Survey of British Literature to the 18th Century

Lecture: MW 2:00-2:50pm
Bondurant Auditorium 204C
Teaching Assistants:

Office: Bondurant C133
Office Hours: T/Th 2:30-3:30p, and by appointment
Email:

Course Description:
This course is an introductory survey that charts the emergence of a national institution of literature in Britain during the years 700-1750. It begins in a time before anything we now know as literature existed, and ends in the very moment when all of the fictional, poetic, or dramatic writing being produced in Britain is beginning to be labeled as what we now think of as literary. As a survey course, English 225 hits what exemplary heights it can—time is limited, so we are left with a series of literary plateaus rather than a smoothly developed narrative of the growth of literature in Britain. Above all, what this survey should provide is an encounter with the complex tradition of literary writing, and with a broad historical experience of a prominent national version of that tradition. What is literature, and what has Britain had to do with the answer to that question? These are the questions we will begin to answer here.

Required Texts (Available at the Textbook Store):
The Broadview Concise Anthology of British Literature, Volume A

Course Objectives:
This is an introductory course that seeks to expose students broadly to an exemplary national canon of British literature. During the course of the semester, students are expected to (and will be encouraged to) focus on developing their skills in gaining and developing a vocabulary of literary explication and close reading, increase their historical understanding of the context of the British literary canon, develop their ability to discuss literary works in a group setting, and improve their methods and strategies in the writing of argumentative, analytical essays. In addition to these concerns of skill acquisition, the course also aims to encourage students in the following directions:

- To better understand the importance of literature as a discipline, as a disciplinary form of knowledge about the world. Both in moments of the historical past and in the very present of our lives, attention to literary perspective offers an irreducibly unique way in which to see, interpret, navigate, and affect the world.
- To see the way in which these long-past literary works, so foreign to us on the surface, are all engaged in confronting their own version of a contemporary moment, which generally means that they name this contemporaneity, critique it, express longing for a lost past, or look to a future for transformation. We will examine throughout the semester the ways in which literature is concerned about the "modernity" of the present in which it is produced.
• An exposure to a range of literary genres will provide a sense of the many ways in which literature’s relation to the world can be imagined formally. We will consider a number of major literary genres—epic, satire, tragedy, elegy, sonnets, and others. The exposure to a wide range of genre will help students begin to map out the terrain of literature in the many varied ways it interfaces with and reflects on social practice.

Course Format:
The course meets twice per week in a large lecture format, and then once per week with your Teaching Assistants in a smaller, recitation or discussion setting. The lectures are intended to act as moments of the relay of information, models of close reading and historical interpretation, and a chance for me to communicate my own perspective on these texts to you. These lectures are also chances for you to ask me questions that might be of use to you and your classmates, and I will welcome and indeed encourage the opening of the lecture hall to discussion and conversation as much as this large format will allow. The discussion sections will offer further opportunity for you to interact as readers of literature, and you should keep in mind that it is this practice—becoming readers of literature, and doing so in tandem with your Professor, Teaching Assistants, and classmates—all your fellow readers—that will allow you to get the most out of this course.

Course Procedures:
• Please arrive on time so that lecture can begin promptly—there is much material to cover and if we linger over the beginning of class, the delivery of material will be rushed and less effective for all involved.
• Please turn off all cell phones. If your phone rings during class, I reserve the right to answer it for you.
• Please bring your textbook to class—to all lectures and discussion sections. Arriving without your textbook will negatively impact your participation grade.
• I encourage all of you to make good use of my office hours and other time outside of the classroom. I feel strongly that the course should find itself extended to discussions outside of class, whether with me or with your Teaching Assistants. Please consider making use of opportunities to extend your inquiries into British literature to other, non-classroom exchanges.
• Please do not talk or chat during the lecture.

Grading:
Mid-Term Exam = 25%
In-Class Essay = 15%
Final Exam = 30%
Quizzes (3 Historical, 6 Other) = 10%
Responses / Discussion-Leading = 10%
Participation = 10%

In-Class Essay: In our lecture meeting on Monday, November 9th, you will spend the class period composing an in-class essay in a Blue Book. This is a kind of exam, but its evaluative concern is directed more towards the composition, organization, and expression of an extended discussion of a topic that will come from the texts that follow
our Mid-Term Exam.

**Quizzes:** There will be three historical quizzes that will cover the asterisked reading assignments (see below). In addition there will be six other quizzes over the course of the semester. These will be given in your discussion sections, and if you are absent from your section when a quiz is held, you may not make it up.

