English 200A

Survey of British Literature I
Section 01

Fall 1991
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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

English 200A is an introductory survey of British literature from the Middle Ages (the fourteenth century) to the middle of the eighteenth century. Although it is a required course for English majors, it is also suitable for non-majors or students majoring in other disciplines. There is no prerequisite for English 200A, though previous courses in English will be an asset.

The course will focus on works by four representative authors—Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton and Swift. These four will be supplemented by works of Spenser, Donne and Pope.

The course is designed to give students a sense of the historical context in which the works were written as well as knowledge and appreciation of the major genres and modes of literature.

For students wishing to continue their study of English literature, English 200B (Survey of British Literature II) is a natural follow-up for English 200A, though this course will serve as a useful preparation for any other course offered by the Department.

Objectives

English 200A has five related objectives.

1. It aims to give you practice and training in reading and interpreting individual pieces of literature with greater insight and in making comparisons among them.

2. It aims to make you aware of the historical context of the works.

3. It aims to make you aware of the different artistic forms of the literature.

4. It aims to give you practice in critical analysis of individual works and comparative analysis of several works.

5. It aims to help you improve your writing ability.

These objectives will be achieved by your own reading and studying of the primary texts, by reading the secondary historical and critical material included in the texts and notes, and by writing essays and the final examination.
II. Texts

Required

Norton Anthology of English Literature, Major Authors Edition.
Methuen.
Thomas, W.K. Correct Form in Essay Writing. University of Waterloo.
Frye, Northrop. The Educated Imagination. CBC Publications.

Recommended

A good college dictionary (e.g., The Random House College Dictionary).
King James version of the Bible.

III. Syllabus

2. ______. "Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale."
   a) The Indifferent
   b) Song ("Go and catch a falling star")
   c) Break of Day
   d) The Funeral
   e) The Apparition
   f) Love's Alchemy
   g) The Flea
   h) The Sun Rising
   i) The Canonization
   j) A Lecture Upon the Shadow
   k) A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning
5. ______. Holy Sonnets.
7. ______. Othello.
IV. ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS

1. Assignment I - a short essay about 4-6 pages in length worth 20% of the final grade.
2. Assignment II - an essay about 8-10 pages in length worth 40% of the final grade.
3. Final Examination - two hours in length, worth 40% of the final grade.

V. RATIONALE AND POLICIES GOVERNING THE ASSIGNMENTS

1. If the topics suggested in the assignments do not appeal to you, I will entertain other suggestions as long as you consult with me in sufficient time with an outline of the topic you propose to work on.

2. I have framed the topics for the essays in a way that will require a careful and thoughtful reading of the texts and little or limited use of secondary material. That is, the topics are not research essays that require consultation in secondary sources. However, if you want to do some extra reading in critical material, feel free to do so. But because plagiarism is a serious offence punishable by suspension or even expulsion, make certain that you acknowledge borrowings from all your sources.

3. Though I would prefer it if you observed the due deadline for the essays, if you should need an extension, please inform me. I will impose a penalty of half a grade on late essays.

4. In order to provide opportunity for improvement, I will allow rewrite privileges without penalty for one of the essays. For practical reasons, the due date for submitting rewrites will be the date of the exam.

5. If you should need an incomplete, please contact me to negotiate a schedule for completion of the course. Incomplete grades are normally converted automatically to an F- after one term, but instructors may revise the grade at any time.

VI. GRADING AND ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS

1. I will follow the Faculty of Arts grading scale by assigning a letter grade from A+ to F- on your assignments. For purposes of averaging, I will use the numerical equivalent assigned to each letter grade from a 95 for an A+ to a 32 for an F-.

2. Besides marginal commentary and internal corrections, I will attach to the assignments a summary evaluation sheet, pointing out strengths and weaknesses and offering suggestions for improvement.
3. In the "General Instructions for Preparing Assignments" that follow, I note some of the qualities I look for in a good essay. Since most students who take this course are either in their first or second year of study, I will be grading your essays within that context. The main purpose of my assessment is not to attach a label to your essay, but to provide you with suggestions on how to improve your work.

VII. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING A FORMAL ESSAY

1. The assigned topics provide you with a central theme or problem which is intended as a focus for your paper.

2. Before you start to write an essay, it is essential for you to do some concentrated thinking about the issues raised by the topic. I suggest you make a list of "random reflections" as a way of surveying your thoughts on the subject. Once you have such a list, try to order these reflections in some coherent manner. Make an outline of the main divisions and subdivisions in your argument. Then, try to keep to your outline as you compose the essay.

3. Limit your analysis and discussion to the topic and avoid introducing peripheral or extraneous material that has little or no bearing on your topic.

