

Rites, Ritual, and Performance in Early British Literature



British Literature 1: English 261, Section 1
MWF 9:30-10:20
Clark Hall 320
Spring 2016

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As a survey course, this class will explore a variety of texts central to the development of British (English as well as Irish, Scottish, and Welsh) literature before 1800. We will cover three historical periods—the medieval era, Renaissance, and Restoration/18th century. These years saw invasions, wars, political turmoil, religious shifts and conflicts, changes in the role of women and social class structure, philosophical and scientific developments, and the beginnings of a British Empire.

As we explore these issues, our central focus for the semester will be ritual, rites of passage, and performance. Prior to 1800 most British literature consisted of poetry and drama, which are meant to be seen and heard, rather than read silently. We will engage literature not only through critical, scholarly reading, but orally, aurally, interactively, and kinesthetically. Understanding not just the meaning, but the sound and physical experience of literature expands the range of analytical tools available to us as scholars.

We will also look closely at how rituals and rites shaped British culture. Literature is full of feasts, coronations, executions, baptisms, ceremonies, contests, protests, festivals, harvests, and so on, all of which performatively mark changes from one status to another. As readers we will pay particular attention to how these culturally sanctioned rites and rituals shaped British identities during the medieval period, Renaissance, and Restoration/18th century.

Course Objectives

Following the guidelines the English department has established for the BA program, this course will help you learn to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse, literary, cultural, and historical contexts
 - a. by identifying genre conventions and analyzing their effects
 - b. by identifying and analyzing effects of complexity or ambiguity
 - c. by locating texts in social/economic/political/literary histories
 - d. by connecting texts to other literary or cultural texts

Required Texts and Resources

Please purchase the required edition of the Norton anthologies because literature prior to 1800 can have wide variations in the editing and presentation of texts, and it will be important that we all read the same editions of edited or translated works.

- *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* 9th ed. Package 1: A, B, C. ISBN 978-0-393-91300-2 (or the single volume edition, ISBN 978-0-393-91247-0)
 - Volume A: *The Middle Ages*

- Volume B: *The Sixteenth Century/Early Seventeenth Century*
- Volume C: *The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*
- Twitter Account

Recommended:

- Lunsford, Andrea. *Easy Writer (EW)*, 5th Custom ed. for WVU. 2014.

Grading and Assignments

Three Period Themes	10 points each, for 30 total
Close Reading	15 points
Term Paper Proposal	5 Points
Term Paper	25 points
In-class Participation	15 points
Theatre Performance	10 points
Total Point Value=100	

Attendance and Late Work

The discussion of literature is central to this class, so participation counts into your grade and attendance is mandatory. The attendance policy allows three absences (one week) with no penalty to your grade; after the third missed class each absence will lower your final course grade by five points (½ letter grade).

All assignments are listed on the syllabus, therefore there is no excuse for not turning work in on time. Typed, printed, and stapled papers must be turned in on the day the assignment is due.

Office Hours and Email

This class will push you to think in new ways about literature and culture. This should not be easy. But you have an excellent resource in my office hours, which are MWF 10:30-11:15 in Colson Hall G07. This time is available for you to come ask questions, get clarifications, seek assistance on assignments, ruminate on the meaning of existence, etc.

You may also email me at pzapkin@mix.wvu.edu. I always answer emails within 24 hours, so if you don't hear back from me by the next evening, please resend your email.

Academic Integrity

The English department and I assume that you will approach academic work honestly, and you will turn in your own original work. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade for the assignment, for the course, or more serious penalties. It is your responsibility to become fully familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is linked on eCampus or in *Easy Writer* pages WVU5-WVU7.

If you are at all confused about what counts as plagiarism, please ask.

Social Justice

You have a right to feel comfortable and accepted in our classroom. You have a right to express your ideas and interpretations of texts. You have a right to pose questions. You do not have a right to make anyone else feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in our community.

Schedule

This schedule is subject to change by me. I will inform you by email and if possible in class of any changes as early as possible.

Please Note: All readings must be done by the class period in which we will discuss them. This includes reading introductory material provided by the Norton editors.

Week	Date	Class Discussion, Readings, and Homework	Assignment Due
1	M 11 Jan.	Introduction to course, syllabus, and policy information	
	W 13 Jan.	History of Celtic and Roman Britain, British geography and cultural history	
	F 15 Jan.	Celtic Literature: “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds” (123-128)	
2	M 18 Jan.	<i>Martin Luther King Day, No Class</i>	
	W 20 Jan.	Anglo-Saxon Epic Poetry: <i>Beowulf</i> lines 1-490 (36-51)	
	F 22 Jan.	Snow Day, No Class	
3	M 25 Jan.	Snow Day, No Class	
	W 27 Jan.	Anglo-Saxon Epic Poetry: <i>Beowulf</i> lines 491-835 (51-58)	
	F 29 Jan.	Estates Satire: Geoffrey Chaucer’s <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> , “The General Prologue” lines 1-478 and 790-811 (238-255, 262)	
4	M 1 Feb.	Medieval Feminism?: Chaucer’s <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> , “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue” (282-301)	
	W 3 Feb.	Critical Writing: “Critical Writing in English” handout on eCampus Period Theme Introduced	
	F 5 Feb.	Mystery Plays: <i>York Play of the Crucifixion</i> (439-447)	
5	M 8 Feb.	Chivalric Romance: <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> lines 1-810 (183-203)	
	W 10 Feb.	Chivalric Romance: <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> lines 811-1689 (203-221)	
	F 12 Feb.	Chivalric Romance: <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> lines 1690-2530 (221-238)	
6	M 15 Feb.	Christian Mysticism: Margery Kempe’s <i>Book</i> 1.11 [Margery and Her Husband Reach a Settlement] and 1:20 [Margery Sees the Host Flutter at Mass] (426-429) Close Reading Introduced	
	W 17 Feb.	Faith in Conflict: “1 Corinthians 13” four versions (671-676)	Medieval Period Theme
	F 19 Feb.	Women in Authority: Mary Tudor’s “The Oration of Queen Mary in the Guild Hall, on the First of February, 1554,” and Elizabeth I’s “Verses	

