

LT135 Introduction to the Study of Literature in English

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3pm



To become a reader—argues a recent article on “Reading for Pleasure”—we need historical knowledge, an understanding of the literary past that gives familiarity with important developments and why they happened, as well as an awareness of what we don’t know, and might want to investigate at a later moment. This course introduces the central phases and forms of literature in English. We begin by addressing the origins and strange early literary manifestations of this “bastard” language, with its hybrid emergence from Germanic and Latin sources. Focusing on epic, drama, lyric and the rise of the novel, as well as genres that escape categorization or are extinct in the contemporary world, the course charts the mutations that literature in English undergoes. We see the modern language move from the marginal, non-standardized and sometimes derided status it still had even after the era of Shakespeare, to a transnational vernacular, under the aegis of imperial power. In that process, poetic works which disregard classical literary rules are canonized, and the very fluidity of English comes to be lauded as a creative virtue. The eventual reach of the colonial

enterprises first sponsored by the 17th-century English state ultimately produced Anglophone literary traditions very different in theme and shape from that which developed in England itself. The linguistic dispossession and inheritance imposed by empire generated rewritings of these traditions, as well as new departures that form part of our story.

Requirements

Attendance at and participation in classes; completion of in-class assignments; completion of all written work. Drafts can be submitted in advance of the paper deadlines, for feedback and revision.

Course Texts

Students must purchase a copy of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature Vol. 1* (7th ed. 2000), and copies of the last two texts on the course, by Jane Austen and Harriet E. Wilson. All other texts will be provided.

Assignments

Weekly reading; in-class assignments; two papers, the first of 2000 words, the second of 3000 words, due respectively on October 20 and December 19.

Grade Breakdown

Preparation and participation: 30%; Midterm Paper: 30%; Final Paper: 40%

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be addressed under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Weekly Schedule

Wednesday September 6:

Introduction: "The Adventure of English"

Wednesday September 13

Beowulf (c.700-1000)

Wednesday September 20

Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485); *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th century)

Wednesday September 27

Chaucer, "General Prologue" to the *Canterbury Tales* (c.1400); "The Knight's Tale"

Wednesday October 4

The Sonnet: Wyatt; Surrey; Spenser; Shakespeare; Sidney; Wroth, Donne

Wednesday October 11

Shakespeare, *Henry V* (1599)

Wednesday October 18

Milton, *Paradise Lost* Books 1, 2 and 4

Mid-term paper due Friday October 20 by email at 10pm

Fall Break October 23-29

Wednesday November 1

Sidney, "Defense of Poesy" (1595); Dryden, "An Essay of Dramatic Poesie" (1668)

Wednesday November 8

Pepys, *Diary* (1660-9); Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year* (Extracts) (1722); Swift, "A Modest Proposal" (1729)

Wednesday November 15

Aphra Behn, *Oronooko* (1688)

Wednesday November 22

Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas* (1759); Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751)

Wednesday November 29

Wordsworth, "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads" (1801); Coleridge "Frost at Midnight" (1798); Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819), Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry" (1840)

Wednesday December 6

Samuel Richardson *Clarissa* (1748), Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (1749) (extracts); Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

Wednesday December 13

Harriet E. Wilson, *Our Nig: Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859)

Final Paper Due: Tuesday December 19 by email at 10pm