

English 40A: Introduction to British Literature I
Fall 2003

***The Comic, the Heroic, and the Satiric:
The Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century***

Professor Yen	T. & Th. 9:00 - 10:15 pm	DH108
Phone: 278-6176	Hours: TR 11:50 am – 1:00 pm	
E-mail: julie.yen@csus.edu	Office: Calaveras 160	

Texts

The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Vol. I A, B, and C. 7th ed. (required)
The Canterbury Tales. Translated by Nevill Coghill. (required)
Mythology. Edith Hamilton. (recommended)
The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms (recommended)

Course Description

In this course, we will be studying some of the most exciting English works written during the middle ages, the Renaissance, and the eighteenth century. We will read the texts carefully, but we will also consider their religious, political, and cultural contexts. We will explore the works through some familiar literary themes and motifs in Western literature, many of which you already know well, such as the idea that life is a journey or a quest, the complexities of love, the personal struggles inherent in the practice of religious beliefs, and others.

In our syllabus, the medieval texts that we will be reading include Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, and *Everyman*; our Renaissance authors include Wyatt, Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, Donne, Herbert, Marvell, Aemilia Lanyer, and Milton; and our eighteenth-century writers include Anne Finch, Mary Wortley Montagu, Swift, Pope, and Johnson.

Goals and Objectives

- to familiarize students with some significant and culturally diverse examples, both canonical and non-canonical, of British Literature written between the medieval period and the eighteenth century
- to introduce students to some of the major literary genres and modes employed by writers of the period
- to provide students with the opportunity to examine some recurring themes in the literature of the period
- to help students understand the relevance of the literature of past centuries to our modern world
- to give students practice in analyzing, discussing, and writing about that literature

By the end of the semester, you should also be able to:

- analyze and develop your own interpretations of literary works
- use appropriate examples from literary texts to illustrate and support your views
- compare different texts and articulate meaningful connections between them
- continue to explore and enjoy new texts on your own.

Requirements

10%	explication essay	Sept. 16
60%	3 tests	Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 16
20%	paper (4 to 5 pages)	Oct. 30
10%	oral presentation and class participation	

Course Policies

1. Your attendance is extremely important for the success of this class. Please arrive on time and don't leave early, unless unavoidable circumstances arise. If you miss more than 6 classes, you may fail the course.
2. You must turn in the required assignments (an explication essay and a paper) and take all three tests. Failure to turn in an assignment or take a test will result in a grade of F for the assignment or test, and possible failure of the course.
3. Your assignments must be turned in on time. A late assignment will be penalized one full letter grade, unless you have been given an extension in advance.
4. All writing done for the course should include substantive content as well as observe general principles of good writing: correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and careful use of language.
5. All work submitted for this course must be your own: plagiarism or cheating on a test will result in a failing grade. (See University Policy about academic dishonesty at <http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umannual/UMP14150.htm>)
6. Authors' names and text titles should always be spelled accurately.
7. You should always bring your textbook to class.
8. You should always be prepared to respond to the discussion questions for each day's reading. In class I will use the questions to frame our discussions by calling on people to respond to one of the questions. But sometimes, instead of responding to specific questions, you may be asked to discuss a passage that you think is important, for which you can identify key themes, issues, and connections.
9. For each day of class, I have also selected one discussion question to focus on. I will expect you to be particularly prepared to answer that question. And on some days, I will ask you to write a one-page response to the question that will be handed in and counted as class participation.
10. And finally, if you are experiencing any difficulty in the class, please come see me as soon as possible.

On days before your first assignment is due and before each of the three tests, we will be holding class in a computer lab. On those days, the class will meet in Calaveras 131. Please bring a floppy disk to class on lab days so you can save your work.

Tentative Schedule

- 1 **Sept. 2** Introductions
Sept. 4 Geoffrey Chaucer. "The General Prologue" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale," in Nevill Coghill's translation of *The Canterbury Tales* (3-26; 258-292); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 210-215 and p. 253.
- 2 **Sept. 9** Chaucer. "The Wife of Bath's Tale" (continued)
- Discussion Question: In the story-telling contest proposed by the Host in "The General Prologue," what are the criteria that will be used to judge the stories told by the pilgrims? If those criteria were used to judge the story told by the Wife of Bath, would it be considered a good story? Why? Use some specific details from the text to support your views.
- Sept. 11 Lab Day**
 Start reading *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* Volume I A (156-210).
- 3 **Sept. 16 Explication Exercise Due**
- Volume I A**
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (156-210)
- Discussion Question: What does this text tell us about the tradition of knighthood?
- Sept. 18** *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (156-210) (continued)
- Discussion Question: How many "tests" do you see in this text? Which one of them is the most difficult and challenging, in your view?
- 4 **Sept. 23** *Everyman* (445-67)
- Discussion Question: What religious lessons does Everyman learn through his experience in the play?
- Sept. 25** Margery Kempe. From *The Book of Margery Kempe* (366-79)
- Discussion Question: Compare the way in which Kempe portrays herself and the way Chaucer portrays the character of the Wife of Bath. Both the historical person and the fictitious character are placed in a position wherein they must defend themselves against patriarchal notions of women before a male audience, Kempe in the ecclesiastical court of the Archbishop and the Wife of Bath in her "Prologue." Do you see any similarities between the two women? Differences?
- 5 **Sept. 30 Lab Day**

Oct. 2 Test 1**Volume I B**

- 6 **Oct. 7** Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder. "Whoso List to Hunt" (527); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 525-526.
Edmund Spenser. From *Amoretti* Sonnet 67 "Lyke as a huntsman after weary chace" (866-67); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 614-616 and 863-864.

