**ENGL 338-02: Survey of British Literature I – Early Texts to the Eighteenth Century**

**M/W/Th 11:10-12:00 PM**

**Room: 414 TH**

Instructor: Mr. A. Baldassano

E-mail: [abaldassano@gradcenter.cuny.edu](mailto:abaldassano@gradcenter.cuny.edu)

Office: 1238 HW

Office Hours: Monday & Thursday, 9:30-11:00 AM

**English 338 Learning Outcomes and Objectives**

Beginning with the earliest poetry written in the English language and finishing just after the close of the eighteenth-century, this course introduces students to a broad survey of British literature, mixing canonical works with lesser known and studied texts. The period of time between the earliest known English poem (“Cædmon’s Hymn,” c. 7th century) and the latest poem we will read (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, republished in 1817) covers approximately twelve centuries; thus, a single semester survey of the literature of those centuries is, of necessity, extremely limited. By the end of the semester, however, students will have engaged with a variety of styles of texts from those centuries, giving a general sense of the social and political contexts for those works.

A course of this particular concentration (older British texts) risks being very homogenous in terms of the types of voices represented. As such, this course pays explicit attention to the voices of women authors as well as those texts that engage with questions of non-white subjectivity and identity. Class discussions will encourage attention to the biases that have informed canonical formation (as it has changed throughout centuries of literary studies) as well as to the ideas and narratives in lesser-studied texts that traditionally have been excluded from formal study.

Students will engage in varied critical approaches, including not only the traditional close readings, but also historical and etymological approaches. As such, we will discuss social, political, and religious contexts, linguistic development from English’s Anglo-Saxon origins, etc. Formal assignments will help students engage with these different approaches in order to give them a sense of the different methodologies that can be used in the study of literature. By the end of the semester, students will have written numerous short papers that practice using different critical methods, as well as one longer paper that engages more closely with a particular methodology.

**Required Texts**

* course packet (provided)
* *Beowulf*, Author: ed. Seamus Heaney, Publisher: Norton, Year Published: 2001, Price: 10.47 USD. ISBN: 0393320979
* *The Duchess of Malfi*, Author: John Webster, Publisher: Dover, Year Published: 1999, Price: 2.70 USD. ISBN: 0486406601
* *Richard II*, Author: William Shakespeare, Publisher: Norton, Year Published: 2005, Price: 5.99 USD. ISBN: 0743484916
* *Oroonoko*, Author: Aphra Behn, Publisher: Norton, Year Published: 1997, Price: 15.86 USD. ISBN: 0393970140
* *The Castle of Otranto*, Author: Horace Walpole, Publisher: Dover, Year Published: 2004, Price: 4.00 USD. ISBN: 0486434125

**Course Expectations**

*Attendance*: Students who miss six or more sessions without reasonable justifications are likely to fail the course. More than three absences will begin to affect your grade.

*Lateness*: Class begins at 11:10 AM every day. Three latenesses will count as one absence. Do not let lateness and absence contribute to lowered final grades or your development as a scholar!

*Participation*: This course is a seminar-style course, meaning that I will not spend the entire 50 minutes lecturing. Instead, group discussions often will be the majority of the class. Therefore, students must be prepared to ask questions and discuss their ideas about the readings and written assignments. Annotating the texts while reading is a good way to prepare for class discussions. *Quality* as well as quantity count for participation.

I encourage open discussion, but “open” does not mean boundless. Derogatory comments and discourse including, but not limited to, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, etc., will not be tolerated.

*Classroom Etiquette/Cell phone/Laptop Policy*: Please keep your cell phones on silent during class. There is no texting allowed. Laptops are allowed only for note-taking (if it becomes apparent that a laptop is being used for any other purpose, that student will not be allowed to use it for the remainder of the semester); internet must be shut off during the duration of the class. Students may drink beverages and eat during class, so long as it is not disruptive (so, please avoid crinkly bags or complex meals that require forks and knives – besides the meal being disruptive, you will need your hands free for writing and mouths free for talking). You must use the standard editions of our texts for papers and exams, although you may use electronic copies of the text for class. Plan accordingly if you are using electronic copies in class.

