

Backgrounds in British Literature to 1800  
English 205  
Dr. Pamela Benson

### General Information

**Goals:** This course has four goals:

To introduce the major developments in English literature and language and their historical context from the beginnings up to 1800 and, thus, to provide you with a framework in which to place the texts you read in other classes and on your own. To develop your skill in applying the techniques of literary analysis taught in English 201 to earlier texts. To examine three key concepts: genre, literary period, and canon. To help you discover a few works that will become your personal classics.

**Required Texts** (available at Off Campus Books):

*The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th ed., package 1. This is a 3 volume set.  
*Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 8th ed.

### Requirements:

Instructions for all assignments are in the Course Handbook. Please refer to it often.

**Reading:** This course is reading intensive. Assignments are listed by due date; thus, reading should be completed for the day on which it appears on the syllabus.

**Quizzes:** There will be unannounced quizzes. There will be no make-up quizzes, except in the very rare case of a genuine emergency; everyone is permitted to drop his/her lowest quiz grade. Quizzes are not analytic; they merely will test whether you have done the reading and learned the dates and information under each heading on the syllabus. -- 40 points possible in total on quizzes.

1 critical paper; topics will be handed out. -- 100 points possible

1 imitation paper; instructions are in Course Handbook. -- 100 points possible

One of these papers must be submitted by October 14. These papers must be on works by different authors.

One brief report (2 pages) on one text from the anthology that is not included on the syllabus.

Due by November 9. (Earlier submissions are encouraged.) -- 30 points possible

2 worksheets on poetry -- a "love poetry worksheet," due on October 5 -- 40 points possible

-- a "lyric poetry worksheet," due on Oct. 28 or Nov. 4 -- 40 points possible

Library worksheet -- 30 points possible

Participation, attendance, and informal written assignments -- 40 points possible.

A mid-term and a final exam -- 100 points possible for each

### Attendance:

Discussion will be a major component of this class, and, thus, your presence and participation are vital to its success. Thoughtful contributions to discussion will benefit your grade; more than 3 absences will lower it. If something happens that will make it difficult for you to attend class regularly, please see me or e-mail me immediately.

### Plagiarism policy:

**Minimum** consequence of plagiarism: an **F** (0 points) on the assignment. Depending on circumstances, you may fail the course.

Plagiarized work may not be rewritten for credit.

This policy applies to all written work -- worksheets, papers, exams, everything.

I will explain more about plagiarism and how to avoid it at our paper writing workshop.

## Grade Scale:

There are 620 points total for the semester.  
A = 92% and above; A- = 90-91.9%, B+ = 88-89.9% , etc.

## Two useful and interesting Websites:

The publisher of our textbook maintains a web site: [WWW.WWNorton.com/literature](http://WWW.WWNorton.com/literature). On this site you will find many interesting pictures, texts, and recordings of materials associated with the authors and books we will be reading. Nothing on the site is required reading; use of the site is strongly recommended.

When you go to the site for the first time, you will need to register; if you bought a new textbook for this class or, indeed, any new textbook from Norton, you should have received an access code when you purchased it. If you bought a used copy of the textbook, you may purchase web access; go to the site for information.

On entering the site, choose "English Literature"; you will see a bar across the top that offers you a choice of periods. Select the one you want and then choose topics from the sidebar on the left.

On this site you will also find a useful discussion of writing literature papers. See "Writing about Literature" in the right side-bar on the first page of the site

The RIC Library Website has a link to Artstor. Try exploring it.

## Students with disabilities

Please contact Disability Services (8061) early in the semester in order to take advantage of the many services they offer and to arrange accommodations for this course, if necessary; also, let me know.

## Revised Syllabus

All readings are in *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, unless indicated otherwise.

Note: Because literary history is such an important component of this course, dates are included

here on the syllabus. Quizzes may test your knowledge of this information.

Always consult the Course Handbook for Study Guides. There are guides for most texts.

