

ENGL 3413: British Literature to 1800

Dr. Scott O'Neil

Course Times: MWF, 12:00-12:50

Course Location: Witherspoon 127

Office Hours: T/R 12:30-2:30 and by appointment

Office Location: Witherspoon Hall 146 (and via WebEx Teams)

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Description and Objectives

Catalog description: Readings in the works of selected early British authors.

This course will introduce you to British literary tradition from its earliest origins in the heroic Anglo-Saxon period up through the cosmopolitan close of the eighteenth century. Throughout the semester, we will cover more than a thousand years of material. We begin with the earliest written literature of our own language, the epic works of Old English, before exploring the magic of Middle English romance, the drama of the Early Modern English stage, and the globalism of the eighteenth century. The goals of this course are twofold: first, to introduce you to the central texts and authors that make up the first “half” (by volume, not by time period) of the corpus of literature written in Britain, and second, to demonstrate the continuity of the British literary tradition as a thriving expression of the social and cultural conditions of its time. In addition, we will question the notion of the “canon,” and consider some literature that was written outside of England and yet had powerful influence on English literature and culture.

Required Texts:

- The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 10th edition, vols A, B, and C.¹

All other texts and some secondary readings will be available through our course Blackboard page or (in the case of several videos) linked to our class page on my professional website.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade in the course will be calculated as follows:

- 20% -- Participation/Preparedness (including Blackboard Dynamic Notes)
- 20% -- Short Responses (4 total)
- 20% -- Midterm
- 15% -- Final Project narrative (3-5 pages)
- 25% -- Final Project

¹ If you need it. See opening class discussion.

Reading and Participation/Preparedness

The reading for each day is listed below on the syllabus next to the appropriate dates; please read, annotate, and think about the reading before the start of class. I would encourage you to bring notes or thoughts with you to facilitate discussion.

In order for us to have fruitful class discussions, all students are expected to come to class willing and eager to engage with each other and the course material. Continued failure to do so may affect your final grade in the course. Good discussion can come in many forms, but everyone should be prepared to ask anything (without hand-raising) and anyone can answer. Classroom discussions often can have one focus—the professor—but in the spirit of collaborative theater, I want us to be a community of multiple voices and conversations, so that we can all learn from each other. You will also keep a running “dynamic notes” thread in the discussion board throughout the semester. This should take the form of an ongoing thread in the Discussion Board forum on our Blackboard page. Start a discussion with your name in the title, and add responses to that thread throughout the semester, reacting to the texts that we read. See Blackboard for some examples of “good” dynamic notes from prior students.

Short Responses

Short responses should be about two full pages in length (typed/double spaced). Responses might expand on a class discussion; they might branch off and consider questions we did not have time to consider in class; they might consider a key image or passage that shapes your view of the work as a whole. Each response should focus on specific passages (or in some cases, one work) read for the course.

Because these responses are fairly short, you are not expected to fully develop and defend a complex thesis. This is your chance to further explore something that confused you or intrigued you about the reading in question – in a focused way. A good short response will lead to an interesting discussion in class. You will write four of these short responses over the course of the semester. There are four deadlines in the course calendar below. Short responses should be turned in *before* we discuss that text in class (to avoid having repeats of class discussions). See Blackboard for some examples of “good” short responses from prior students.

Midterm

The Midterm will not be a midterm. It will be a formal set of notes/organizational work of texts from your selected “bucket.” More on this moving forward.

Final Project and Final Project Narrative

As I mentioned in the first week of class, we are flitting about through 1,000+ years of literary history, sampling bits of text from a variety of genres, regions, topics, etc as we go. Each text that we read is merely a drop in a larger bucket, and delving deeper into one of those buckets would

offer the ability to better understand those kinds of texts, the varieties within, and how those texts still reverberate today.

For your final project, you are going to select one of the droplets (texts) that we read this semester, and identify one longer and several shorter texts that also likely belong in the same bucket as the text that we read. For example, if you were to select John Lyly's court play, *Galatea*, you might put together a "bucket" of texts that offer public praise of Queen Elizabeth I. You might select another court play (maybe *The Lady of May* by Sir Philip Sidney), some excerpts featuring Elizabeth figures in *The Faerie Queene*, some laudatory poetry from several points during her reign (including the elegies published upon her death), and maybe even some "outside the box" things, like Elizabeth's writings in praise of herself or even some of the portraits meant to praise her. The midterm is literally your initial construction of your "bucket"—you identify the theme and list, with justification, a series of texts that seem to fit the theme of your bucket.