**Responses/Discussion-Leading:** You will each, over the course of the semester, on two occasions write a short (1-2pp, single-spaced) response paper on a passage or issue in one of the texts from the week's lectures. You will sign up for these responses in your discussion sections. On the meeting of discussion section in which you hand in your response, you will also be responsible to serve as a discussion leader, which simply means that you will need to take responsibility for the life and the direction of the discussion during that meeting. You may talk about what you have written in your response to orient discussion, or you may simply work hard to help ensure that the discussion that week is focused, attentive to important textual concerns, and lively. The written responses should focus on a close reading of a passage or a set of passages from one of the week's texts, communicating to your readers the importance or significance of the passage you've chosen. You may decide to orient your response towards a problem within the text—a place where the text presents a difficulty that seems to demand further interpretation. Or you may decide to add to our discussion of these texts by building on (but not simply replicating or repeating) a theme I've proposed in the lecture. In general, the key for successful responses will be writing that tells us what its concern is, sets out quickly to begin interpretation and close reading, and remains, throughout, focused on the matter with which you begin.

**Participation:** Your participation grade, assigned by your Teaching Assistant, will come from your contribution to the conversation that takes place in your discussion section.

Grades will be available via Blackboard.

**Attendance:**
You are allowed two (2) absences from your discussion sections without penalty. Much of the course's effect will emerge not only from the lecture, which will offer an authoritative perspective on the material, but also from the experiences you will share with your TAs and classmates in your discussion sections. Each time you miss class, you miss the product of your instructor's lectures, these conversations, and the unique opportunity for shared inquiry. Each absence beyond the second will also incur a reduction of your final grade by 5%.

**Academic Honesty:**
You are expected to uphold the University of Mississippi's expectations for academic honesty in all of your work. This means that you must take as your task the production of original, synthetic writing that gives proper credit to those sources that enable it. See the University's M Book for further guidelines about academic honesty and how to avoid plagiarism.
Accomodations for Disabilities:
It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations and to contact the Office of Student Disability Services (http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sds/).

Schedule of Readings:
All readings are to be completed by the beginning of class on the respective date assigned below.

August

24 M  Introduction

26 W  “Introduction to The Medieval Period” (1-29) *
“The Wanderer”(51-3); “The Wife’s Lament” (55)

31 M  Beowulf (57-79); “Background Material” (101-5)

September

2 W  Beowulf (80-100)

7 M  No Class – Labor Day Holiday

9 W  Bede: from Ecclesiastical History of the English People (35-49)
Marie de France: Lanval (106-122)

14 M  “Contexts: The Crises of the Fourteenth Century” (131-141)
Chaucer: from The Canterbury Tales, Introduction and “The General Prologue”
(214-235)

16 W  Introduction to “The Knight’s Tale” (236)
Introduction to “The Miller’s Prologue and Tale” (269)
Introduction to “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale” (282)
“The Wife of Bath’s Prologue” (284-297)

21 M  “The Wife of Bath’s Tale” (298-303)
“Contexts: Religious and Spiritual Life” (351-371)
23 W  “Introduction to the Renaissance and the Early Seventeenth Century” (450-499) *

28 M  Marlowe: The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus (736-37; 750-83)

30 W  Marlowe: The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus (750-83)

October

5 M  “The Elizabethan Sonnet and Lyric” (565-572)
Shakespeare Sonnets TBA

Mary Wroth: Sonnets TBA

12 M  MIDTERM EXAM

14 W  Shakespeare: King Lear: Acts 1-3 (803-848)
“In Context” (884-888)

19 M  Shakespeare: King Lear: Acts 4-5 (849-883)

21 W  Milton: Paradise Lost: Introduction through Book 4 (975-6; 996-1029)

26 M  Milton: Paradise Lost: Argument to Book 5 through Book 12 (1030-1059)

28 W  “Introduction to The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century” (1062-1096) *
Rochester: “A Satire against Reason and Mankind” (1235-7)

November

2 M  Behn: Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave. A True History (1146-80)

4 W  Haywood: Fantomina (1457-72)
“In Context: The Eighteenth-Century Sexual Imagination” (1473-6)

9 M  IN-CLASS ESSAY
Defoe: from A Journal of the Plague Year (1269-78)
Swift: “A Description of a City Shower” (1288);
Johnson: “The Vanity of Human Wishes” (1504-8)

Pope: The Rape of the Lock (1399-1414)

from The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano (1574-84)

No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday

No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday

Pope: Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady (1414-15)
Gray: Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1542-5)
Duck: “The Thresher’s Labor” (1557-60); Collier: “The Woman’s Labour: To Mr. Stephen Duck” (1561-3)

December

Review for FINAL EXAM