Class 1 Introduction to materials and methods and to how to read *Beowulf*

### Period One: The Middle Ages, part one: Anglo-Saxon England

Rulers and major events

43 - ca. 420 The Romans conquered Britain.

432 St. Patrick began conversion of Ireland.

450 Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain began

597 Conversion of Anglo-Saxons to Christianity begins

680-800 *Beowulf* was composed sometime during these years.

871 - 99 Alfred, a very learned man, is king of the Anglo-Saxons in a region of southern England called Wessex.

The languages in which literature was written in southern England during this period were Latin and Anglo-Saxon, also known as Old English.

The adjective to use when discussing this period is "medieval" or "Anglo-Saxon."

Class 2 Reading: "The Middle Ages," pp. 1-7

*Beowulf*, pp. 29-62

"Old ... English prosody," p.19, first paragraph

"Geographic Nomenclature," A-45 (at the back of the book)

*Genesis*, selections are in the Course Handbook  
Reading Lyric and Narrative Poems (*Beo* is narrative) study guide  
term: "epic" in Abrams

Class 3 Reading: *Beowulf*, pp. 62 - end of poem  
terms: "motif and theme" in Abrams

Period One: The Middle Ages, part two: after the Norman conquest

Rulers and major events

1066 The Norman Conquest: At the battle of Hastings, King Harold was defeated by the French speaking Normans. William I, "The Conqueror," became king of England. French became the language of the elite.

1215 Magna Carta: King John was forced to sign this document granting political rights to his barons (noblemen).

1348 Black Death (plague) killed 1/3 of the population.

The languages in which literature was written in England during this period were Latin, Anglo-Norman (a dialect of French), and Middle English, which was a new language, eventually spoken by all social classes.

Class 4 Reading: "The Middle Ages," pp. 7-10

Marie de France, *Lanval* and *Chevrefoil*, pp. 141 - 57

Excerpt from *Lanval* in Anglo-Norman in Course Handbook

(Examine, even if you don't know French)

Prologue to the lays in Course Handbook

*Fables* in Course Handbook

terms: "chivalric romance," "courtly love" in Abrams

Class 5 Reading: "The Middle Ages," pp. 10-14

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, pp. 160-185 (parts 1 and 2)

"Old and Middle English Prosody," pp. 19-20

terms: "alliteration," "rhyme," p. A24-5

"strong-stress meters" and "chivalric romance" in Abrams

Class 6 Reading: *Gawain*, 185- end (parts 3 and 4)

"Medieval English," pp. 15 - 21

Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, "General Prologue," lines 1- 78, 118-162,

Be sure to look at Chaucer study guide in Course Handbook

Class 7 Reading: Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, introduction. pp. 213-17

"General Prologue," at least 165-310, 447-78, 547- 568, 671-721

"The Miller's Prologue and Tale," pp. 239-255

Term: "fabliau," p. A35 and in Abrams

If you are interested in the social and literary context of this reading, see

"Medieval Estates and Orders" at "Norton Topics Online"

Class 8 Reading: Chaucer, "Introduction" and "The Pardoner's Prologue," pp. 284-288

"rhetoric," A39

In class: How to write papers for English 205

Useful information at [WWW.WWNorton.com/literature](http://WWW.WWNorton.com/literature) -- see "Writing about Literature" in the right side-bar.

Class 9 Reading: Chaucer, "The Pardoner's Tale and Epilogue," pp. 288-298

Term: "allegory," p. A25; "allegory," in Abrams -- especially "exemplum"

Period Two: The Renaissance and Reformation, part one: the Sixteenth Century

Rulers and major events

1476 Caxton set up the first printing press in England.

- 1485 Battle of Bosworth Field ends War of the Roses: Richard III defeated by Henry Tudor, Henry VII.
- 1509 Accession of Henry VIII, son of Henry VII.
- 1534 Henry VIII breaks from Church of Rome (Catholic Church); declares himself head of the English church -- the Reformation.
- 1547 Death of Henry VIII; Edward VI is king (Protestant).
- 1553 Death of Edward VI; Mary I is queen (Catholic).
- 1558 Death of Mary I; Elizabeth I is queen (Protestant).
- 1564 Shakespeare born.
- 1588 Defeat of the Spanish Armada.
- The languages in which literature was written in England during this period were Latin and Early Modern English.

