

ENGL 261: British Literature I

Online, TuTh 11:30-12:45

Prof. Farina

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Course Description:

English 261 is a survey of British literary history from its beginnings to the 18th century. The course covers a large swath of time (roughly 1,000 years!) and a wide variety of historical writings. While we may think of “British” literature as a synonym for works written in English (aka Anglophone writing), the British Isles have always been home to a multilingual, multi-ethnic assortment of peoples. The English language itself has a more complicated relationship to English and British communities than many realize.

To help us understand these relations between language, literature, and historical audiences, we will focus on the theme of *community-making* this semester. Now as much as ever, we are grappling with questions about what makes a “community.” From 10th-century poetry to 18th-century novels, British literature also ponders this question, giving its readers tools to think about “insiders” and “outsiders,” the possibility of togetherness over distance, and the things that cause people to care about and for one another.

Course Goals:

As a survey course, 261 aims to give you a broad understanding of literary history, a “big picture” that will give you context for the more specialized subjects you would study in a 300-level English class. It also gives you practice in the following skills:

- 1) Textual analysis, in which you identify and discuss themes, imagery, techniques of characterization, structure, and style in a literary work.
- 2) Close reading, a kind of textual analysis in which you discuss a textual passage in terms of its diction, figurative language, thematic content, line arrangement, and use of character, perspective, and narration.
- 3) Contextual analysis, in which you interpret a text in relation to its historical context and/or genre.
- 4) Textual comparison, in which you compare two or more texts in terms of their style, content, structure, or context.
- 5) Argument-driven writing and discussion, in which you support your interpretations with evidence drawn from the text being discussed.

Course Text:

We are using online, Open-Access resources for this class. Our main textbook is the *British Literature I Anthology* from the Open Textbook Library:

<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/british-literature-i-anthology-from-the-middle-ages-to-neoclassicism-and-the-eighteenth-century> .

You can download the entire thing as a PDF. Other readings will be uploaded to e-campus or reached through links provided in class announcements.

Required Work:

Participation (verbal or written)	24 pts (2 pts per day)
Passage analyses	20 pts (4 @ 5 pts each)
Terminology Quiz	5 pts
Two exams	50 pts (25 points each)

Late work:

I will not give credit for written discussion posted after the deadline nor for late Passage Analysis exercises. The first exam may be rescheduled, provided there is a good reason to do so (the make-up will be a different, but comparable, exam). The final exam cannot be rescheduled.

The Fall 2020 Semester:

Because of the current COVID pandemic, we will be conducting our own experiment in community-making as we try to establish a class using some unfamiliar means and without the familiar dynamics that happen in a physical classroom space. This will require all of us to make adjustments—and probably not just at the beginning of the semester. I will do everything I can to provide a predictable schedule, accessible ways of working, and clear instructions and evaluation. But I also encourage you to approach online learning with an open mind, reflect on your engagement in the course’s different activities, and offer your perspective on how we are working as a class. It’s going to be a bit weird; there’s no getting around that. But if you are struggling, let me know—I can offer help and/or suggest alternative arrangements.

How We’ll Do It:

We will use **ecampus** as our class hub. From links on our e-campus page, you will be able to connect to: discussion pages on **Google Docs**, synchronous class meetings on **Zoom**, and short lecture videos on **YouTube**. I’ll use the “**Announcements**” function in e-campus on a regular basis to give you directions and alert you to upcoming assignments. I will post your **grades** on e-campus continuously, so you will be able to see exactly how you’re doing at any time (your grades will be visible only to you).

As you will see in the schedule below, our class will have synchronous and asynchronous components, alternating between a “discussion-board” type written commentary on one day, and an in-person discussion via Zoom on the next. Both types of class meeting will incorporate some amount of small group discussion as well as full-class discussion.

Class Conduct:

I expect all members of class to be respectful of one another and to refrain from discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

In discussion, do not assume that everyone shares your background, identity status, or beliefs. Class discussion online may require some adjustment, but see the “Zoom Meetings” handout (on e-campus) for expectations and suggestions. Disruptive and/or offensive behavior may result in removal from the class.

