ENGLISH 200A (04)

SURVEY OF BRITISH LITERATURE I

DWE 1515  

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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, or long 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), the Modernist period (1901-1945), and the Post-modernist period (1945-the present).

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 the 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, by visiting Norton Topics Online at www.wwnworton.com/nael (see inside front cover of text), and by writing essays and one examination.
TEXTS:

The following texts are required:

The following text is recommended:
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 that all royalties derived from the sale
of this text will be donated to the Department of English Scholarship Fund.*]

*Or the First Canadian Edition.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

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

Volume 1A: The Middle Ages:

1. Anglo-Saxon Lyrics:
   "Caedmon's Hymn" (24-25)
   Some Riddles (handout)
   "The Wanderer" (100-102 plus handout)
2. Selections from *Beowulf*:
   Heorot Is Attacked (34-36, lines 86-188)
   The Fight with Grendel (46-49, lines 662-835)
   Another Attack [Grendel's Mother] (60-62, lines 1251-1382)
   Beowulf Fights Grendel's Mother (63-68, lines 1383-1650)
   The Dragon Wakes (79-86, lines 2200-2509)
   Beowulf Attacks the Dragon (86-92, lines 2510-2820)
3. A Selection of Middle English Lyrics:
   "Allison" (351-52)
   "I Have a Young Sister" (handout)
   "Adam Lay Bound" (354)
4. Chaucer, Selections from *The Canterbury Tales*:
   "General Prologue" (lines 625-716): Description of the Summoner and the
   Pardoner (230-32)
   "The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale" (281-96)
5. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (158-210)
Volume 1B: The Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century

6. The English Bible (540-42)
7. Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus* (991-1023)
*8. Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*
9. A Selection of Love Poems:
   Sidney, Sonnet 9 (919)
   Spenser, Sonnet 64 (866); Sonnet 75 (867-68)
   Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 (1031); Sonnet 130 (1040-41)
   Donne, "The Flea" (1236); Elegy 19 (1256)
   Herrick, "To the Virgins" (1649-50); "Upon Julia's Clothes" (1654)
   Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" (1691-92).
10. A Selection of Religious Poems:
    Donne, Sonnet 14 (1271)
    Herbert, "The Pilgrimage" (1608)
    Marvell, "Bermudas" (1686-87)
*11. Milton, Selections from *Paradise Lost*:
    Book 1, lines 1-49 (pp. 1818-19)
    Book 2, lines 629-897 (pp. 1849-54)
    Book 3, lines 56-134 (pp. 1859-61)
    Book 4, lines 393-535 (pp.1882-85)
    Book 5, lines 1-94 (pp. 1895-97)
    Book 9, lines 412-1016 (pp. 1970-83)

Volume 1C: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century:

12. Bunyan, Selections from *Pilgrim's Progress*:
    Christian Sets Out for the Celestial City (2137-39)
    The Slough of Despond (2139-40)
    Vanity Fair (2140-42)
13. Swift, Selection from *Gulliver's Travels*:
    Part 2: A Voyage to Brobdingnag (2372-2414)
14. Some Selections on Marriage:
    Defoe, from *Roxana* (2285-91)
    Lady Montagu, "An Epistle from Mrs. Yonge" (2582-83)
15. Johnson, Selections from *A Dictionary of the English Language*:
    From *Preface* (2719-23)
    Some Definitions: A Small Anthology (2723-2725)
GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Two essays of approximately six double-spaced, typewritten pages (1500 words) 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.

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

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

ESSAY TOPICS AND DUE DATES:

General Notes:

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 address, 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, proofread it carefully, checking for errors in typing, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Consider your readers: Will they have any trouble following your ideas?

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

5. Give your essay a descriptive title that includes the title of the work(s) that you will be considering. Also include your name and course number on the first page. A separate title page is not necessary. All page references to the works go in parentheses at the end of your sentence but before the period. A Works Cited list is required, even if you have only quoted from the primary text. I will give you some information on how to use MLA style to cite works in anthologies and editions of plays. Little, Brown Handbook has a good summary of MLA style.
6. I mark essays holistically, taking into consideration content, organization, and style and correctness.

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Essay 1:
Due: Thursday, October 23, 2003.
Length: Approximately six double-spaced, typewritten pages (1500 words)

Write an essay on one of the following topics:

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. Compare and contrast the poet’s presentation of these three episodes. In your answer you might consider some of the following questions: Which episode 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 heroism, and 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: 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 strategies by which Lady Bercilak attempts to seduce Sir Gawain in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. In your answer you might consider some of the following questions: What is Lady Bercilak’s motivation? What does the narrator reveal of Sir Gawain’s mindset? What sort of arguments or strategies does Lady Bercilak use? How does the relationship between the seducer and her victim change over the course of their encounter? Comment on her success or failure. (See the note to question 2.)

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

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Essay 2:
Due: Thursday, November 20, 2003
Length: Approximately six double-spaced, typewritten pages (1500 words).

Write an essay on one of the following topics:

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

   OR (b) Compare the theme of disguise, and how it is presented in *The Taming of the Shrew*, with one of the following works: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Dr. Faustus*, *Paradise Lost*. How might you explain the interest in disguise in the literature of this period?

2. Could Adam and Eve, in *Paradise Lost*, have avoided the fall? (Or: To what extent, at the end of Book 12, could they blame the devil—or God?)

3. *The Rhetoric of Temptation*. Compare Satan's temptation of Eve (*PL 9*: 417-784) with either Mephistopheles' temptation of Dr. Faustus or Eve's temptation of Adam (*PL 9*: 838-1016). In your answer you might consider some of the following questions: What is the motivation of the tempter and the mindset of the victim in each case? What sort of arguments or strategies does the tempter use in each case? Which strategies, if any, are effective, and why? How does the relationship between tempter and victim change in the course of their encounter? (Note: Issues of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* may be helpful.)

4. Why do you think Eve is successful in her seduction of Adam, while the speakers in "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress" apparently fail? (Rhetorical issues, such as the questions in # 3 above, might give some ideas and direction.)

5. What themes and image patterns are common to the love poems and religious poems of the 16th and 17th centuries? If you wish, use your discussion to help explain the fact that religious poets, like Donne and Marvell, also wrote erotic love poems.

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The Faculty of Arts requires that we notify you of the following:

"Note on avoidance of academic offenses: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offense, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offense is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline) which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (p. 1:11). If you need help in learning how to avoid offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the disciplinary policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean."