ENGLISH 221: BRITISH LITERATURE TO 1798

The object of this course is to introduce you to work by major British writers from the Middle English period to the end of the eighteenth century. We will stress Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Dryden, Swift, Pope, Defoe, and Samuel Johnson. There will be two short papers, a term paper, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Papers may be on any author or work not covered in class sessions.

Required texts:
- Shakespeare, *Four Tragedies* (Bantam paperback)
- Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (Dover paperback)

SCHEDULE

August
- Wed 23 organization
- Fri 25 Geoffrey Chaucer, “General Prologue,” “Miller’s Prologue and Tale,” “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale”
- Mon 28 Chaucer, continued
- Wed 30 Sir Thomas Wyatt, “They flee from me”
  - Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 20, 28, 47, 52, 91, 108; *The Defense of Poesy*

September
- Fri 1 Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*: “A Letter of the Authors”; selection from Book 2
- Mon 4 NO CLASS: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
- Wed 6 Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*
- Fri 8 Marlowe, continued
- Mon 11 William Shakespeare, Sonnets (all those printed in Norton 7)
Wed 13  Shakespeare *Hamlet*

**FIRST PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

Fri 15  continue *Hamlet*

Mon 18  Shakespeare, *Othello*

Wed 20  continue *Othello*

Fri 22  John Donne, *Songs and Sonnets* (all printed in Norton 7)

**FIRST PAPER DUE**

Mon 25  continue Donne


Ben Jonson, *Volpone*

Fri 29  continue Jonson

October

Mon 2  John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 1, 9, and 12

Wed 4  continue Milton

Fri 6  **MID TERM EXAM**

Mon 9  NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

Wed 11  Andrew Marvell, “A Dialogue between Soul and Body,” “The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn,” “To His Coy Mistress,” “The Definition of Love,” “The Garden”

Fri 13  Session on late 17th century and history

Mon 16  John Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel, Mac Flecknoe*

Wed 18  continue Dryden

Samuel Pepys, selections from *Diary*

Fri 20  Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*

Mon 23  Jonathan Swift, “Verses on the Death of Dr Swift,” “A Modest

Wed 25  Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Part 1

**SECOND PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

Fri 27  Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Part 4

Mon 30  Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*

November

Wed 1  continue Defoe

Fri 3  continue Defoe

**SECOND PAPER DUE**

Mon 6  Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*

Wed 8  Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*
Fri 10    Pope, selections from An Essay on Man; “Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot”

Mon 13    John Gay, Beggar’s Opera
Wed 15    session on paper writing etc.
Fri 17    session on 18th century history

Mon 20    conferences
TERM PAPER PROPOSAL DUE
Wed 22    conferences
Fri 24    NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Mon 27    Samuel Johnson, “Vanity of Human Wishes,” Ramblers 4 and 60
Wed 29    Johnson, selections from Dictionary and Preface to Shakespeare

December
Fri 1     James Boswell, selections from Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D.

Mon 4     Finale: what have we accomplished?
Wed 6     conferences
Fri 8     conferences

THE TERM PAPER IS DUE ON FRIDAY 8 DECEMBER AT 4 P.M. IN MY MAILBOX IN 116 BURROWES BUILDING.

The FINAL EXAM is tentatively scheduled for Monday, 11 December from 6:50 to 8:40 p.m. This date cannot be formally confirmed until 23 October.

Expectations and explanations:

(1) You are required to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be taken. You are expected to come prepared, and to participate in discussion. A passive class is a dull class. The course will be as good as your joint participation makes it.

(2) Two papers and a term paper will be required (each preceded by a formal, typed proposal). The short papers should be 4-5 pages; the term paper should be roughly 8-10 pages. Due dates are given above. There will be a mid-term exam, and a final exam during the December exam period. The exams will require detailed knowledge of what has been said in class as well as the assigned reading, and they will be closed-book. You are strongly advised to read the Norton anthology period and author introductions and to study them closely. You are also advised not only to attend class but to take notes. You are responsible for knowing what is said in class.

(3) Late papers will be penalized one-third of a grade per working day unless you have obtained an extension in advance.
Finding a valid and interesting topic is often the most important part of writing a paper. Therefore I will not assign topics. You are expected to find your own topics. I will, however, be happy to discuss a possible topic with you in advance, in person or by e-mail, and I will try to help you find good ones.

I do not want papers from frat files or other such sources. Therefore you are required to turn in your handwritten draft, together with your final typed version. (If you write rough drafts at the keyboard, then please hand in a first printout.) NB: Please keep a second printout for yourself in case you somehow lose the paper or the electronic file.

You are always welcome to rewrite any paper prior to the term paper in my courses—whether the first version was good, bad, or indifferent. I will not give another grade for the paper, but improvement will definitely be taken into account in the final grade. NB: “Rewriting” does NOT just mean correcting the spelling and grammar, or responding to specific criticisms.

The final grade will not be determined by any tidy mathematical formula. The final paper will count much more heavily than the short ones; class participation will have a significant effect on the final grade. I do not grade on a curve: you are not competing against one another for grades.

This is a pleasantly small class. Please drop into my office hours at your convenience and get acquainted. I am happy to talk with you about British Literature, the English major, the university, life in the real world, jobs, graduate school, or the universe.