*Contact*: I can answer quick questions via e-mail ([abaldassano@gradcenter.cuny.edu](mailto:abaldassano@gradcenter.cuny.edu)). I nearly always respond to e-mails within a day. If you are in need of help with something more complex than what can be covered in a short e-mail, we can meet during my scheduled office hours or make an appointment. I do not discuss or debate grades via e-mail; make an appointment with me to talk in person.

*Academic Integrity*: Any instance of plagiarism (even one sentence in a first draft!) will be reported immediately to the dean. The college officially states that:

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

*Writing Center*: The Hunter College Reading/Writing Center offers FREE one-on-one tutoring. You may visit the center at any stage of the writing process—brainstorming, drafting, outlining, revising, etc. The writing center tutors are other students, so they will not grade or proofread your paper, but they will help you become a stronger writer. The Reading/Writing Center is located in the Thomas Hunter building (room 416) and is open on **TBD**. For more information, visit their website: http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/index.html

*Statement of Accommodation*: In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/ or Learning) consult the Office of Access ABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations.  For further information and assistance please call (212- 772- 4857)/TTY (212- 650- 3230).

*Reading Assignments*: Careful and engaged reading of every assigned text not only is required, but is essential to your success as a developing writer/reader and to the course as a whole. I recommend that you read every assigned text **twice**. Write in the margins. Take notes and jot down questions. Look up words you don’t know. Mark off passages that you, personally, find particularly interesting, or particularly confusing, etc. You must bring the assigned text(s) to class and be ready to discuss what you have read. In-class writing assignments and quizzes will be based on out-of-class readings, and so you must keep up with assigned readings.

*Writing Assignments/Presentations and Grading Policies*: In the next sixteen weeks, you will do a lot of writing and revising. This includes formal essays, in-class writing assignments, and response papers. Late papers will be graded accordingly. In-class writing assignments and quizzes will be graded and cannot be made up.

Although your essays will undergo several revisions, the grades you receive on your papers will reflect your work on your final essays *and* drafts. Your writing only will improve if you genuinely work hard on your drafts and then make significant changes in your final essays.

* **Attendance/participation (20%)**

Your participation grade, as discussed above, is based on your attendance and the quantity and quality of your comments. Do not be afraid to talk, and don’t let absence and lateness get in the way of your progress!

* **Ten short analytic papers (40%)**

Throughout the course of the semester, we will be reading nearly thirty texts/authors (some as short as a single-page poem, some closer in length to a novella). You are expected to write short papers (approx. 1 ½-2 pages) on ten of them, due the day that we are scheduled to discuss them in class. You are responsible for keeping track of your own progress on completion. These papers should focus on one small aspect of the text that interests you and should mimic a proposal for a longer paper. By the end of the semester, then, you will have a broad range of topics for further research in a paper.

* **Final research paper (due in stages) (35%)**

You will write a 7-10 page research paper on a topic related to one of the texts. It can be developed from one of your shorter papers, but does not have to be. You must have a clear thesis statement and support it with your own analysis of the text and **at least three scholarly sources**. Your draft will undergo several revisions. When turning in your paper, you must hand in your final essay as well as the drafts you work-shopped. Your grade for the assignment will be based not only on the quality of your final draft, but the extent to which you revised your preceding drafts (yes, I do look at every draft!). Your essays must be double-spaced and follow MLA paper-writing guidelines. Details to follow.

* **Peer Review (5%)**

During the drafting process for the research paper, you will participate in a peer review workshop. This workshop will require you to read carefully and comment upon the drafts of several of your peers. The grade is based on the quality of your comments for your peers. Details to follow.

**Schedule of Readings** (schedule subject to change throughout semester)

Readings are to be completed *for the day they are scheduled.* Most readings are included in the course packet; texts that you must purchase are marked with an asterisk.

