

ENG 321 British Literature Through History - I

Tu, Th 1:50-3:05 PM Engleman D266

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Office Hours: Tu 9:30-10:30, Wed 2-5, Th 9:30-10:30 (and by appointment) **Web:** www.jmdodson.com

Course Description

This course is a survey of early British literature, covering late medieval and early modern English writing from the 14th to the 17th century. The scope of this period is incredible: it gives us the works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Sidney, Marlowe, Donne, and others; the invention of the printing press and the professional theatre; the Tudor Reformations of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and the revolutionary beheading of Charles I. It is also a period that bequeaths to us three major problems, essential to all modern English literary history:

- What is a poet?
- What is Englishness?
- What is a book?

This semester, we will examine how poetry, prose, and drama between 1380 and 1660 raised, and went about trying to answer, these basic yet profound questions. Our goal is two-fold: to learn how to place early British literature historically, before and after Shakespeare, in its period and context; and to learn how to read pre- and early modern literature critically, paying close attention to the way English ideas about literary form and especially the printed book continue to shape our own.

You are expected to read *everything* in this course, carefully and repeatedly. You are also expected to learn and know major dates, figures, and historical background; to take careful notes in class lecture and discussion; to write clearly; to memorize poetry; and to do research for an in-class presentation. Course requirements also include a film viewing outside class (the 2013 Globe production of *Dr. Faustus*) and a class field trip to the Beineke Rare Book Library in downtown New Haven to look at 16th and 17th century books (see schedule below).

Objectives

- To learn how to place early British literature before 1700 in its historical context, including a knowledge of major authors, periods, and cultural movements
- To gain a working knowledge of three basic areas of literary discourses in late medieval and early modern England: poetics, English nationalism, and the history of the book
- To become confident close readers of early English poetry, prose, and drama, before and after Shakespeare

Required Texts

Stephen Greenblatt, ed., et al., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th edn (New York: Norton, 2012)
ISBN: 978-0-393-91247-0 [1 Volume: Middle Ages; 16th / Early 17th Century; Restoration/18th Century]

Assignments and Grading

Keyword Project	20%
Paper	20%
Early Modern Book Presentation	15%
Exams	35%
Participation/Quizzes/Poetry Memorization	10%

Keyword Project (20%): The story of early British literature is in large part a story of the transformation of the English language, from middle English, to Elizabethan, to the florid prose of Milton and revolutionary England. From weeks 3 to 15 this semester, you will track *one word*, a “keyword,” of your choice (from a recommended list provided in week 2) throughout *all* of your readings. You will compile your findings each week in a “Keyword Journal” in Blackboard; weekly posts (250-300 words in length) will be due in Blackboard by 12:00 PM each Thursday. You will be graded on your ability to read closely and analytically, noting *all* the instances, variations, and cognates of your word in the course readings, and to analyze the evidence of their appearance through well-developed paragraphs. A mini-essay will be due on the results of your keyword project at the end of the semester.

Paper (20%): A longer, thesis-driven essay (7 pp.) on *The Faerie Queene* will be due in week 11, showing your ability to develop a close reading of a Spenserian stanza in relation to at least one other historical text we have read. Instructions for this essay will be distributed in week 8.

Early Modern Book Presentation (15%): In the third unit of our course, you will each, in groups of 2, give an in-class presentation (9-10 minutes) on the historical significance of an early modern printed book. Each group will be assigned a PDF of one 17th century book from a folder in Blackboard. You will need to describe the book, including its material features (date, publisher, size, format, etc.), and then develop a theory about why this “book” matters to one of our readings in unit three. Presentations will require research in the Buley Library (including research notes to be handed in from each group member) and a clear, well-rehearsed oral and visual delivery in class.

Midterm (15%) and Final Exam (20%): The midterm and final exams will be comprehensive, covering all required readings, class lectures, and dates, background, and historical information included in the Norton introductions to each volume and author.

Participation, Quizzes, and Poetry Memorization (10%): You will be graded not only on having attended but on the quality of your participation in class. Reading quizzes will occasionally be given at the beginning of class, including 3 Norton Online quizzes you need to take on the historical period introductions in your textbook. These quizzes must be completed by the dates listed in the Calendar in BB. You are also required to memorize **16-20 lines of poetic and dramatic verse by the end of the term (week 15)**, to be recited in my office. Plan ahead – it will be fun!

In order to pass this course, you must complete every assignment; failure to do so will result in an F in the class until all outstanding work has been handed in. The paper, presentation, and keyword project will receive a letter grade according to the scale below. Keyword posts will be graded out of 40 points each; 0 if late, though they may be submitted by the end of the week for final credit. In-class quizzes will be graded out of 10 (10, 5, or 0) and may not be re-taken.

Exceptional	Good	Average	Low Passing	Failure
A = 94-100%	B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	C- = 70-72%	F = 0-59%
A- = 90-93%	B = 83-86%	C = 73-76%	D+ = 67-69%	
	B- = 80-82%		D = 63-66%	
			D- = 60-62%	

* In converting letter grades to numbers, I award the top value in each category above, unless otherwise noted on the grade sheet. (e.g., A- = 93%, B+ 89%, etc.)

Other Requirements and Course Policies

- *Required Texts:* Please purchase the required textbook and bring it with you to every class. *If you do not have the text, you will be marked absent.* You may not use an e-reader, cell phone, or laptop.
- *Attendance:* You are allowed 3 excused or unexcused absences in this class before your grade is lowered. At the 6th absence, you will automatically fail the course, per English Department policy.