		Written with a Diamond” and “Speech to the Troops at Tilbury” (726-727, 749-750, 762-763)	
7	M 22 Feb.	Renaissance Comedy: William Shakespeare’s <i>Twelfth Night</i> Acts I-II (1187-1218)	
	W 24 Feb.	Renaissance Comedy: Shakespeare’s <i>Twelfth Night</i> Acts III-IV (1219-1241)	
	F 26 Feb.	<i>Mid-Semester</i> . Renaissance Comedy: Shakespeare’s <i>Twelfth Night</i> Act V (1241-1250)	Close Reading
8	M 29 Feb.	The Renaissance Stage: Performance and Criticism, E.M.W. Tillyard’s “The Chain of Being” and Catherine Belsey’s “Disrupting Sexual Difference” on eCampus	
	W 2 Mar.	Pastoral Poetry: Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” and Walter Raleigh’s “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (1126, 1023-1025)	
	F 4 Mar.	Sonnets: Edmund Spenser’s “Sonnet 75,” Sir Philip Sidney’s “Sonnet 27,” and Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 29” (989, 1089, 1174)	
9	M 7 Mar.	Revenge Tragedy: John Webster’s <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> Acts I-II (1571-1598); “Aristotelian Tragedy” handout on eCampus	
	W 9 Mar.	Revenge Tragedy: Webster’s <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> Acts III-IV (1599-1630)	
	F 11 Mar.	Revenge Tragedy: Webster’s <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> Act V (1630-1647)	
10	M 14 Mar.	Crisis of Authority: <i>The Moderate</i> , No. 28 and Milton’s “The Tenure of King’s and Magistrates” (1834-1838, 1846-1849)	
	W 16 Mar.	Cavalier Poets: Robert Herrick’s “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” and “Upon the Nipples of Julia’s Breast,” Richard Lovelace’s “To Lucasta, Going to the Wars,” and Katherine Philips’ “A Married State” (1762, 1764, 1779, 1783-1784)	
	F 18 Mar.	Dissenter Poetry: John Milton’s “On the New Forcers of Conscience Under the Long Parliament,” “To the Lord General Cromwell, May 1652,” and “On the Late Massacre in Piedmont” (1940-1943) Term Paper and Proposal Introduced	
11	M 21 Mar.	<i>Spring Recess, No Class</i>	
	W 23 Mar.	<i>Spring Recess, No Class</i>	
	F 25 Mar.	<i>Spring Recess, No Class</i>	
12	M 28 Mar.	Libertine Poetry: John Wilmot’s “The Disabled Debauchee,” “The Imperfect Enjoyment,” and “Upon Nothing” (2296-2301)	Renaissance Period Theme

	W 30 Mar.	Satire: Jonathan Swift's <i>A Modest Proposal</i> (2633-2639)	
	F 1 Apr.	Non-Fiction Prose. Samuel Pepys' <i>Diary</i> "The Great Fire" and Mary Montagu's "The Turkish Embassy Letters" (2260-2264, 2759-2763)	
13	M 4 Apr.	Literary Criticism: Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Criticism" (2665-2685)	
	W 6 Apr.	Debates on Liberty: John Locke's "Two Treatises of Government" and David Hume's "Of the Liberty of the Press" (3012-3018, 3024-3028)	
	F 8 Apr.	Scholarly Research using the Library Databases	Term Paper Proposal
14	M 11 Apr.	Satiric Opera: John Gay's <i>The Beggar's Opera</i> Introduction-Act I (2787-2803)	
	W 13 Apr.	Satiric Opera: Gay's <i>The Beggar's Opera</i> Act II (2803-2818)	
	F 15 Apr.	Satiric Opera: Gay's <i>The Beggar's Opera</i> Act III (2818-2833)	
15	M 18 Apr.	Slavery: Olaudah Equiano's <i>The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself</i> (3033-3043)	
	W 20 Apr.	<i>Blackadder the Third</i> "Sense and Senility," season 3 episode 5; Performance groups	
	F 22 Apr.	Performance Rehearsal Day	Restoration/18 th Century Period Theme
16	M 25 Apr.	Theatre Performances Day 1; Course Evaluations	
	W 27 Apr.	Theatre Performances Day 2	
	F 29 Apr.	<i>Last Day of Classes</i> . Theatre Performances Day 3	
17	M 2 May		Term Paper due to my office or mailbox, by 12:30.
	F 6 May	Term Papers may be picked up from my office from 9:30-12:30	