Academic Honesty:

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](#). Plagiarism on short assignments will result in failure of the assignment and an additional deduction of points for the class. Plagiarism on exams will result in failure of the course.

Learning Accommodations:

Students requiring specific kinds of support should discuss these needs with me at the beginning of the semester. You may also want to contact the WVU [Office of Accessibility Services](#).

Safety and Wellness:

You can find a directory of services offered by WVU here: <https://safety.wvu.edu/> . WVU's [Carruth Center](#) offers counseling to help deal with stress, illness, and other burdens. They can help with everything from time management skills to trauma recovery. I am happy to help you locate the services you need, but please be aware that if you inform me of harassment or abuse, I am legally obligated to report it. This doesn't mean you will need to file or pursue a claim, just that someone will contact you to inform you of your options.

Office Hours:

Talking with me personally is a good way to get help with class participation, study skills, and exams. I'm available Thursday 2:00-4:00 and many other times. Make an appointment with me via email (Lara.Farina@mail.wvu.edu). I respond to email from students **once a day, weekdays only**.

Weekly Schedule:

Monday 10:00 am, I will post in the Announcements section of e-campus. There, you will find a link to short lecture video about the week's readings and a link to a Google Doc with discussion questions.

Tuesday, 9:00 pm, is the deadline for you to write a one-paragraph response to one of the discussion questions if you wish to earn two participation points for the week's written participation.

Thursday, 11:30-12:45, we will meet synchronously via Zoom for spoken discussion. If you say something in class discussion, you will earn two participation points.

Thursday 2:00-4:00, I'll hold office hours.

This usual weekly order will be flipped the last week of class (see below).

Detail Schedule:

Date	Readings	Activity	Assignment Due
Th. 8/27		Zoom mtg.	
Tu. 9/1	Textbook, pp. 1-5; The Wanderer, The Wife's Lament, Judith	Discussion post	
Th. 9/3	Beowulf, to Part XIV	Zoom mtg.	
Tu. 9/8	Beowulf, to Part XXVII	Discussion post	
Th. 9/10	Beowulf, to end	Zoom mtg.	Terminology Quiz
Tu. 9/15	Textbook, pp. 5-7; Marie, The Lay of Sir Launfal	Discussion post	
Th. 9/17	Marie, Bisclavret (e-campus)	Zoom mtg.	
Tu. 9/22	Chaucer, CT General Prologue	Discussion post	
Th. 9/24	Chaucer, Pardoner's Prologue and Tale	Zoom mtg.	Passage Analysis
Tu. 9/29	Chaucer, Wife of Bath's Prologue	Discussion post	
Th. 10/1	Chaucer, Wife's Tale	Zoom mtg.	
Tu. 10/6	Review questions	Discussion post	
Th. 10/8	---	Ecampus	Exam I
Tu. 10/13	Textbook, pp. 599-602; More, Utopia	Discussion post	

Th. 10/15	More, Utopia	Zoom mtg.	
Tu. 10/20	Lanyer, "To Cookeham" (ecampus)	Discussion post	Passage Analysis
Th. 10/22	Shakespeare, Sonnets	Zoom mtg.	
Tu. 10/27	Textbook, pp. 1415-1419; Cavendish, The Blazing World	Discussion post	
Th. 10/29	Cavendish, A True Relation...	Zoom mtg.	Passage Analysis
Tu. 11/3	---	Go Vote!	
Th. 11/5	Milton, Paradise Lost, Book I	Zoom mtg.	
Th. 11/10	Milton, Paradise Lost, Book II	Discussion post	
Th 11/12	Milton, Paradise Lost (work with Books I & II)	Zoom mtg.	
Tu. 11/17	Milton, from Book IV	Discussion post	
Th. 11/19	Milton, Book IX	Zoom mtg.	Passage Analysis
Tu. 11/24	From Defoe, A Journal of Our Plague Year (ecampus)	Discussion post	
Th. 11/26	---	Thanksgiving	
Tu. 12/1	Defoe; Review	Zoom mtg.	
Th. 12/3	Review	Discussion post	
W. 12/9 (9am) – F. 12/11 (noon)			Exam II