I. Calendar description of the course:

An examination of examples of the greatest literature in English and its relation to the periods of its origin. Figures such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Blake, Keats, Tennyson, Dickens, and T. S. Eliot will be examined.

II. Rationale

The course is concerned with increasing your awareness in a number of areas.

You will study a number of major works of English literature that are representative of the periods in which they were written. You will thus become better acquainted with the principal ideas, assumptions, and attitudes of people living in those periods and will be able to compare them with those of the twentieth century. At the same time you will examine the ways in which writers of the different periods sought to express the ideas of their age, and you will thus know better what kinds of literature are to be found in each period.

The works chosen also reflect a wide variety of genres appearing in English literature, and you will examine how the conventions employed in these genres make them work in the way they do, with the result, again, that you will know where to find further examples of those genres which appeal to you.

The course is also concerned with strengthening your ability to make informed comment on the works studied. To this end you will be guided through a series of brief critical essays, in which you will comment on how certain of the literary works function. You will also be guided through a series of exercises designed to let you use the library more profitably, especially with regard to finding what others have said about the literary works studied.
These two series will then coalesce in the writing of an essay which is both critical and research-based, in which you will present your own ideas with the assistance of ideas from other commentators.

III. Requirements

You will be expected to read about 600 pages in the Norton Anthology and all the other texts listed below; in addition you will read whatever critical and scholarly writing is necessary for your final essay. You will complete the series of brief essays and library exercises mentioned above, along with the final essay; you will also write a mid-term test in each term and a two-hour examination at the end of each term, at a time in the examination period scheduled by the registrar. Participation in classroom discussion will be encouraged but not required.

The final grade in the course will reflect these requirements in this manner: 10% of that grade will derive from the series of brief critical essays, 10% from the series of library exercises, 10% from each mid-term test (total of 20%), 20% from the final essay, and 20% from each two-hour examination (total of 40%). Classroom participation (can) then modify the final grade by a part-grade (e.g., C-plus to B-minus, C-plus to mid-C).

IV. Texts


2. Shakespeare, The Tempest, ed. Harbage (AHM)


5. Dickens, A Christmas Carol (Airmont)

6. Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest (PPL)

7. Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea (Scribner)

8. Synge, The Playboy of the Western World & Riders to the Sea, ed. Hunt (AHM)

9. Gardner, Grendel (Ballantine)

10. Thomas, Correct Form in Essay Writing (English Dept., Univ. of Waterloo)
V. Order of Topics

A. Fall Term

1. Introduction (Sep. 11)

2. Beowulf, as epic (Norton Anthology, pp. 1-9, 18-79) (Sep. 13, 15, 18)

3. First writing exercise due Sep. 18

4. Introduction to library exercises, Sep. 20.

5. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, as romance (NA, pp. 218-72) (Sep. 20, 22, 25)

6. First library exercise due Sep. 25

7. Second writing exercise assigned Sep. 27 (due Oct. 4)

8. Chaucer, General Prologue (NA, pp. 9-17, 80-109) (Sep. 27, 29, Oct. 2, 4, 6)

9. Second writing exercise due Oct. 4

10. Second library exercise assigned Oct. 6 (due Oct. 13)


14. Third writing exercise assigned Oct. 23 (due Oct. 30)


16. Sonnets (in NA):

   (a) Milton: "How Soon Hath Time" (p. 658), "When I Consider" (p. 660), "Methought I Saw" (p. 661) (Oct. 27)

   (b) Shakespeare: Nos. 12, 30, 71, 73, 116, 129, 130 (pp. 478-86) (Oct. 27, 30)

17. Third writing exercise due Oct. 30

18. Third library exercise assigned Nov 1 (due Nov. 8)

19. Shakespeare, King Lear, as high tragedy (NA, pp. 490-574) (Nov. 1, 3, 6, 8)
20. Third library exercise due Nov. 8.

21. Fourth writing exercise assigned Nov. 10 (due Nov. 24).

22. Shakespeare, The Tempest, as romantic comedy (Nov. 10, 13, 15).

23. Fourth library exercise assigned Nov. 15 (due Nov. 22).


25. Fourth writing exercise due Nov. 22.


27. Jonson, The Alchemist, as humours comedy (Nov. 24, 27).


29. First-term examination (2 hours), to be scheduled by the registrar. Oral home test: assigned Dec. 1, due Dec. 11.

B. Winter Term


2. Pope, Rape of the Lock, as mock-epic (NA, pp. 840-55, 1120-26, 1139-58) (Jan. 3, 5, 6, 10).


4. Sterne, A Sentimental Journey, as fiction and sentiment (Jan. 12, 15).


10. Essay topics distributed Feb. 2 (outline due Feb. 12, essay due Mar. 15) and lecture on organizing essays, Feb. 2.

Setebos") (NA, pp. 2076-81, 2085-90, 2123-26, 2129-37) (Feb. 5, 7)

12. Dickens, A Christmas Carol, as Victorian fiction (Feb. 9, 12)


[Arts study week]


16. Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest, as manners comedy (Feb. 28)


18. Essay due Mar. 5

19. Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea, as modern fiction (Mar. 12, 14)

20. Synge, The Playboy of the Western World, as satiric comedy (Mar. 16, 19, 21)

21. Synge, Riders to the Sea, as proletarian tragedy (Mar. 23)

22. Gardner, Grendel, as modern fiction (Mar. 26, 28)

23. Second-term examination (2 hours), to be scheduled by the registrar.

Sat, Apr 14  9-12  HA 150