Th 8/27: Syllabus review

M 8/31: *The Wife’s Lament* (c. 10th c.) + *The Wanderer* (c. 10th c.) + *Cædmon’s Hymn* (c. 7th/e. 8th c.)

W 9/2: *The Dream of the Rood* (c. 10th c.) + *The Seafarer* (c. 10th c.)+ “The Mental Container and the Cross of Christ: Revelation and Community in *The Dream of the Rood*,” Britt Mize

Th 9/3: \**Beowulf* (c. 8th-11th c.) (ll. 1-851) + “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” Jeffrey J. Cohen (*Of Giants*, p. 1-28)

M 9/7: Labor Day, CUNY closed

W 9/9: \**Beowulf* (complete)

Th 9/10: [classes on Monday sched.] \**Beowulf* (complete) + “The *Lācnunga* and Its Sources: The *Nine Herbs* *Charm* and *Wið Færstice* Reconsidered,” Karin Olsen

M 9/14: No classes scheduled

W 9/16: *History of the Kings of Britain*, Geoffrey of Monmouth [excerpts] (c. 1136)

Th 9/17: *History of the Kings of Britain*, Geoffrey of Monmouth [excerpts] + *De origine gigantum* (c. 1330s) + “Thirty-three Murderous Sisters: A Pre-Trojan Foundation Myth in the Middle English Prose *Brut* Chronicle,” Tamar Drukker

M 9/21: *Bisclavret*, Marie de France (c. l. 12th c.)

W 9/23: No classes scheduled

Th 9/24: *Bisclavret*, Marie de France + “Hybridity, Ethics, and Gender in Two Old French Werewolf Tales,” Noah D. Guynn

M 9/28: *Sir Orfeo* (c. 1330)

W 9/30: *Sir Orfeo*

Th 10/1: *The General Prologue*, Geoffrey Chaucer (l. 14th c.)

M 10/5: *The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale*, Geoffrey Chaucer + Questioning of John/Eleanor Rykener

W 10/7: *The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale*, Geoffrey Chaucer

Th 10/8: *The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale*, Geoffrey Chaucer

M 10/12: College closed, no classes

W 10/14: *The Miller’s Prologue and Tale*, Geoffrey Chaucer

Th 10/15: *The Miller’s Prologue and Tale*, Geoffrey Chaucer

M 10/19: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (l. 14th c.)

W 10/21: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Th 10/22: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

M 10/26: *Utopia* excerpts, Sir Thomas More (1514-18)

W 10/28: *Utopia* excerpts, Sir Thomas More

Th 10/29: “Will and Testament,” Isabella Whitney (1567-73)

M 11/2: \**Richard II*, William Shakespeare (c. 1595)

W 11/4: \**Richard II*, William Shakespeare

Th 11/5: \**Richard II*, William Shakespeare

M 11/9: \**The Duchess of Malfi*, John Webster (1612-13)

W 11/11: \**The Duchess of Malfi*, John Webster

Th 11/12: \**The Duchess of Malfi*, John Webster

M 11/16: *Songs and Sonnets* excerpts, John Donne (d. 1631)

W 11/18: *Holy Sonnets* excerpts, John Donne

Th 11/19: “Eve’s Apology in Defense of Women” and “The Description of Cooke-ham,” Aemilia Lanyer (1611)

M 11/23: \**Oroonoko*, Aphra Behn (1688)

W 11/25: *\*Oroonoko*, Aphra Behn

Th 11/26: College closed, no classes

M 11/30: *Some Reflections upon Marriage* excerpts, Mary Astell (1700) and *Roxana* excerpts, Daniel Defoe (1724)

W 12/2: “A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed,” Jonathan Swift (1734) and Sonnet 130, Shakespeare

Th 12/3: *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, William Wordsworth (1802)

M 12/7: \**The Castle of Otranto*, Horace Walpole (1764)

W 12/9: \**The Castle of Otranto*, Horace Walpole

Th 12/10: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1798/1817)

M 12/14: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*