English 2120 Sample Syllabus 2

English 2120
Survey of British Literature

Office:
Office hours:
Phone:
E-mail:

Women’s Voices in British Literature

Course Description: English 2120 is a historical survey of literature from the British Isles. Topics to be considered include literary genres, conventions, and modes. Additionally issues such as language change, periodization, canon formation, national identity and interrelationships between literature and other elements of culture inform the choice of selections and should guide discussions. Since the history of literature in English is long and rich, our choices represent highlights rather than a complete survey.

As a way to anchor and guide the course, we’ll be concentrating on the cultural and historical position of women throughout British literature. The status of women varies throughout British history, and the literature produced by males containing female characters as well as literature produced by women provides interesting insights into a culture largely dominated by men. While we’ll certainly address other prevalent issues in British literature besides gender, much of the literature we’ll be reading illustrates attempts to subvert prevailing ideologies regarding gender roles, to maintain the status quo, and to highlight women’s issues. With women (and gender) as our overarching theme, we should be able to shed a unique light on British culture and its literature as a cultural production by the end of the semester.

Course Goals: The primary aim of this course is to introduce students to a wide range of genres and authors in the British tradition. The emphasis is on gaining familiarity with the works on the reading list, and the class will focus on comprehension and retention of the texts. Students will also leave the class with a strong sense of literary history. We will discuss various ways of interpretation as a skill through discussion, group work, and more traditional lectures. Students will be expected to practice and demonstrate these interpretive strategies and subsequent skills in analyzing texts.

Learning Outcomes:

General Outcomes –
- identify and explain the fundamental features of the genres of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and drama
- define key literary terms/concepts and implement these in oral/written discussion as well as in literary interpretation
- describe, examine, and evaluate their own reading practices and oral/written critical analyses
- analyze literature and explain how various components of literature work together to create meaning.
- apply writing and revision as tools for understanding literature and its interpretation
Specific Outcome(s) –
· recognize and describe British literary history as chronological, developmental (moving through time periods), and generic/thematic
· recognize and interpret relationships between British literature and its literary history and culture

Texts:
Abrams et al., eds. The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Major Authors. 7th ed.
Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart (edition information forthcoming)
Shakespeare, William. Macbeth (edition optional)

Prerequisites: a “C” or better in English 1102 and good written usage of standard American English.

Course Requirements
The first requirement for succeeding in this course is to read the material carefully and thoughtfully. Because this class is designed as a reading comprehension course, you’ll be expected to follow the reading very closely and on schedule. You will be able to demonstrate your mastery of the material in responsible, collegial class participation, and on quizzes, a presentation, short reading responses, a midterm examination, and final examination.

Course assignments and exams will be weighted in this way:

Quizzes 20%
Presentation 15%
Reading responses 20%
Midterm examination 20%
Final examination 25%

Quizzes: Reading quizzes will be given during most class meetings. Students are responsible for the literary pieces as well as the introductions to the periods provided in the text. The grades on these quizzes will be averaged to make up the 20%. Quizzes may not be made up.

Once during the course, you will be responsible for bringing two well-considered and well-supported questions regarding the day’s reading as a prompt for class discussion. “Well-supported” doesn’t necessarily mean you know the answer; it means that you have an open-ended question for which the text provides some evidence that confirms or contradicts what you think the answer could be. These can be fairly broad questions or ones that focus on a particular passage. You’ll be expected to ask them aloud to the class as a whole or in small groups and to hand in to me a copy of the questions. This assignment counts as a quiz grade.

These questions should not involve confusions regarding plot. While you may be confused regarding “who does what” and are welcome to bring them up in class (other students will likely be confused also), these questions should focus on literary, historical, or cultural elements.
**Reading Responses:** These are typed, two page, double-spaced responses to the reading. You’ll turn in eight throughout the semester; three must be turned in before 3/2. This assignment gives you the opportunity to explore your initial reactions to the reading. You should seize on one (or maybe two) aspects of the reading to write about. Some of these are theme, setting, characterization, language, meter, etc. Your assignment should reflect an extended response to the particular aspect you’ve chosen and should result in a thoughtful, organized response.

This assignment does not call for you to necessarily come to any conclusion about the reading; indeed, it should consist of something that you find interesting, troubling, insightful, confusing, etc. Therefore, a good approach to this assignment is to write about something you don’t quite understand or something you have questions about. This paper should illustrate your exploration into the text and should reflect your thought process in light of that exploration. This is not a formal essay, but it must show that you’ve thought about the text in some depth.

Please do not write a plot summary. A plot summary involves relating what happened in a story, poem or play; your reading response should have to do with how certain literary elements contribute to the meaning of the work. A plot summary will amount to a failure for the assignment.

While this is a writing assignment, I’ll be looking for your ability to comprehend the text and to analyze it in light of your reaction more than your writing skills. However, basic writing skills such as correct grammar, mechanics, and usage are required. Failure to adhere to these fundamental writing requirements will result in a failure for the assignment. These assignments will be evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis. I’ll return the first Reading Response with an “R” (for revise), however, if I determine that you’ve not met the basic requirements for the assignment in terms of writing skills or if you seem to have misunderstood what I’m looking for in terms of the components of the assignment. I will give “R”s for the first Reading Response only. If you receive an “R,” you may revise by the next class period. If you don’t revise, you’ll receive a failure for the assignment. Three (3) failures will result in an “F” for the 20% this component is worth.