Once you have read and taken notes on the texts in your "bucket," you will devise a project that reflects your new knowledge of, or even *adds* to theme of that bucket. It may help to think of this in terms of your major. Education major? Maybe you design a unit plan with lessons connected to these texts. Creative Writing major? Maybe you can create a modern version of that kind of text (how do people publicly praise rulers/those in power today as opposed to 400 years ago?). The possibilities are endless, and I will expect you all to check in if you have questions as you work. The idea here is three-fold: 1- Delve deep on one of the things that we can only skim in class. Become the expert on that thing. 2- Connect what you've learned to the skills that you already have. These should be at least a little bit fun to do. 3- Impress me. Between the project itself, the narrative (more on that below) and the "midterm," this project accounts for 60% of your final grade. It should be a substantial piece of work to reflect that kind of academic value.

The Final Project Narrative is a 3 to 5-page (double spaced) document that you will hand in with your project. In the narrative, you have to space to *explain* your project. In creative writing, a good tip is always "show it, don't just tell us about it." In the project, you "show it." In the FPN, you tell us about it. Think about it like a museum exhibit, where your project is the item on display and the FPN is the placard that explains the important details about it.

Policies

Contacting Your Instructor

I will be delighted to discuss your suggestions, ideas, and concerns about this course with you. You should feel free to drop by during my office hours, particularly if you enjoy coffee/tea. If those times are inconvenient, please e-mail me. I'm happy to make other arrangements. Please e-mail me in advance if you need to cancel an appointment.

The best way to contact me is via e-mail. **I will respond to all e-mails within 24 hours**, and I request that you show me the same courtesy. However, I am not permanently attached to my computer. **I do not generally check my e-mail between 10 PM and 10 AM.**² Please plan your electronic communications accordingly.

² This is a lie, but you shouldn't really expect a response that late at night. ☺

Written Work

All writing assignments should be typed and double spaced with one-inch margins. Please use 12-point Times New Roman font. All writing will be handed in electronically via email; **All assignments must be in .doc or .docx format, or I will not be able to open them.**

Please note! This syllabus constitutes a contract for this class. I will follow all of the policies I have set out in the syllabus. If you are still enrolled in this class by the end of the add/drop period, I will assume you have agreed to these terms and conditions.

Due Dates:

Blackboard Dynamic Notes—Continuous

Midterm—October 9th

1st Short Response—Between 8/19 and 9/11

2nd Short Response—Between 9/14 and 10/5

3rd Short Response—Between 10/7 and 10/28

4th Short Response—Between 10/30 and 11/24

Final Project—TBD

Course Schedule

Week 1

W 8/19 and F 8/21: Welcome, Introductions, Syllabus overview, Decisions about course structure, Anglo-Saxon Riddles and dispelling the “Dark Ages.”

Week 2

M 8/24 and W 8/26: Lyric poetry, Elegiac mood, Oral tradition: “The Wanderer,” “Wulf and Eadwacer,” “The Wife’s Lament,” and “The Ruin.” Chat about (ie: don’t need to read for class) *Judith* and *Beowulf*.

Asynchronous Class: England’s history—poetical vs. political. Geoffrey of Monmouth (online via Blackboard) and Bede (pages 30-33 in Norton).

F 8/28: [Online via WebEx]—Faith, gender, and boundaries. The Dream of the Rood (pages 33-36 in Norton), Ancrene Wisse (pages 154-157 in Norton), and Julian of Norwich (pages 430-441 in Norton).

Week 3

M 8/31 and W 9/2: John Gower, Allegory, and Confession (pages 364-376 in Norton).

Asynchronous Class: Medieval Romance. Marie De France (pages 159-187 in Norton)—**Kyle?**

F 9/4: [Online via WebEx]—Medieval Romance. The Myth of Arthur's return (we will discuss in passing Monmouth, Wace, Layamon, and Thomas of England). We will look at directed passages from *Gawain and the Green Knight* (pgs 201-255 in Norton) in class. Before class, please read Sir Thomas Malory, selections from *Morte Darthur* (534-553 in Norton) and choose one Arthurian *character* and read about them on the *Camelot Project* (link on Blackboard).

Week 4

M 9/7: NO CLASS—LABOR DAY HOLIDAY (Monday group will get an asynchronous lesson)

W 9/9: Medieval Drama—Liturgical Beginnings. *Quem Quaeritis* (on Blackboard), *The Wakefield Second Shepherds' Play* (pages 465-494 in Norton).

F 9/11: [Online via WebEx]—Medieval Drama in Performance. Please watch the performance of *Everyman* (link on Blackboard—the text begins on page 558 of the Norton). Please also watch the clips from several modern productions of mystery cycles that I have uploaded to our class's page on my website (three clips in total).

Week 5 (Welcome to the Renaissance)

M 9/14 and W 9/16: Lorenzo Valla, the exposure of a fraud, and the founding of philology. Please read the excerpts from Valla's *Donatio* (scanned and on Blackboard).

Asynchronous Class: Christian Humanism, and faith vs. state-based communities. Please read the scan from Erasmus's *Adages* (on Blackboard).