I take attendance on my iPhone at the beginning of class; if you do not see me taking attendance when you walk in, you have been counted absent. You need to speak to me at the end of class to notify me of your presence. 3 late arrivals = 1 absence.

It is your responsibility to monitor your attendance and to get notes or updates from fellow classmates about material you may have missed. If you are experiencing a chronic illness or ongoing family emergency, please speak to me in person and to Academic Affairs about your situation.

- *Late Work:* Papers and other projects are due in hard copy at the beginning of class; *I do not accept assignments via email.* Major assignments will be reduced by ½ letter grade for each 24 hour period they are late.

- *No cell phones, texting, or screens in class:* Unless instructed otherwise, nothing about this class requires a laptop or screen. Please notify your family and friends that you will be unable to receive texts or messages during class. If you have special accommodations requiring the use of electronic devices, please let me know and I will happily oblige.

- *Film viewing and field trip:* Our class field trip and film viewing are course requirements; please see the syllabus below and plan ahead accordingly. Travel options to and from downtown, as well as a university travel waiver, will be required for our field trip. Please speak to me if you need special accommodations for either requirement.

For additional policies on plagiarism, disability services, and the university sexual assault policy, see the document “Additional Policies” in Blackboard. For answers to Frequently Asked Questions about office hours, reading quizzes, rough drafts, etc., see the FAQ section of my webpage: <http://jmdodson.com/teaching/frequently-asked-questions.html>

Course Schedule

Note: All readings must be completed on the date listed. Items listed as “read also” are required, contextual readings for the day’s literary texts.

Major assignments are listed in bold. Norton Online Quizzes and other intermediate dates will be listed in the course calendar in Blackboard.

T 8.28 *Introduction:* “the kingdome or oure owne Language”

I. What is a Poet? (Chaucer to Marlowe, ca. 1380-1590)

T 9.2 Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy* (1037-9, 1044-55)

Th 9.4 Sidney, *Defense* (1066-83)

T 9.9 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue (238-63) and “Medieval English” (19-21)

Th 9.11 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, Miller’s Tale

Begin Keyword Project

T 9.16 *Tudor Lyric:* Wyatt (646-54, 58-61) (focus: “They Flee From Me” and “Mine Own John Pains”)

Th 9.18 *Tudor Lyric:* Surrey (661-3, 666-7) (focus: “Wyatt Resteth Here”), Gascoigne (1007)
Read also: “Faith in Conflict,” 677-8

T 9.23 Spenser, *Shepheardes Calender* (“October”, 766-76); Sidney, Sonnet 71 (1095), Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” (1126)

Th 9.25 Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*, prologue–scene 5 (1127-1147)

T 9.30 *Dr. Faustus*, scene 6-11 (1147-57)

** Screening of *Dr. Faustus* (2013 Globe production) – place and time t.b.a.

Th 10.2 *Dr. Faustus*, scene 11-end and “Two Texts of Dr. Faustus” (1157-65)

Read also: John Calvin (681-4)

T 10.7 **Midterm Exam**

II. What is Englishness? (Age of Spenser, 1590-1600)

Th 10.9 Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Bk 1, Proem and Canto 1, Stanzas 1-28 (775-77, 781-9)

T 10.14 *FQ*, Canto 1.29 - Canto 2 (789-806) *Canto 3 read aloud in class*

Th 10.16 *FQ*, Cantos 4-5 (817-43)

T 10.21 *FQ*, Cantos 6 (843-67) *Canto 7 read aloud in class*

Read also: Anne Askew and John Foxe (684-88)

Th 10.23 *FQ*, Cantos 8-9 (868-93)

T 10.28 *FQ*, Canto 10 (893-910)

Read also: Elizabeth I (764-66)

Th 10.30 *FQ*, Canto 11-12 and “A Letter of the Authors” (910-34, 777-80)

T 11.4 Raleigh, “The discovery of ... Guiana” (1030-33); Bacon, *Essays* (1662-4, 69-71, 73-4)

Read also: “Publication: From Print to Manuscript” and “Pen to Press” (pdf BB)

III. What is a Book? (17th century Literary Culture)

Th 11.6 ** *Field Trip:* Beinecke Rare Book Library, Downtown New Haven
(Arrive by 2:00 PM; travel information distributed in advance)

T 11.11 *Images of the Book:* Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1430-40)

Essay Due

Th 11.13 *Images of the Book*: Ben Jonson (1440-42, 1539-44 select, 1556-7) (Focus: “To the
Memory of My Beloved, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare)

T 11.18 *Images of the Book*: Donne and Herbert (selections)

Th 11.20 *Images of the Book*: Herrick, *Hesperides* (1757-67)
Read also: Crisis of Authority (1834-8)

T 11.25 Milton, from *Areopagitica* (1897-1901, 1929-39)

Th 11.27 **No Class – Thanksgiving Break**

T 12.2 *The Book and the Land*: Milton (1939-43) and Winstanley (1849-55)

Th 12.4 *The Book and the Land*: Marvell (1789-90, 1796-7, 1800-4)

Keyword Project Due

T 12.9 Marvell (1811-33, “Upon Appleton House,” select stanzas)

Final Exam: Th 12.11 12:45 PM