**You may choose any of the works on the reading assignment sheet to write your responses on. The Reading Responses must be turned in on the day the topic (piece of literature) of your response is assigned at the beginning of class.**

Headings for Reading Responses must be formatted as follows:

Name
Reading Response #
Date

**Presentations:** Each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation on one of the assigned readings. The presentations are due the day the class is scheduled to discuss the assigned reading. Specifics on the requirements for the presentation will be handed out next week.

**Midterm Examination:** A take-home, open-book midterm exam will be distributed on February 26th and will be due March 2nd. The format will consist of a number of paired passages to choose from. You must identify the passage by providing the title of the work it’s from and name the author. Then, in a couple of paragraphs compare and contrast the passages.
You’ll be expected to explain how the quotations exemplify thematic, stylistic, literary historical elements, or other similarities or differences you notice. In short, why are they paired? Avoid the temptation to attempt reading my mind; rely instead on your own imagination and interpretative skills that you acquire over the course of the semester. I’ll certainly have my own ideas about the points of comparison in the passages. I’ll be taking into consideration issues discussed in class as well as those raised in the introductions in the texts, but very often students come up with ideas I hadn’t considered.

Please use blue books. The exam will be designed so that you can complete it in two or three hours. I recommend spending no more than this so that you’ll be prepared for the final exam.

**Final Examination:** The final exam will be a **cumulative**, two-hour, in-class exam given according to the university exam schedule. The format will be same as the midterm with the inclusion of terms to identify. You may use your book for this exam but not your notes. Blue books are required.

**Policies**

**Attendance:** I do not monitor attendance. However, students who do not attend regularly perform poorly on exams because the exams are based largely on lecture and class discussion. Moreover, since quizzes may not be made up and are worth 20% of the final grade, students who do not attend class regularly do not receive adequate points for the quiz portion of their grade.

Occasionally, the reading schedule will change depending on the needs of the class and time constraints. These changes will sometimes be announced the class period before the change occurs; it is, therefore, imperative that you attend class in order to get these changes. It is your responsibility to obtain this and any other information or announcements made in class. Contact me via email for any updates if you’re absent. An even better and often more efficient way of receiving information (including lecture notes) is from a trusted classmate. I **highly** recommend this kind of communication. Not only can it save you from being unprepared for the next class, it’s a good way to build classroom community (i.e. exam study groups).

I will accept no late work, unless under extraordinary circumstances (such as a death or grave illness in your immediate family). If other circumstances arise which prevent you from getting your work to me on time and you make arrangements with me a day or two in advance, I may consider an extension.

I will not accept no work by email or fax machine unless arrangements are made with me ahead of time.

Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices while in class.

**Accommodations for Students with Special Needs:** Students who need accommodations are asked to arrange a meeting with the instructor at a mutually convenient time during the first week of classes, or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately. Bring a copy of your Student Accommodation Form to the meeting. If you do not have such a form, but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services (Suite 230 New Student Center, ext. 3-9044) to arrange for accommodations.

**Portfolio Requirement for English Majors:** All English majors must submit, as part of their graduation requirements, individual portfolios of their work as English majors. Students should
collect several assignments each term to include in the portfolio. The main office of the Department of English can supply specific requirements for individual concentrations. Instructors and advisors can counsel students about portfolio inclusions.

**Academic Honesty:** Students are expected to abide by the University’s policy on academic honesty, which is summarized on pages 54-57 in the current undergraduate catalog. Any plagiarized or otherwise academically dishonest work will receive a grade of zero, with no chance for revision. The instructors will assign a failing grade for the course to any student who submits academically dishonest work.

**Reading Assignments**
(specific assignments may be added to, substituted for, or omitted).

- **Week 1:** Introduction to the Middle Ages, 1-20 and Marie de France, “Lanval,” 104-118
- **Week 2:** Dame Julian, “Showings,” 276-82; Chaucer, “General Prologue,” 173-98
- **Week 3:** Chaucer, “Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale,” 216-44; Introduction to the Sixteenth Century, 315-338; Selected sonnets from Spencer, Sidney, and Shakespeare
- **Week 4:** *Macbeth*
- **Week 5:** Milton, *Paradise Lost*

**Midterm Examination distributed**

- **Week 8:** Introduction to Romanticism, 1313-35; Wordsworth, 1424-27; 1432-35; “Tintern Abbey,” 1490-93; Coleridge, 1573-75; “Frost at Midnight,” 1613-15; “Christabel,” 1598-1613; Keats, 1793-96; “La Belle Dame sans Merci,” 1814-16; “Ode to a Nightingale,” 1818-20
- **Week 10:** Introduction to the Victorian Age 1859-81; *Wuthering Heights*

Week 12 “Dover Beach,” 2090-01; 2025-26; Elizabeth Gaskell, “The Old Nurse’s Story,” 2006-21

Week 13: Introduction to the Twentieth Century, 2271-89; Virginia Woolf, 2402-3; Professions for Women 2475-79; James Joyce 2487-91; “The Dead,” 2496-2524


Week 15: Philip Larkin, selected poems; Seamus Heaney, selected poems

Week 16: Achebe, Things Fall Apart

Final Examination