

SPRING 2009
ENGLISH 211.03— BRITISH LITERATURE FROM MEDIEVAL TO NEO-CLASSICAL
PROFESSOR JENNIFER FEATHER
TR 3:30-4:45; GRAHAM 423

Office: MHRA 3110
Office Hours: T and Th 1:30-3:00 & by appt

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Course Description:

This course will examine how English texts have been organized into a literary tradition in order to articulate a sense of English national identity. Rather than proceeding in chronological order, we will begin with texts which have historically been treated as epitomizing English literature and then, explore how other texts from the 6th century to the early part of the 18th century participate in the gradual formation of a national English identity out of a broad multi-cultural context. Finally, we will explore how this identity continues to be negotiated and transformed in encounters with other cultures, attending as we proceed to groups – like the Irish, Scots, and women – who do not fit easily into the national story. Requirements: three exams, weekly questions, and a short essay.

Course Aims:

This course hopes

- to develop an understanding of canonical texts as both reflecting and producing the culture they inhabit, specifically conceptions of national identity.
- to understand how the shaping of canon and literary tradition influences the construction of national culture and identity.
- to develop a set of reading skills that will help you to decipher texts which seem alien to you and look critically at those texts which are more familiar.

Course Objectives:

On completion of this course, students should be able to

- place major texts of the English tradition in historical context.
- articulate how English texts contribute to and challenge conceptions of English national identity.
- read a text and evaluate it critically.
- ask productive questions of a text.

Course Requirements:

REQUIRED TEXT:

- *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th Edition, Volume 1, Stephen Greenblatt, M.H. Abrams, et. al. eds.
- *Henry V*, William Shakespeare (Folger Edition)
- Supplementary readings found on Blackboard – noted in the syllabus as [BB]

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

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|--|----------|
| • 3 Exams | 20% each |
| • Writing Assignment | 15% |
| • Participation in Class, Attendance, Informal Assignments | 25% |

READINGS:

You must complete all assignments by the class period in which they are being discussed. *Remember: you are not reading merely to finish, but to comprehend.* Analyze the author's message and rhetorical strategies and formulate your own opinion in response to what you read. You should make notes in your margins. What questions does the reading raise? What caught your attention? Why? How does this text contribute to or challenge English identity? Does it speak to how you define your identity or not?

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Class participation is a mandatory part of the course. If you find it difficult speaking in class, please come and talk to me about ways to enhance your participation in the class.

Your class participation will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- To what extent do your comments and questions indicate your understanding of the logic of the text?
- To what extent are your comments and questions rooted in specific textual moments?
- To what extent do you engage with the comments of other class members?
- To what extent are you able to ask questions that provoke a deeper understanding of the text?
- To what extent can you relate different texts to one another?

INFORMAL ASSIGNMENTS:

At the end of most classes, I will pose questions or suggest small projects that will enhance your reading of the texts. Often, I will not ask you to submit written response to these questions, but I will ask you about them in class. You will receive credit for them if you either a) refer to the project in class or b) submit a hard copy of your work during THAT class session.

OBSERVATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

To help me keep track of class participation and informal assignments, you will each be asked to submit your notes three times over the course of the semester. These notes should be a transcript of what happened in class, including the names of your classmates and the questions they asked or comments they made. Submitting these notes will also count toward your participation grade.

EXAMS:

You will have three exams all of which will be administered in-class. Each exam will cover only the material discussed after the most recent exam. These exams will be given in class on February 19th, April 7th, and May 5th. No makeup exams will be scheduled nor will exams be given early, except in the case of documented medical or personal emergency.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND THE WRITING CENTER:**Important Writing Instructions:**

- Use MLA style for all citations.
- All papers should be
 - Typed in 12-point Times New Roman
 - Have one-inch margins and page numbers
 - Be double-spaced
 - Be stapled
- I will not accept electronic copies of papers.
- Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date.
- Later papers will lose a full letter grade for each day they are late. Thus, I will not grade any paper that is more than five days late except in cases of documented medical or personal emergency.

From the Writing Center Website, <http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/>

“The purpose of the Writing Center is to enhance the confidence and competence of student writers by providing free, individual assistance at any stage of any writing project. Staff consultants are experienced writers and alert readers, prepared to offer feedback and suggestions on drafts of papers, help students find answers to their questions about writing, and provide one-on-one instruction as needed.”

I strongly encourage all of you to visit the Writing Center. Whether you are an expert writer or writing is more difficult for you, having someone else look critically at your work is invaluable. For instructions about arranging and appointment go to <http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/studentfaq.html#q4>.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

You must attend every class, arrive on time with whatever the assignment for the day is and your book, and you must stay for the duration of the class. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact someone to find out what you have missed. Absences will affect your grade in the course as follows:

- You may miss class **three** times without penalty. You do not need to contact me about these absences.
- Your final grade will go down 1% for each additional unexcused absence. Absences will only be excused in case of serious illness or situations and only if you have discussed the situation with me **in advance** (or promptly thereafter in the case of an emergency). Contacting me is your responsibility.
- Arriving late to class, leaving early, or failing to bring your book will count as 1/3 absence.
- Missing the first three class meetings or more than three classes before February 19th will result in your being dropped from the course.
- If you miss **six or more** classes **BEFORE** March 17th (the last day to drop without academic penalty), I will drop you from the course.
- If you miss more than **six or more** classes **AFTER** March 17th, you will receive a WF (Withdraw/Fail) for the class.
- Keeping track of your absences and keeping up with readings and assignments is your responsibility.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Violations of the academic integrity policy will result in serious repercussions including failure on a particular assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or expulsion.

