying attention when they speak. Cell phones will be silent and put away while class is in session. In the event that you need access to your phone for emergency circumstances, please notify me beforehand. Disruptive actions negate the purpose of attendance and will be treated accordingly. Excessive tardiness and incidents of disrespectful conduct (talking while others are talking, using your phone, listening to other media, browsing the internet) will be noted in the same way that absences are noted, affecting your final grade.

## WVU COVID-19 SYLLABUS STATEMENT

WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Should campus operations change because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other campus-wide emergency, it is possible that this course will move to a fully online delivery format. If that occurs, students will be advised of technical and/or equipment requirements, including remote proctoring software.

In a face-to-face environment, our commitment to safety requires students, staff, and instructors to observe the social distancing and personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines set by the University at all times. While in class, students will sit in assigned seats when required and will wear PPE according to current University guidelines. Students who fail to comply may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for sanctions.

COVID-related absences fall under the University attendance policy found here: [attendance](#). As detailed in the policy, a student who becomes sick or is required to quarantine during the semester should notify the instructor. The student should then work with the instructor to develop a plan to complete the course learning outcomes while he or she is absent.

## LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

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>.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are responsible for the integrity of your work. This means that all of your work for this course must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work will have serious consequences. Here are a few things you need to know right away:

Submitting someone else's paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing is fraud. It will result in a failing grade for the course and may result in additional action by the Office of Student Conduct.

Copying paragraphs or other passages of someone else's writing without properly citing them is plagiarism. It may result in a grade reduction or failing the course. It, too, may result in additional action by the Office of Student Conduct.

The Eberly College of Arts and Sciences provides [a helpful online resource](#) on understanding and avoiding plagiarism. If you have any questions about when and how to document sources, or any other question that will help you avoid unintentional plagiarism, please talk with your instructor, a librarian, or one of the Writing Studio tutors in Colson Hall.

## SCHEDULE OF WORK

This course will meet regularly on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Clark Hall, Room 317. The schedule of work below is subject to minor changes based on our progress.

### WEEK 1

Thursday,  
18 August *First Day of Class.*

## The Middle Ages

Readings for this section will either be in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (10<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. A) or available on Google Classroom.

### WEEK 2

Tuesday,  
23 August *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People (Caedmon's Hymn), The Dream of the Rood, Judith.* 8/24 is the last day to add &/or drop classes without a "W."

Thursday,  
25 August *Beowulf: Grendel.*

### WEEK 3

Tuesday,  
30 August *Beowulf: Grendel's Mother.*

Thursday,  
1 September *Beowulf: The Dragon.*

### WEEK 4

Tuesday,  
6 September *Lais of Marie de France: "Guigemar," "Chevrefoil," "Bisclavret."* A link to the lai "Guigemar" is available on Google Classroom.

Thursday,  
8 September *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Fitts 1–2.*

### WEEK 5

Tuesday,  
13 September *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Fitts 3–4.* Visit the [Medieval Bestiary](#) website. A link to the Medieval Bestiary is available on Google Classroom.

Thursday,  
15 September Sir Thomas Malory, *Morte Darthur.*

### WEEK 6

Tuesday,  
20 September Geoffrey Chaucer, Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales.*

Thursday,  
22 September **Exam 1**

## The Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries

Readings for this section will either be in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (10<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. B) or available on Google Classroom.

### WEEK 7

Tuesday,

27 September Thomas More, *Utopia*: Book I.

Today is the last day to turn in Essay 1.

Thursday,

29 September Thomas More, *Utopia*: Book II.

### WEEK 8

Tuesday,

4 October Edmund Spenser,  
*The Faerie Queene*: Book I,  
Cantos 1–3.

Thursday,

6 October Edmund Spenser,  
*The Shepheardes Calendar*.  
Christopher Marlowe,  
“The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.”  
Sir Walter Raleigh,  
“The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.”

Mid-Term Grades will be posted to WVU Star by noon on 10/6.

### WEEK 9

Tuesday,

11 October Christopher Marlowe,  
*Doctor Faustus*: Prologue, Scenes 1–6.

Thursday,

13 October Christopher Marlowe,  
*Doctor Faustus*: Scenes 7–13, Epilogue.

### WEEK 10

Tuesday,

18 October William Shakespeare,  
*The Tempest*: Act I – Act III.1.

A link to *The Tempest* is available on Google Classroom.

Thursday,

20 October William Shakespeare,  
*The Tempest*: Act III.2 – Act V.

### WEEK 11

Tuesday,

25 October John Milton,  
*Paradise Lost*: Books 1–2.

Thursday,

27 October John Milton,  
*Paradise Lost*: Books 4–5.

### WEEK 12

Tuesday,

1 November John Milton,  
*Paradise Lost*: Books 9–10.

Thursday,

3 November **Exam 2**

# The Eighteenth Century

Readings for this section will either be in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (10<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. C) or available on Google Classroom.

## WEEK 13

Tuesday,

8 November *General Election Day – No Class Today.*

Thursday,

10 November John Dryden,  
 Preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern*, “The Flower and the Leaf,”  
 “Annus Mirabilis.”

A link to “The Flower and the Leaf” is available on Google Classroom.

## WEEK 14

Tuesday,

15 November Jonathan Swift,  
*Gulliver’s Travels*: Part 1.

11/15 is the last day to drop classes &/or withdraw from the university.

Thursday,

17 November Jonathan Swift,  
*Gulliver’s Travels*: Part 2.

## WEEK 15

11/19 – 11/27

*Fall Recess – No Class This Week.*

## WEEK 16

Tuesday,

29 November Alexander Pope,  
 “Eloisa to Abelard,” “The Rape of the Lock.”  
 Samuel Johnson,  
*Lives of the Poets: Pope.*

Thursday,

1 December Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*.  
 George Crabbe, *The Village*.

## WEEK 17

Tuesday,

6 December Thomas Gray,  
 “Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat,”  
 “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.”  
 William Cowper,  
*The Task*, “The Castaway.”

Thursday,

8 December **Exam 3**

**Today is the last day to turn in Essay 2.**

12/8 is the last day of classes.

**12/12–12/16: Final Exams Week.** English 261 does not meet during Finals Week.

I will be in my office (Colson 309) during the scheduled Final Exam timeslot if you would like to pick up your paper copy of Essay 2 &/or Exam 3.