4. You must support your analysis or interpretation with evidence from the text(s) in question. This may take the form of a direct quotation or a brief paraphrase or summary. However, try to avoid including summaries for their own sake or evidence that may be either peripheral or redundant.

5. Organize your essay carefully so that it has a central idea or argument and a coherent structure. Make sure that there are adequate transitions between the various paragraphs and sections of your essay and that it ends with a logical conclusion based on the evidence that you have provided in support of your argument or thesis.

6. In topics requiring comparisons and contrasts, organize your essay around points of comparison and contrast rather than examining each work separately and then drawing some comparisons. This type of organization will help you to avoid repetition.

7. Write your essay in a style that is clear, precise and concise. You should use as few words as necessary to make your points clearly and precisely. Avoid loose and rambling sentences and exclude all redundancy and repetition. Avoid vagueness, ambiguity and awkwardness in expression. If a sentence seems awkward to you, rephrase it.
8. After you have completed a rough draft, I suggest you let it sit for a day or two before beginning revisions. This is to allow for second thoughts and reconsideration. In revising make sure that your points are well supported, that there are adequate transitions between parts of your essay, and that the essay has a firm conclusion. Finally, examine the essay for style. Remove all verbiage, tighten and rephrase sentences, try to vary the syntactical structure of your sentences, and especially avoid sentences that string together clauses joined by the conjunction "and." Needless to say, you should insure that your sentences are grammatically correct and that your spelling and punctuation are accurate.

9. I do not insist that your essays be typewritten, though I would prefer it. If you turn in a hand-written essay, make it as legible as possible, and please leave a good margin on the left hand side for comments.

10. For matters of form, I refer you to W.K. Thomas's Correct Form in Essay Writing. You are expected to follow this manual for such matters as the correct form for quoting from a text, for footnoting, and for bibliographies.

VIII. ASSIGNMENT I

Instructions

1. Choose one of the topics listed below.
2. Write an essay of about 4-6 pages in length (double-spaced typewritten).
3. Due date: 17 October 1991
4. Weight: 20% of the final grade.

1. If you were to imagine a modern-day excursion including a representative cross-section of your society, who would you include? Using Chaucer's style and descriptive technique, describe at least two of your travellers. You may try your hand at couplets, though prose descriptions will be acceptable.

2. Some critics argue that the Wife of Bath unwittingly condemns women in her account of her experiences with her five husbands. Do you agree or not? Explain why.

3. What do you think the Wife of Bath has learned about herself and about marriage? What do you think of her views?

4. What aspects of the "Wife of Bath's Tale" are appropriate to the Wife herself? Explain why.

5. Who do you think are Red Cross's most potent enemies? Explain why.
6. Spenser's allegory is in part a psychomachia, an analysis of the divisions and conflicts within the self. Imagine yourself as the subject of a psychomachia. Describe briefly how you would allegorize the contrary forces within yourself.

7. If you were the recipient of Donne's poem, "The Good Morrow," what would be your interpretation of your lover's message to you?

8. Using the Protestant paradigm of salvation as a model, how would you interpret the speaker's spiritual condition in Holy Sonnet 14 (Batter my heart, three-personed God).

IX. ASSIGNMENT II

Instructions

1. Choose one of the topics listed below.
2. Write an essay about 8-10 pages in length (double-spaced typewritten).
3. Due date: 3 December 1991
4. Weight: 40% of the final grade.

1. Compare and contrast the nature and function of the narrators in three of the following works: "The General Prologue" to The Canterbury Tales, Paradise Lost, Rape of the Lock, Gulliver's Travels, Book I.

2. According to Northrop Frye, in The Educated Imagination, "all themes and characters and stories that you encounter in literature belong to one big interlocking family." Discuss this statement by referring to at least three works on the course. What is your opinion about this approach to the study of literature?

3. A recurring type of character in many works of literature is a manipulator who directs and influences the course of the action. Compare and contrast the function of three of the following: Archimago, Don John, Iago, Satan.

4. Characters in literature often make choices in a crisis that determine the rest of their lives. Compare and contrast the way three of the following characters respond to the crisis in their lives: Othello, Claudio, Adam, Belinda, Gulliver in the land of the Houyhnhnms.

5. The relations between the sexes is a central element in many works. Compare and contrast the nature of this relationship in three of the following: "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," Much Ado About Nothing, the Songs and Sonets, Paradise Lost, Rape of the Lock.

6. What insights have you gained about the nature of man's moral and spiritual life as explored in the works studied in this course? Use examples from at least three works to illustrate your answer.

X. FINAL EXAMINATION (2 hours, worth 40% of the final grade)