ENGLISH 200A (05)
SURVEY OF BRITISH LITERATURE I

HH 150
Tuesday & Thursday 10-11:30

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

English 200A is an introductory survey of British literature from the Middle Ages to the late eighteenth century. Although it is a required course for English majors, it is also suitable for non-majors or students majoring in other disciplines.

The course will focus on representative authors from the various literary periods: the Middle Ages (c. 1000-1485), the sixteenth century (1485-1603), the early seventeenth century (1603-1660), and the Restoration and eighteenth century (1660-1798).

For students wishing to continue their study of English literature, English 200B continues the survey through the Romantic period (1798-1832), the Victorian period (1832-1901), and into the twentieth century.

OBJECTIVES:

English 200A has six related objectives:
1) To give you practice and training in reading and interpreting individual pieces of literature with greater insight and in making comparisons among them.
2) To make you aware of the historical context of the works.
3) To make you aware of the different artistic forms of the literature.
4) To give you practice in critical analysis of individual works and comparative analysis of several works.
5) To help you write more effectively.
6) To give you some enjoyment reading (I hope!).

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 by writing essays and one examination.
TEXTS:

The following texts are required:
William Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew (Signet Classics).

The following texts are recommended:
Jane E. Aaron and Murray McArthur, The Little, Brown Compact Handbook, First Canadian Edition (Addison-Wesley). [This text has very useful sections on punctuation, grammar, and sentence errors, as well as suggestions for writing essays and a summary of the MLA style. Please note: All royalties derived from the sale of this text will be donated to the Department of English scholarship fund.]

In addition, some poems and short works on the course will be provided on handouts.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

(NOTE: Page references are to the Norton Anthology. Works marked with an asterisk will require about three classes.)

1. Anglo-Saxon lyrics:
   "Caedmon's Hymn" (17-18).
   "Three Riddles" (handout).
   "The Wanderer" (handout).

2. Selections from Beowulf:
   "The Hall Heorot Is Attacked by Grendel" (28-29)
   "The Fight with Grendel" (35-37).
   "Grendel's Mother's Attack" (43-46).
   "Beowulf Attacks Grendel's Mother" (46-48).

3. Some Middle English Lyrics:
   "Alison" (287-88).
   "I Have a Young Sister" (289).
   "Adam Lay Bound" (291).
   "Not Long Ago I Met a Clerk" (handout).
   "Brainy Teacher" (handout).
   "The Thrush and the Nightingale" (handout).

4. Chaucer, Selections from The Canterbury Tales:
   "General Prologue" (11. 625-716): Description of the Summoner and the Pardoner (95-97).
   "The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale" (164-79).
*5. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (202-254).

7. Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew.

8. A selection of love poems:
   Sidney, Sonnet 9 (462).
   Spenser, Sonnet 64 (735); Sonnet 75 (737).
   Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 (810); Sonnet 60 (813); Sonnet 130 (820).
   Lady Mary Wroth, Sonnet 1 (1689); Sonnet 40 (1690-91).
   Donne, "The Flea" (1090-91); Elegy 19 (1101-03).
   Herrick, "To the Virgins" (1361-62).
   Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" (1420-21).

9. A selection of religious poems:
   Donne, Sonnet 14 (1117); "Hymn to God My God" (1120).
   Herbert, "The Pilgrimage" (1381).
   Marvell, "Bermudas" (1416).

10. Milton, Selections from Paradise Lost:
    Book I, 11. 1-49 (pp. 1476-77).
    Book II, 11. 629-898 (pp. 1509-15).
    Book III, 11. 56-134 (pp. 1520-22).
    Book IV, 11. 393-535 (pp. 1541-44).
    Book V, 11. 1-94 (pp. 1549-51).
    Book IX, 11. 412-1016 (pp. 1576-89).

11. Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-century Selections:
    Boswell, from the London Journal (handout).
    Addison and Steele, from The Spectator (handout).
    Mary Astell, from Some Reflections upon Marriage (1772-74).
    Lady Montagu, "Epistle from Mrs. Yonge" (2005-07).


GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Two essays of six to eight double-spaced, typewritten pages, or the equivalent in handwriting (1500-2000 words). These two essays, taken together, will account for 60% of the final grade (i.e., 30% each).

One three-hour final exam will account for the remaining 40% of the final grade.

