

ENGLISH 205 SYLLABUS

British Literature: Middle

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Required Text:

- Stephen Greenblatt, General Editor, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*.

Text's Web Site

- www.wwnorton.com/literature. Your registration code is in the front of your text. If you have a used book, you can purchase the access code on the web site. Alternately, there is free access to much of the site.

Prerequisites

- WR 121 is required for successful completion of this course. English 104 and 106 are also very strongly recommended.

Course Description:

The goal of this class is to bring literature to life and to help you in the effort to understand the relevance of literature to our own lives and times. We'll learn about the social and historical forces that determine convention and values, and we'll try to relate those elements to what happens in our own lives. We'll look at literary genres such as satire and determine their value as political or social tools, and we'll discuss why long, epic poems once made the bestseller lists but are now out of fashion. In the process, we'll get to know the writers of the times we study and try to grasp a little of their hopes, aspirations, and skills as men and women.

Specifically, we'll look at more than the crafting of creative writing into literature; we'll look as well into the role of religious/political/social beliefs of the writers because they reflect the philosophy, world-view, politics, and existential reference points, perspectives that are differently nuanced in different historical conditions. Literature is about the human condition, and this is the underlying dynamic for most art and mental constructs outside science. The context here is one wherein human beings try to make sense of the world around them—a world they cannot control or understand. They attempt to reach an understanding through art forms, and these art forms have their own styles and conventions. The samples of creative writing through the centuries we'll be looking at had enough excellence to have become "literature."

In trying to understand existence, writers and thinkers deal with imponderables, the questions that are ever asked and always hard to answer. They try to construct a comprehensible world, and we see this in efforts from Beowulf to the modern novel. They are attempts to control and explain natural forces; they result from the interplay of the human mind and physical existence, and they embrace magic,

superstition, mystery, myth, legend, and modern cosmologies.

British Literature (ENG 204, 205, 206) traces the common elements of cultural and historical context from the author of *Beowulf* through Hopkins' tortured and beautiful poems, to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the inspiration for *Apocalypse Now*, and raises questions about what elements these creations have in their drive and origins. The motives remain the same: only the language, styles, conventions are time-bound and differ.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: We will be formatting our work using the Chicago Manual of Style for this class (see the Appendix or your handbook for details). You will have the opportunity to demonstrate our learning outcomes by accomplishing the following tasks:

Tuesdays

1. Author Biographies. (25 points each) Handed in Tuesdays w/ \surd +, \surd -, (A, B, C) option. These 2+-page reviews will be handed in during the Tuesday class and will be used as a springboard for class discussion.
 1. Go further afield in researching biographical information about writers. The dry statistics aren't that interesting (an obituary of facts) and don't help in bringing the life of the person before our eyes. What made these people interesting? What were they like, personally? Who were their friends, and why? What were they trying to do?
2. Creative Writing Exercises. (5 points each) We'll do these in the class Tuesdays for credit/no credit. We'll have the option to read them aloud, if you wish. Attendance & discussion is necessary for credit.
 1. We'll try to follow the form and intent of the author of the week in order to understand the process of writing.

Thursdays

1. Analysis Letter. (25 points each) Each of us will pick a single element from the list below, read the assigned work with that in mind, and be prepared to talk about that aspect in the class discussion. A two-page analysis is to be emailed to me each Thursday before we talk about the work. No late work for this.
 1. These exercises will take the form of creative writing feedback letters addressed to the author and focusing on a particular fictive or creative element used in the piece of writing we are studying. A list of these topics can be found in the syllabus and on our Moodle website.
 2. Use the Feedback Template posted on the website. It contains guidelines and a list of topics to analyze.

Online Quizzes:

These content-driven, multiple choice, open-book quizzes are posted on your Moodle website and can be completed anytime, though sooner is better than later.

Final Capstone Essay. (100 points) This take-home exam will be due during the final week of classes

(1200-1800-word paper [5-7 pages]). It will be a self-reflection paper in which you will assess

1. Changes (growth) in your thinking and attitudes towards yourself, literature, and the human condition,
2. Aspects about your own thinking that you have become aware of, and
3. Insights about the relevance of literature and you.

The Story Feedback, due each Tuesday on the assigned work:¹

You will be responsible for turning in, on the dates specified, a thorough, thoughtful, one-page, typed (double-spaced in courier #12 font) analysis of the assigned work from the textbook.