Class 10 \_\_\_\_\_ Topic: Lyric poetry -- **Before you read the poetry**, read “Some Advice on Reading ... Poetry” and “Love Poetry Worksheet” in the “Written Work” Section of the Course Handbook. Think about the questions as you read. Also, you may want to see “Sidney Study Guide” in the Guide section)

Reading: Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, poems 1, 2, 7, 20, 31 (p. 975 ff)  
Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti*, poems 54, 64, 65, 75, 79 (p. 903ff)  
Shakespeare, sonnets 18, 65, 73, 106, 116, 130, 138

Visual texts: “A literal portrait of a beauty,” compared with Spenser 64 and Shakespeare 130 (Handbook)  
Whitney *Emblems* -- 2 pages of pictures plus poems (Handbook)

Note: The numbers for the poems refer to single poems in your textbook. Their authors originally presented them in collections called sonnet sequences. Sidney’s collection is called *Astrophil and Stella*; the poems are spoken by Astrophil, a man who loves a woman named Stella. Spenser’s collection of love poems is called *Amoretti* (which means Little loves or little Cupids); he is the speaker and the poems present a history of his courtship of his wife, Elizabeth. Shakespeare’s collection is simply known as “The Sonnets.”

Terms: “rhythm and meter,” “sonnet,” “figurative language,” “conceit,” “connotation/denotation” in Abrams

**Writing due:** Love Poetry Worksheet (in Course Handbook)

Class 11 Reading: “The Sixteenth Century,” pp. 485 - 496  
“Faith in Conflict,” pp. 616-617  
“The English Bible,” pp. 618-619  
1 Corinthians 13 from Tyndale’s Translation, *Norton*  
Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, The First Book, stanzas 1-4, and Cantos 1 and 2, pp. 714-742  
“What is Allegory?” in Course Handbook

Visual text: “Preaching at Paul’s Cross” (notice the outdoor setting)

Terms: “rhyme and stanza,” “figurative language,” “symbol,” “conceit,” “connotation,” “figurative language” in Abrams

Class 12 No Class

Class 13 Special Make up class. Attendance is required.  
Reading: *Faerie Queene*, Book One, Cantos 4, 5, 9 (only stanzas 20-54 in canto 9)  
“The Sixteenth Century,” pp. 498 - 506

Class 14 Topic: Early books in the library  
**Special location:** Meet in the library in the Fortes seminar room.  
**Writing due:** This is the last date to turn in your first paper.

Class 15 Reading: *Faerie Queene*, Book One, Cantos 10, 11, and 12

In class: Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*, Chorus and scene one, lines 1-77 (pp. 1022-1026)

Class 16 Midterm Exam

Class 17 Reading: Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*, complete, pp. 1002 -04, 1022 - 57  
“The Elizabethan Theater,” pp. 506-11  
William Tyndale, pp. 621-2

Writing: Last day to turn in Library worksheet

Period Two: The Renaissance and Reformation, part two: the Earlier Seventeenth Century

Rulers and major events

1603 Elizabeth dies; James I King (Protestant)

Tudor dynasty ends; Stuart begins

1607 Jamestown colony founded in North America

1611 King James Bible published (English translation from Hebrew and Greek)

1616 Death of Shakespeare.

1620 Plymouth colony founded.

Class 18 Topic: Lyric poetry

Reading: John Donne, “The Good Morrow,” “The Sun Rising,” and  
“Valediction Forbidding Mourning,” *Holy Sonnets* 5, 10, 14  
“The Earlier Seventeenth Century:” pp. 1235-1240, up to the  
paragraph beginning, “James’s second son...,” and pp. 1242-1250

Writing due: Lyric Poetry Worksheet on a poem assigned for today. (Alternate  
due date is Nov. 4. on a poem assigned for the 4th)

Class 19 Topic: Lyric poetry

Reading: Lady Mary Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*:1,16,74, 77 (pp.1457-60)  
Ben Jonson, “On Giles and Joan,” “On My First Son,” “A Sonnet, to ...  
Lady Mary Wroth” (p. 1438)

Class 20 Topic: Lyric poetry

Reading: George Herbert, “The Altar,” “Easter Wings,” “Jordan 1,” “Virtue,”  
“The Collar,” “Love 3”

-- See Study Guide on “Virtue” in Course Handbook.