Class participation will affect the final grade positively (up to 5%). There may be some deduction of marks (up to 5%) if your attendance is noticeably irregular.

(Note also: One number grade (1%) may be subtracted for each day a paper is late, unless an extension has been granted in advance. No paper will be accepted after the other students' papers have been returned to them.)
ENGLISH 200 A

ESSAY TOPICS

1) These essay topics require a careful and thoughtful reading of the texts and little or limited use of secondary material. That is, they 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 all borrowings from all your sources.

2) Use the MLA style for documenting page or line references from your primary sources, as well as any secondary sources that you may use. Also, use the MLA style for your list of works cited (bibliography). I will give you some basic points on the MLA style; for detailed information, see the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (ed. Joseph Gibaldi).

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ESSAY 1:

DUE: Thursday, October 23, 1997.

LENGTH: Six to eight double-spaced, typewritten pages (1500-2000 words) or the equivalent in neat handwriting.

TOPICS: One of the following:

1. Beowulf's achievement is defined by three episodes: his fight with Grendel, his attack on Grendel's mother, and his attack on the dragon (pp. 55-63). Compare and contrast the poet's presentation of these episodes. Which represents his greatest challenge? his greatest triumph? Is there a pattern or development in the episodes? Do they suggest anything about the poet's ideas about good and evil?

2. Aristotle defined "rhetoric" as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." Of what does the Pardoner attempt to persuade his audience (the other pilgrims) in his prologue and tale? What devices or "means of persuasion" does he use? Comment on his apparent failure.

(NOTE: For this essay, you may find Aristotle's terms, ethos, pathos, and logos, helpful; these are the basic "appeals" by which a speaker attempts to win over an audience.)
3. Trace the references to the seasons, including the seasons of the Church year, in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. How does the pattern of the seasons underlie the story and its meaning?

4. "The devil made me do it!" Would Dr. Faustus be justified in saying this to the audience at his final curtain-call?

ESSAY 2:

DUE: Thursday, November 27, 1997.

LENGTH: Six to eight double-spaced, typewritten pages (1500-2000 words) or the equivalent in neat handwriting.

TOPICS: One of the following:

1. Discuss the importance of disguise in The Taming of the Shrew. To what extent does the emphasis on disguise affect your interpretation of the play, especially its "anti-feminism"? (Keep in mind, too, a crucial aspect of disguise: the three female parts would have been played by boys.)

2. Could Adam and Eve, in Paradise Lost, have avoided the fall?

3. Compare Lady Bercilak's seduction of Sir Gawain (Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Part III) with Satan's temptation of Eve (Paradise Lost IX, 417-784). (You may wish to consider some of these questions: What motivates the tempter in each case? What sort of arguments or strategies does he/she use? Which strategies seem most effective? How does the relationship between the tempter and his/her victim change in the course of their encounter? The terms, ethos, pathos, and logos may be helpful.) Try to draw comparisons between the works.

4. "The Rhetoric of Love." Choose at least two love poems from the course, including one by Donne. What sort of arguments or strategies does the lover use in each case? How, do you think, might the beloved respond to these arguments? Try to draw comparisons between the poems. (Again, the terms ethos, pathos, and logos may be helpful.)

5. Compare at least one of Donne's love poems with at least one of his religious poems. (You may wish to consider some of these questions: How much of himself does he reveal in each case? What ideas, concerns, images, poetic devices, etc. are common to the poems? Do you find anything disturbing about the poems?)
6. "The Woman's Voice." Write an essay in which you discuss the following poems by women: "A Woman's Message" (handout: A Selection of Old English Poetry); "Epistle from Mrs. Yonge" by Lady Montagu; and at least one of the sonnets by Lady Mary Wroth. (You may wish to consider some of these questions: What audience is the woman addressing? What is her motivation? What ideas, concerns, images, poetic devices, etc. are common to the poems? What do you find disturbing about the poems?) Try to draw comparisons among the poems.

7. Oronoko has been called "an early protest against the slave trade." Is it?

8. Discuss the use of the first person point of view in Gulliver's "Voyage to Brobdingnag." (You may wish to consider some of these questions: To what extent do you sympathize with Gulliver? How reliable is he as a narrator? How does the point of view affect your acceptance of the story? How does the point of view enable Swift to satirize British society?)