For the written critique, allow at least two readings of the work, then choose one of the following topics, and be prepared to talk about it. Write a two plus page feedback letter focusing on your subject and its role in the story. Please Note: this is not to be a critique or review of these works. It is to be an example of *your own* close reading abilities and your understanding of the relationship between a writer's craft and your interpretation of the story's subject or psychological conflict.

In your analysis, use direct quotations from the text to support and explore your topic. I'll evaluate these based on 1) the quality of your questions or inquiry; 2) open, but careful thinking; 3) clarity of presentation; 4) specifics from the text for support.

Written Analysis Topics for These Readings:

Pick ONE of the following for your analysis and use a different topic for each work.

1. The handling of time.
2. Place and imagery.
3. Voice and/or point of view.
4. "Focal" character.
5. The role of a minor character.
6. Humor.
7. Mythological (or other literary) motifs.
8. The pattern of the sentence.
9. The art of the dialogue.
10. The pattern of the paragraph.
11. Transitions.
12. The use of formal repetition.
13. The opening.
14. The pattern of development.
15. The dramatic moment or crisis—is there one?

¹ Read the work and examine its meaning closely. Mark the pages in your texts. Allow at least two hours of outside work for each hour of class and be sure to have all assignments done before class. Your grade will reflect your preparedness.

16. Ending or resolution.
17. Poe's Single Effect.
18. The initial problem and its development.

NOTE: Please try to submit your work by uploading it on the Moodle website. I've provided links and instructions there for you. These assignments are due before class on the due dates. You will get them back sooner than written work (which is due in class), and have the opportunity to get more feedback on them.

Resources:

- My Web Page (<http://cf.linnbenton.edu/artcom/english/millet/web.cfm?pgID=54>) has a list resources and templates.
- See pages 18-19 in the General Catalogue for a list of campus resources. The Writing Center is an excellent place to get professional help with your essays.

LBCC Comprehensive Statement of Nondiscrimination

LBCC prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, ethnicity, use of native language, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, veteran status, age, or any other status protected under applicable federal, state, or local laws.

(Further information at <http://po.linnbenton.edu/BP1015 - Nondiscrimination and Nonharassment Policy.pdf>)

Tentative Schedule (Subject to revision, with notice)

A Note

As with any survey course, there is just not enough time to cover everything that should be covered. Read widely, and do not limit yourself to the works covered in class.²

Week 1

Course Introduction: *Who Writes This Stuff, and Why?* Syllabus and overview

Tuesday: What is literature and who wrote it? Who cares?

- Literature through the ages has been more than an art form.¹
- People have died for writing it.
- A little bit about you: What's your name; where do you come from; where are you going; what time is it?
- **Read Swift's *A Modest Proposal* this week.**

Thursday: Poe's *Single Effect*.

- The Heart of the story: two levels.
- Writing Exercise #1: Who Speaks? Point of View: a satirical short. Think of a significant event that stands out in the social world (politics, celebrity, etc.), and write a short satire about it.
- Research Swift's life and background and find something interesting to say in your biography for next Tuesday.
- Keep reading! Have *Gulliver's Travels* read with your feedback letter for **one** of them finished for next Thursday's class.

² Middle English Literature: Introduction to the text and course. Note how the worldview will evolve in this period with the exploration of the individual through poets and writers who explore the human condition in largely existential terms. The origin of the search for that meaning will continue to move from exterior to interior, from physical confrontation with the forces of nature to the landscape of mind and soul. The world will become defined as moral or immoral depending upon who defines it, a world with notions of sin and consequences, of moral struggle and exploration not so much of the physical world as was the case with early literature, but with the landscape of the soul and mind and the cosmos. But again, survival is more than that of the body.

Week 2

Swift: Satire in *Gulliver's Travels* and *A Modest Proposal*.

Tuesday:

- Biography background report due: Jonathan Swift. Find something interesting to say about him and his place in time. Go beyond the obvious.
 - Get into his head and look around at what he saw.
- Creative Writing Exercise: Who Speaks II. Significant detail. Write your satire as a piece from a professional's POV: a universalization of your experience.

Thursday:

- Feedback letter due on either A Modest Proposal or Gulliver's Travels. Your choice, but read both.

Suggested Topics (pick one):

- Place and Imagery;
- Mythological Motifs;
- The Moment of Crisis.
- Pick your approach from the list above, and be ready to talk about *the piece you chose*. We'll discuss this using the workshop model. Follow the guidelines of your feedback letter template.
- We read and share the polished freewrites.