F 9/18: [Online via WebEx]—Sonnets, and the sonneteers who love them. Please read selected sonnets by Wyatt, Anne Locke, Spenser, Shakespeare, Lady Mary Wroth, and Richard Barnfield.

Week 6

M 9/21 and W 9/23: Faith in transition/translation. Please read the different translations of 1 Corinthians 13 in the Norton (pages 143-148). Bibles, authorized texts, and political control.

Asynchronous Class: Schools and schoolmasters. Please read the excerpts from Roger Ascham's *Schoolmaster* (pages 171-175 in the Norton) and the schoolboy narrative by Vives (on Blackboard) before watching this lesson. Dainty?

F 9/25: [Online via WebEx]—Sir Thomas Hoby, Castiglione, and Mirrors for Magistrates. Please read the material from *The Courtier* (pages 176-192 in the Norton).

Week 7

M 9/28 and W 9/30: The Cult of Elizabeth, the King's Two Bodies, and Spenser's *The Faerie*

Queene. Please read selected passages (I will update which passages) from *The Faerie Queene* (likely on Blackboard and/or in the Norton).

Asynchronous Class: Professions, professional folly, links to *The Courtier* and Renaissance space (no new reading for this lesson—this was basically my dissertation topic, so I’m just going to jam with it and also give a model for how to set up the “midterm” prep work for your final project).

F 10/2: [Online via WebEx]—Pastoral vs. the Court. Please read Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” (page 678 in the Norton), Sir Walter Raleigh’s “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (page 527 in the Norton), and one of “Lyly’s” entertainments for Queen Elizabeth (will be linked on Blackboard once I choose which one I want to look at)

Week 8

M 10/5 and W 10/7: Words of the Queen/King and legacy—Shakes/Jonson/Eulogy verse

Asynchronous Class: First half of Galatea (on Blackboard)—Court Comedy and Theodora

F 10/9: [Online via WebEx]—Second half of Galatea—Hic Mulier/Haec Vir. Boys companies clip.

Week 9

M 10/12 and W 10/14: Gender and the wider world—excerpts from *Daughters, Wives, and Widows* (on Blackboard); excerpts from *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (on Blackboard); “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” by Joan Kelly (on Blackboard); Read the three excerpts under “Gender Relations” in the Norton (pages 1198-1210). Victorian echoes (Copperfield and Dracula).

Asynchronous Class: Race and the wider world—*The Elizabethan Image of Africa* (on Blackboard); Elizabeth’s proclamation re: Moors (on Blackboard), Norton 609-657 (selections). Sydney?

F 10/16: [Online via WebEx]—Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (film)—Lead driven vs. Company model.

Week 10

M 10/19 and W 10/21: Individual conferences to discuss the Midterm and how to move your projects forward (via WebEx).

Asynchronous Class: Revenge Tragedy—first half of *The Atheist’s Tragedy* (on Blackboard)—Sam Newmark

F 10/23: [Online via WebEx]—2nd half of *The Atheist’s Tragedy*, and discussion of other examples of revenge tragedy genre.

Week 11

M 10/26 and W 10/28: Transition, push towards Great Britain, and thoughts of divine right to rule. Gunpowder plot (Shapiro on Blackboard). Connections to Monmouth. Connections to *King Lear*.

Asynchronous Class: Civil War, Interregnum, Milton (readings TBD in the Norton)

F 10/30: [Online via WebEx]—Pepys Diary (link on Blackboard) and the importance of daily lives—Read April 23, 1661; September 2 & 5, 1666, and 5 dates of your choosing.

Week 12

M 11/2 and W 11/4: 17th C poetry—metaphysical, structural, and the conflation of the sexual and spiritual: Donne/Herbert/Vaughan/Crashaw/Herrick (selections TBD).

Asynchronous Class: Aemilia Lanyer (pages 980-990 in the Norton)—Leslie

F 11/6: [Online via WebEx]—Bacon's essays (pages 1212-1235 in the Norton). The push towards science/reason.

Week 13

M 11/9 and W 11/11: Locke (pages 105-108 and 961-964), Mary Astell (pages 248-251 and 965-968), and Dryden (Criticism, pages 77-85 in the Norton)—criticism, debate, and rational thought.

Asynchronous Class: Swift—A Modest Proposal and Satire (pages 454-459—Connect to Dryden and Valla—what *is* satire/sarcasm?).

F 11/13: [Online via WebEx]—Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko* (pages 139-186).

Week 14

M 11/16 and W 11/18: The beginnings of a literary afterlife. Samuel Johnson, selections from *The Preface to Shakespeare* (pages 806-816).

Asynchronous Class: Olaudah Equiano (pages 979-990 in the Norton)

F 11/20: [Online via WebEx]—Individual conference time to meet with me about your projects

Week 15

M 11/23: Individual conference time to meet with me about your projects

T 11/24: Individual conference time to meet with me about your projects

Thanksgiving Break is 11/25-30