ENGLISH 200A (04)
SURVEY OF BRITISH LITERATURE I

HH 150
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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.
The following texts are required:

The following text is 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).
   - "Beowulf and the Dragon" (55-59).
   - "Beowulf Attacks the Dragon" (59-63).

3. Some Middle English Lyrics:
   - "Alison" (287-88).
   - "The Wily Clerk" (handout).
   - "I Have a Young Sister" (289).
   - "Adam Lay Bound" (291).

4. Chaucer, Selections from *The Canterbury Tales*:
   - "General Prologue" (lines 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, *Othello*.

8. A selection of love poems:
   - Sidney, Sonnet 9 (462).
   - Spenser, Sonnet 64 (735); Sonnet 75 (737).
   - Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 (810); Sonnet 130 (820).
Lady Mary Wroth, Sonnet 1 (1689).
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, "Easter Wings" (1372).
   Marvell, "Bermudas" (1416).
10. Milton, Selections from Paradise Lost:
    Book I, lines 1-49 (pp. 1476-77).
    Book II, lines 629-898 (pp. 1509-15).
    Book III, lines 56-134 (pp. 1520-22).
    Book IV, lines 393-535 (pp. 1541-44).
    Book V, lines 1-94 (pp. 1549-51).
    Book IX, lines 412-1016 (pp. 1576-89).
12. Eighteenth-century Social Writings:
    Boswell, from the London Journal (handout).
    Lady Montagu, "Epistle from Mrs. Yonge" (2005-07).
13. Swift, Gulliver's Travels (Part II): "A Voyage to Brobdingnag"
    (2082-2123).

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 200A: ESSAY TOPICS

1. You will need to find a suitable way of selecting and organizing the material of your essay and of focussing your ideas in a clear direction. Give special attention to your introductory paragraph, which should identify the main topic or set of issues which your paper will treat, identify the direction of your essay, and interest your reader.

2. Provide evidence for generalizations that you make. Try to strike a strong balance between general argument and specific illustration. Use quotations to support your ideas, but don’t overquote.

3. Before you submit your paper, be sure to proofread it, carefully checking for errors in typing, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Consider your readers: Will they have trouble following your ideas?

4. I prefer that you base your ideas on a careful and thoughtful reading of the texts. Feel free to use ideas from class discussions, but please do not consult secondary sources unless you see me first.

5. Use the MLA style for documenting page or line references from your sources. Also use the MLA style for your list of Works Cited. I will give you some basic points on the MLA style; for more details, consult The Little, Brown Compact Handbook.

ESSAY 1:

DUE: Thursday, October 21, 1999.

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

TOPICS: One of the following:

1. Beowulf undergoes three tests, and Sir Gawain is tempted three times by Lady Bercilak. Compare the tests of Beowulf with the temptations of Sir Gawain. You may wish to comment on the pattern or development of the episodes in each work, as well as their significance. You may also consider the significance of the number three.

2. Discuss the presentation of the supernatural in Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. How do you, on the verge of the 21st century, react to the supernatural elements in these works? To what extent do you think that your reaction is different from the intended audience?
3. Trace the references to the seasons, including, if you wish, the seasons of the church year, in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. How are the seasons significant for the characters and events of the poem?

4. 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.)

Essay 2:

DUE: Thursday, November 25, 1999.

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

TOPICS: One of the following:

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

2. Compare two of the following:
   i) Lady Bercilak's seduction of Sir Gawain in Part III,
   ii) Iago's temptation of Othello,
   iii) 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? Issues of ethos, pathos, and logos may be helpful.

3. What does Milton's allegory in Book II of Paradise Lost suggest about the nature of sin and death, as well as the way in which they are interrelated? To what extent do the other parts of Paradise Lost that you have read support this view?

4. Discuss the metaphor of travel in Donne's "Elegy 19" and in his "Hymn to God My God."

5. Compare issues of race and racism in Othello and Oroonoko. (This essay is due before we will have discussed Oroonoko in class.)