Recursive Context

- The Colbert Report
 - The Daily Show
-

Week 3

Gray: *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

Tuesday:

- *Biography background report due: Thomas Gray.*
- Creative Writing Exercise: Place and Atmosphere. Thought and reflection.

Thursday:

- Feedback letter due. Look at the technical aspects of this sort of creative writing. What strengths do the literary devices show? Why a poem?

Suggested Topics:

1. The Initial Problem & Its Development;
2. Ending & Resolution

Pick your approach from the list above, and be ready to discuss *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

The Recursive Context

- Connect this poem with John Donne's "Meditation 17".

Week 4***Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience******Tuesday:**

- Bio background on an author report due: *William Blake*
- Creative Writing Exercise: Theme and Voice.

Thursday:

- Feedback letter due.*
- We read and share the polished freewrites.

Suggested Topics:

1. The Pattern of the Sentence;
2. The Pattern of development;
3. Voice & Point of View

Pick your approach from the list above, and be ready to discuss this section of the selected poems (see footnote below).

Recursive Context:

- Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallot"
- Malory's "Morte D'Artur"
- Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus"

Pick at least one of these works and be prepared to discuss its commonalities, if any, with what Blake is writing about.

*These poems:

- From *Songs of Innocence*:
 - The Chimney Sweeper;
 - The Divine Image;
 - Holy Thursday;
 - Nurse's Song;
 - Infant Joy.
- From *Songs of Experience*:
 - The Chimney Sweeper;
 - Divine Image;
 - Holy Thursday;
 - Nurse's Song;
 - The Garden of Love;
 - Poison Tree.

Week 5

Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; *Kubla Khan*

Tuesday:

- Bio background on an author report due: *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*.
- Creative Writing Exercise: Theme. The human condition in fantasy and fable.

Thursday:

- Feedback Letter due.
- Pick your approach from the prompt above (the human condition in fantasy and fable), and be ready to discuss the role of language, metaphor, and innuendo.

Associated Reading:

- Jorges Borges. Look up his essay "The Dream of Coleridge" in *Other Inquisitions*.*

* "Jorge Luis Borges wrote of the parallels between the historical figure of Kubla Khan building a dream

palace and Samuel Taylor Coleridge writing this poem, in his essay, “The Dream of Coleridge”:

“The first dream added a palace to reality; the second, which occurred five centuries later, a poem (or the beginning of a poem) suggested by the palace. The similarity of the dreams hints of a plan.... In 1691 Father Gerbillon of the Society of Jesus confirmed that ruins were all that was left of the palace of Kubla Khan; we know that scarcely fifty lines of the poem were salvaged. These facts give rise to the conjecture that this series of dreams and labors has not yet ended. The first dreamer was given the vision of the palace, and he built it; the second, who did not know of the other’s dream, was given the poem about the palace. If the plan does not fail, some reader of ‘Kubla Khan’ will dream, on a night centuries removed from us, of marble or of music. This man will not know that two others also dreamed. Perhaps the series of dreams has no end, or perhaps the last one who dreams will have the key....”

--from “The Dream of Coleridge” in *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952* by Jorge Luis Borges, translated by Ruth Simms (University of Texas Press, 1964, reprint forthcoming November 2007)

(http://poetry.about.com/od/poems/a/kublakhanguide_4.htm . 12/15/13)

[Click here to link to Borge's book and the essays.](#)

[Click here for insights into the Byronic or Satanic hero.](#)

Week 6

Robert Burns: *Poems*

Tuesday:

- *Bio background on an author report due on: Robert Burns.*
- Creative Writing Exercise: Symbol and allegory.
- Write a fable or poem with dialect, dramatic tension, and irony.
- Theme: human nature and condition.

Thursday:

- Feedback Letter due.

Suggested Topics (pick one):

1. Focal Character
2. The Dramatic moment or Crisis
3. Place and Imagery

Pick your approach from the list above, and be ready to discuss it.

Week 7

Austen: *Plan of a Novel*: (and quickly) *Love and Friendship*

Watch a Jane Austin film on Netflix or PBS before this week's classes, such as:

- Emma
- Sense and Sensibility
- Pride and Prejudice, etc.

Tuesday:

- *Bio background report due: Jane Austen*
- Creative Writing Exercise: Structure. Write you own two-page plan for a novel in Jane Austen's style.
- Theme: human nature, betrayal, social responsibility, trust.

