This course is intended as an introduction to the history of British literature. In general, literary history is an odd notion. It rarely refers to the actual historical study of literature; it is typically a mere chronology of writers in the order of their births. Of course, bits of historical fact appear in textbook headnotes and footnotes, and sometimes even in lecture notes. And the chronological presentation of authors does invite consideration of the important influences of earlier writers on later ones. But, significantly, the survey of an entire literature ordinarily demands that we canonize a narrow selection of writers as the "major authors" of a literary tradition.

In this class we will cover some of the outstanding writers in the English tradition, from Chaucer to Austen. But we will also seek to develop a critical understanding of the forces and judgements—whether aesthetic, axiological, or ideological—that have shaped, and continue to shape, this tradition. We will pursue this latter goal both by a critical reading of canonical texts, and by sampling some of the important—and entertaining—writers overlooked by the Norton anthology.

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Office: Hagey Hall 254, X2416
Office hours: 2:30-4:30 Wednesday, or by appointment

Required Texts:
Shakespeare, Othello, ed. Kernan (Signet Classic)
Behn, The Rover, ed. Link (Nebraska)
Behn, Oroonoko (Norton)
Defoe, Robinson Crusoe (Oxford)
Equiano, Narrative, in Gates, Jr., ed., The Classic Slave Narratives (Mentor)
Austen, Northanger Abbey (Oxford)

Recommended Texts:
MLA Handbook
Assignments: attendance and active participation in class (15%); 3 page paper (15%); 6 page paper (30%); and a final examination (40%). Papers must be typed and double-spaced. A page is 250 words. Paper deadlines will be announced. Late papers may be penalized.
British Literary Formations, 1386-1803

SYLLABUS

Introduction (2=estimated number of classes)
Chaucer
"The Miller’s Tale" (Norton=N) (2)
"The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale" (N) (2)
Shakespeare
Othello (4)
Milton
Paradise Lost (selections from N) (4)
Behn
Oroonoko (2)
The Rover (3)
Defoe
Robinson Crusoe (3)
Swift
Gulliver’s Travels (selections from N) (4)
Pope
The Rape of the Lock (N) (2)
"Of the Characters of Women" (N) (1)
Equiano
Narrative (2)
Austen
Northanger Abbey (3)

NOTE: The University is closed on Monday, October 12 for the Thanksgiving holiday; this class is also cancelled Friday, October 9.