Discussion Question: How are the women in the two poems "Lyke as a huntsman after weary chace" and "Whoso list to hunt" represented? Do these two portraits of women give us the same ideas about Renaissance women and how they were perceived? Use some details from the poems to support your views.

- Oct. 9** Sir Philip Sidney. From *Astrophil and Stella*, Sonnet 1 "Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show" (917); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 909-911 and 916-917.

William Shakespeare. Sonnet 3 "Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest" (1029-30); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 1026-1028.

Discussion Question: How would you describe the tone of Sidney's poem? Cite a word, phrase, or line from the text to support your view.

- 7 **Oct. 14** William Shakespeare. Sonnet 18 "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" and Sonnet 130 "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (1031, 1040-41)

Discussion Question: Who do you think is the intended audience of Shakespeare's Sonnet 130? Why?

- Oct. 16** Christopher Marlowe. *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* (990-1023); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 970-971.

Discussion Question: What is Faustus' problem? To what extent is he responsible for his troubles?

- 8 **Oct. 21** Ben Jonson. "To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us" (1414-16); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 1292-1294.

Discussion Question: How would you describe the tone of the poem? Do you think Ben Jonson is sincere in his praise of his greatest professional rival? Why? Use some passages in the poem to support your reading.

Oct. 23 John Donne. "The Flea," "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," and Holy Sonnet 14 (1236, 1248-49, 1271); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 1233-1235.

Discussion Question: One of the most striking aspects of Donne's poetry is the use of paradoxes. What is a paradox? Can you identify any paradoxical ideas in Holy Sonnet 14?

9 Oct. 28 George Herbert. "Redemption," "The Pulley," and "Love (3)" (1597, 1610, 1614-15)' and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 1595-1596.

Discussion Question: Compare Herbert's representation of Christianity with Donne's. Do their speakers use the same types of images or focus on the same kinds of ideas and religious experiences? Which poet's work do you prefer? Why?

Oct. 30 Paper Due!

Andrew Marvell. "To His Coy Mistress" (1691-92); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 1684-1685.

Discussion Question: What is the most compelling image or idea in the poem? Why is it effective?

10 Nov. 4 Lab Day
Nov. 6 Test 2

11 Nov. 11 Aemilia Lanyer. "Eve's Apology in Defense of Women," from *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1285-87); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 1281-1282.

Discussion Question: Do you find Lanyer's argument persuasive? Why or why not?

Nov. 13 John Milton. *Paradise Lost* Book I, lines 1-270 (1815-24); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 1771-1774.

Discussion Question: Consider Milton's portrayal of Satan. How would you describe this character? Please use some lines from the text to illustrate your view.

12 Nov. 18 John Milton. *Paradise Lost* Book IX, lines 192-1189 (1965-86)

Discussion Question: Compare Milton's version of the story of The Fall with Lanyer's version. Do they seem to be emphasizing different aspects of the story? If you see a difference, do you think it has to do with the difference in the genders of the writers?

Volume I C

Nov. 20 Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea. "The Introduction" (2291-93); and the introductory material in *Norton*, p. 2291.

Discussion Question: What is the most important idea in Finch's poem?

- 13 Nov. 25** Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. "Epistle from Mrs. Yonge to Her Husband" (2582-83); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 2579-2580.

Discussion Question: Both Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu could be described as early feminists. Compare and contrast the ways in which each author argues for the rights of women. Which writer's argument is more persuasive? Why? What rhetorical strategies does each writer use?

Nov. 27 Thanksgiving

- 14 Dec. 2** Jonathan Swift. "A Modest Proposal" (2473--79); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 2298-2299.

Discussion Question: What do you think is Swift's purpose in making his argument? Who or what is the main target of his satire? How is this 18th-ct text written about social problems in Ireland still relevant to our society today?

- Dec. 4** Alexander Pope. *An Essay on Criticism* (2509-25); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 2505-2509.

Discussion Question: What significant eighteenth-century ideals does the poem introduce us to? Are these ideas outdated, or would they work equally well in our society today?

- 15 Dec. 9** Samuel Johnson. From *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (2679-2712); and the introductory material in *Norton*, pp. 2660-2662.

Discussion Question: In your opinion, what is the moral lesson in Johnson's fable? Compare it to the moral lessons taught in medieval texts: what similarities do you see? Differences? Use some details and examples from the text to support your view.

Dec. 11 Lab Day

- Dec. 16 Test 3 8:00 - 10:00 am**
No make-up test: Test 3 must be taken at this scheduled time.

Please note: I cannot mail your last test. Please pick up your test at my office next semester.