Katherine Philips, “A Married State,” “On the Death ... Child”

Visual texts: English tomb architecture (3 images)

Writing due: Lyric Poetry Worksheet on a poem assigned for today, if you did  
not complete one for Oct. 28. No late worksheets accepted.

Period Three: The Civil War

Rulers and major events

1642-48 The Civil War: Royalists (Cavaliers) vs Parliamentarians (Roundheads)

Theaters closed.

1649 Execution of Charles I; Republic declared; Oliver Cromwell Lord Protector

Period Four: The Restoration

1660 Restoration of the Monarchy; Charles II (son of Charles I), king.  
Theaters reopened. Actresses permitted on the English stage.

1662 The Royal Society ... for the Improving of Natural Knowledge chartered.

The language in which literature was written in England during this  
period was Modern English, though some scientific tracts were in Latin.

Class 21 Reading: “The Revolutionary Era” and “Literature and Culture,” pp 1251-57

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 1 and 2 and pp. 1785-89 and 1830-31

Virgil, *Aeneid*, opening lines in Course Handbook  
term: “epic simile” in Abrams; review *Genesis*  
**Writing due**: last date for report on extra reading

Class 22 No class

Class 23 Reading: *Paradise Lost*, Books 4 and 5

Class 24 Reading: *Paradise Lost*, Books 9; 10, lines 1- 590; 12, lines 552 - end

Class 25 Reading: Congreve, *The Way of the World*, complete  
Mary Astell, *Some Reflections on Marriage* (selection)  
“The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century,” pp. 2057-66  
**Writing due**: last date for second paper with the opportunity to revise.

Period Five: The Eighteenth Century

Rulers and major events

1688 - 89 Peaceful revolution, called “The Glorious Revolution” -- James II  
(Catholic son of Charles II) deposed; his daughter, Mary, and

1702 William dies; James II’s daughter Anne is queen.

1707 Act of Union with Scotland; England and Scotland share a single  
government.

1720 Collapse of South Sea Bubble (like junk bonds)

1775 American revolution begins.

The language in which literature was written in England during this  
period was Modern English.

Class 26 No class -- preparation for Thanksgiving

Class 27 Reading: Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Part 1, complete, pp. 2323-66  
terms: “satire,” A41; “utopias and dystopias” in Abrams

Class 28 Reading: Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, cantos 1-3, pp. 2513 - 25  
“To Mrs. Arabella Femor,” p. 2514  
“The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century,” pp. 2070-77  
terms: “chiasmus” A28, “antithesis” A29, “irony” A30, “zeugma” A31,  
“burlesque” A42; Abrams: “burlesque,” “mock epic,” “rhetorical figures”

Class 29 Reading: Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, complete, pp. 2513 - 32  
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, “Epistle from Mrs. Yonge...,” pp. 2587-8  
**Writing due**: last date for second paper with no opportunity to revise  
**No late papers accepted.**

Class 30 Reading: Samuel Johnson, and *Idler*  
no. 21, pp. 2678 -80 and A7-8  
I encourage you to also read Johnson’s “The Vanity of Human Wishes.”  
Visual text: William Hogarth, *Marriage A-la-Mode*, pp. 2656-63  
Important: Try to follow the story in the pictures; the descriptions were written by  
the editors of *Norton*, not by Hogarth; they will help you understand what  
is happening, but they do not pretend to any literary merit.  
Review for exam.  
**Party -- if you can, please bring a small contribution of food or drink**