Definition of Plagiarism from The Academic Integrity Policy (available at <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>)

“Representing the words of another, as one's own in any academic exercise. Plagiarism may occur on any paper, report, or other work submitted to fulfill course requirements. This includes submitting work done by another, whether a commercial or non-commercial enterprise, including Web sites, as one's own work.”

If you have any questions as to whether a specific passage constitutes a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, I am more than happy to discuss those with you in advance of your turning in the assignment.

TECHNOLOGY:

Contact: The most reliable way to contact me is via email, and I will occasionally contact you via email. I check my email at least once a day, except over the weekends. However, you should not assume that I will catch your message the same day you send it. Allow enough advanced time to make sure I get your message.

Blackboard: I will place the syllabus and important course documents such as assignments on blackboard. If you miss class, you should be sure to check blackboard to see what you missed.

Laptops and Cellphones: You may **NOT** use laptops in the classroom except in documented cases of medical need. All electronic devices including cellphones should be turned off before class.

READINGS AND DUE DATES

Week I

Tu Jan 20

Introduction

Th Jan 22

Gloria Anzaldúa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" from *Borderlands/La Frontera* [BB];
Introduction to Volume A (pp1-7; 13-14)

Week II

Tu Jan 27

Beowulf, lines 1-1650 (p34-69)

Th Jan 29

Beowulf, lines 1650-end (p69-10)

Week III

Tu Feb 3

Geoffrey Chaucer, *General Prologue*, lines 447-478 (p 229-230), *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (p256-275)

Th Feb 5

Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (contd.) and *The Wife of Bath's Tale*

Week IV

Tu Feb 10

William Shakespeare, *Henry V* (Acts 1-3)

Th Feb 12

William Shakespeare, *Henry V* (Acts 4-5)

Week V

Tu Feb 17

William Shakespeare, *Henry V* and Selected Poems

- Ben Jonson, *To The Memory of My Beloved Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us* (p1444)
- John Milton, *On Shakespeare* (p1797)
- Samuel Johnson, *The Preface to Shakespeare* (p2755-9)

Th Feb 19

Exam

Week VI

Tu Feb 24

Richard Helgerson, "The Kingdom of Our Own Language" from *Forms of Nationhood* [BB]

Th Feb 26

Selected Histories

- Bede, *Caedmon's Hymn* from *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (p24-27)
- The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *Obituary for William the Conqueror* (p 115)
- Geoffrey of Monmouth, "The Story of Brutus and Diana's Prophecy" (p 119) and "The Myth of Arthur's Return" (p127) from *The History of The Kings of Britain*
- Wace, "The Myth of Arthur's Return" from *Le Roman de Brut* (p127)
- Layamon, "The Myth of Arthur's Return" from *Brut* (p127)
- Sir Thomas Malory, "The Myth of Arthur's Return" from *Morte Darthur* (p452-3)

Week VII

Tu Mar 3

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, parts 1 & 2 (p162-185)

Th Mar 5

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, parts 3 & 4 (p185-213)

Week VIII

Tu Mar 10

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Th Mar 12

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week IX

Tu Mar 17

Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Letter of the Authors and Book 3, Canto 1 [BB]

Th Mar 19

Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book 3, Cantos 2-3 [BB]

Week X

Tu Mar 24

Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Locke*, Cantos 1-3

Th Mar 26

Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Locke*, Cantos 4 & 5

Week XI
Tu Mar 31

Lyrics

- Thomas Wyatt, *Whoso List to Hunt* (p595)
- Christopher Marlowe, *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* (p1022)
- Walter Raleigh, *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* (p917)
- John Donne, *The Bait* (p1274)
- Andrew Marvell, *To His Coy Mistress* (p1703)
- John Milton, "The Lord General Cromwell, May 1652"; "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont"; "Methought I Saw My Late Espoused Saint"

Th Apr 2

Conceptions of Polity

- Queen Elizabeth, "Speech to the Troops at Tilbury" (p699)
- Henry V at Agincourt from William Shakespeare's *Henry V* (4.3.21-69)
- Vodicea from Holinshed's *Chronicles* [BB]
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (p1598-1605)

Week XII

Tu Apr 7

Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Race* [BB]

Th Apr 9

Exam

Week XIII

Tu Apr 14

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Prioress's Prologue and Tale* [BB]

Th Apr 16

Chaucer, *The Prioress's Prologue and Tale* (contd.); Selections from *The Book of Margery Kempe* (p384-389)

Week XIV

Tu Apr 21

The Irish

- Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queene, Book 5, Canto 12* [BB]
- Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal* (p2462-2468)

Th Apr 23

Literature of Discovery

- Walter Raleigh, Selections from *The Discovery of Guiana* (p923-926)
- Selections from *Amadas and Barlowe's Voyage to Virginia* (p935-938)
- John Donne, "Sun Rising" (p1266); Elegy 19 "To His Mistress Going to Bed" (p1283)

Week XV

Tu Apr 28

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*, pp. 2183-2203

Th Apr 30

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*, pp. 2204-end

Week XVI

Tu May 5

Last Day of Class – Exam in Class; Writing Assignment Due

I will be in office during our scheduled exam time (Saturday, May, 9th) to answer any questions you might have.