Thursday:

- Feedback letter due.

Suggested Topics:

1. Literary Motifs
2. Symbol and Imagery
3. Ending or Resolution

Pick your approach, and be ready to discuss *Plan of a Novel* **or** *Love and Friendship*, and one of the films.

Week 8

Hazlitt: *On Gusto; My First Acquaintance with Poets*

Tuesday:

- *Bio background report due: William Hazlitt.*
- Creative Writing Exercise: Write a descriptive piece of fiction or poetry using "Gusto".
- We read and share the freewrites.

Thursday:

- Feedback letter due.

Suggested Topics:

1. The "Use of Formal Repetition
2. Mythological Motifs
3. Voice and/or Point of View

Pick your approach from the list above, and be ready to discuss it.

Recursive Context : "Did he have passion?"³

Week 9

Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein: A Modern Prometheus*

Tuesday:

- *Bio background report due: Mary Shelley*
- Creative Writing Exercise: Winging it. The writer as creator: human as monster, monster as human.

Thursday:

- Feedback letter due due.

Suggested Topics:

1. The Initial Problem and Its Development
2. The Ending or Resolution
3. The "Focal" Character

³ The question asked 3,000 years ago at the funeral service of an Athenian, in response to the demand: "How do we determine the significance of this man's life?" As Zorba the Greek said: "Everyone needs a little madness. To be alive is to undo your belt and look for trouble." (Nikos Kazantzakis. *Zorba the Greek*)

Pick your approach from the list above, and be ready to discuss *Frankenstein*.

Recursive Context: *Beowulf* and Gardner's novel *Grendel*. Think about the nature of the "demons" and the responsibilities of the leader or parent figure.

Take Home Final Capstone Project is posted (and handed out in class) this week. You have one week to complete this self-reflective essay.

The link to your exam is posted on our Moodle website in the Week 9 page.

Week 10

The Winter Roundup

Tuesday:

- Frankenstein roundup
- We read and share the freewrites.

Thursday:

- Debriefing and food
- **Take Home Final Essay (hard copy) due today, your last day of class in Week 10**
- **Online content-driven test should be completed by Friday**

Recursive Context: Coleridge: The Byronic or Satanic Hero; Humphrey Bogart: *Casablanca* (etc); Bruce Willis: *Die Hard* (etc.); Clint Eastwood: *Fistful of Dollars* (etc); *Batman* and the multitudinous host of associated etceteras.

Discussion Points: We are what we eat.

Friday: Last day to submit this week's assignments.

- No late work can be graded next week.
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Finals Week

The class meets for the Final wrap-up during the college's scheduled time:

- Place: our classroom
- Time: 9:30am (subject to change with notice)

I'll submit your final grades by Friday night of this week, and the College will post them the following Monday.

Here Are Our Course Policies

Late Work Policy:

Stay current and avoid problems.

- In-class exercises such as creative freewrites and their discussion, by their nature, cannot be made up. You have to be present to participate.
- If you have extenuating circumstances, talk to me about them. Life happens, and we all need allowances on occasion.
- The upload links for your assignments are timed and automatically deactivate at 11pm the day your work is due (Tuesdays for the biographies, and Sundays for the Feedback letters). That's plenty of time. If you choose to hand in hard copy, that work is due in class.
- Please do not skip your assignments and hand them in at the end of term, expecting them to be graded. It's too late to beg for mercy at that point.

No late work can be graded during week 10 and Finals Week.

Academic Standards For All Your Assignments

All good college writing has these characteristics:

- It covers the topic fully.
- It reveals complexity and depth of thought.
- It uses an academic voice.
- It uses information from various sources.
- It always credits its sources properly (NO plagiarism).
- It goes beyond the obvious -- shows originality of inquiry.

More specifically, it's expected that you do the following:

- Follow written and oral directions carefully.
- Address or fulfill ALL parts of the assignment or question.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Organize sentences into paragraphs that have topic sentences and organized supporting details.
- Carefully adhere to the prescribed academic style (the Chicago Style for this class).
- Spell-check papers and obtain help with proofreading, if needed, at the Writing Center.

Use this checklist for all your submissions.

1. Do not be chatty or colloquial in formal papers, and avoid text-speak.
2. Pay attention to formatting: for example, always follow the directions for page margins, headers, page numbers, and title pages. Get them right because they count toward your grade.

These are requirements on the papers you submit, and they are skill sets you are meant to learn.