

English 261

Lara Farina, ENGL 261, Fall 2005

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.

Required Text: *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, Vol. I. A,B,C (in three parts)

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%)
- 8-10 unscheduled quizzes and/or short writing assignments (20%)
- two mid-semester exams (20% each)
- final exam (20%)

Quizzes cannot be rescheduled if missed; to allow for chance absence, I will drop one quiz grade from the final average. Exams can be rescheduled if there is good cause. Exams will be closed book and focused on passage identification and analysis. 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. While there is no ultimate limit on absences, you will receive an “F” for class participation and will lose the right to reschedule exams after six absences. 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, 10:00-11:00, in 357 Stansbury Hall. You can also make an appointment to see me. I seldom answer my office phone, but you can email me at either my MIX address or at Lara.Farina@mail.wvu.edu. Do not email me to find out what you missed in class: get in touch with another student for notes. If I make any important announcements in class, I will also email notification of these to the class via MIX.

Schedule:

Tu. 8/23 Introduction. “Gnomic Verses”; Holzer, “Truisms”

The Middle Ages:

Th. 8/25 Longman pp. 3-10; *Bede* et al. (132-144); *Riddles* (155-158)

Tu. 8/30 *Beowulf*, pp. 27-66

Th. 9/1 *Beowulf*, pp. 67-91; *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (144-145)

Tu. 9/6 “Wulf”; “Wife’s Lament” (153-155); “Judith” (120-125)

Th. 9/8 Longman pp. 11-20, *Marie de France, Lais* (176-192)

Tu. 9/13 Longman pp. 20-25; *Gawain and the Green Knight*, pp. 192-218

Th. 9/15 *Gawain and the Green Knight*, pp. 218-258

Tu. 9/20 Taliesin’s poems (146-150); *Tale of Taliesin* (565-578)

Th. 9/22 EXAM #1

Tu. 9/27 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue (301-320)

Th. 9/29 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, The Wife’s Prologue (337-356)

Tu. 10/4 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, The Wife’s Tale (356-364)

Th. 10/6 Mankynd (xxx-xxx)

The Early Modern Period:

Tu. 10/11 Longman pp. 641-647; More, *Utopia*, pp. 686-713

Th. 10/13 More, *Utopia*, pp. 713-755

Tu. 10/18 Marlowe, *Faustus*, pp. 1143-1171, viewing of Svankmajer's *Faust*

Th. 10/20 Marlowe, *Faustus*, pp. 1171-1191, Carter on Dr. Dee (handout)

Tu. 10/25 EXAM #2

Th. 10/27 Lanyer, poems (1093-1103)

Tu. 11/1 Shakespeare, *Sonnets* (1125-1237)

Th. 11/3 Donne, poems (titles TBA)

Tu. 11/8 TBA

Th. 11/10 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books I-II (1837-1880)

Tu. 11/15 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, from Book IV (1893-1912)

Th. 11/17 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book X, XII (1959-1985)

Thanksgiving Break

Tu. 11/29 Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Book 4; Cavendish, selections (2142-2156)

Th. 12/1 Swift, "Proposal for an English Academy" (on e-reserve)

Tu. 12/6 Review

Th. 12/8 Optional Final Exam Date (you may take the exam on this day or during its regularly scheduled exam slot)