ENGLISH 200A
Survey of British Literature 1
Section 03
SYLLABUS for FALL, 1989

Calendar description of the course

An historical survey of major figures, types, and trends in British literature from the Middle Ages to the late 18th century.

Rationale

The course is concerned with increasing your awareness in several 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 which periods.

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.
This aspect of the course will culminate in your writing an evaluation of the usefulness of a particular article. (You will of course be shown how to go about doing this.) You will then be equipped to undertake research essays in the following term.

Work required

You will be expected to read about 450 pages in the Norton Anthology and the three dramas listed below. You will complete the series of library exercises mentioned above, two critical essays of 500 words each, and an evaluatory essay of 1000 words. (These essays will double as take-home examinations.)

The library exercises together will be worth 30% of the final grade, each of the two brief critical essays will be worth 15%, and the evaluatory essay will be worth 40%.

Texts assigned


Order of topics and assignments

(An asterisk indicates a date for submitting an assignment.)

1. Introduction (Sept. 11)
2. Beowulf, as epic (Norton Anthology 1-5, 19-72) (Sept. 13, 15, 18)
3. Background to the first library exercise (Sept. 18)
4. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, as romance (NA 181-238) (Sept. 20, 22, 25)
6. Chaucer, the Wife of Bath in General Prologue (lines 447-78), her Prologue and her Tale (NA 90-1, 117-46) (Sept. 25, 27, 29, Oct. 2)
7. Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, as beast fable (NA 163-7A) (Oct. 4)

8. Background to the second library exercise (Oct. 5)


*10. Submit the second library exercise Mon., Oct. 16.

11. Assigning of the first critical essay and a discussion of how to write it (Oct 16)


15. Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, as tragicomedy (Oct. 25, 27, 30)

16. Background to the third library exercise (Oct. 30)

17. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, as romantic comedy (Nov. 1, 3)

*18. Submit the third library exercise Mon., Nov. 6.

19. Donne, "Song: Go and catch," "The Flea," Sonnet 14, "Hymn to God my God," "A Hymn to God the Father" (NA 590, 597-8, 615-7, 620-1) (Nov. 6, 8, 10)


21. Assigning of the second critical essay and a discussion of how to write it (Nov. 15)


*23. Submit the second critical essay (500 words) Mon., Nov. 20.

24. Pope, *Rape of the Lock*, as mock heroic (NA 1108-2R) (Nov. 22, 24)

25. Illustration of how to analyze the usefulness of a critical article and assigning of topics for evaluatory essay (Nov. 27)


*27. Submit the evaluatory essay (1000 words) to HH 263 by 5 p.m. on Mon., Dec. 11.