

ENGL2170: Introduction to British Literature and Culture I

Eric Weiskott

Teaching Assistant: Margaret Summerfield

Fall 2017, M/W/F 12:00-12:50

Office hours: M 2:00-3:00 (Stokes S407)

The British Isles were home to an exceptionally vibrant early literary tradition spanning English, French, Irish, Latin, and other languages. British writing connected rulers and rebels, merchants and monks, brewers and bureaucrats. This course is a survey of British literature from the beginnings to 1700. Most texts are in English; some are read in translation. The course focuses on connections between literature, power, and the formation of literary canons. The survey covers all major genres of early British literature. Texts and authors include *Beowulf*, Marie de France, Chaucer, Margery Kempe, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Behn.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the BC Bookstore)

The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: Concise Edition, Volume A (3rd ed.) (Broadview, 2017)

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Peter Holland (Penguin, 1999)

Note: All page numbers in parentheses refer to the *Broadview Anthology*.

SCHEDULE

Literature before literature

Aug 28 Introduction to early British literature
“Riddle 47” (79; solution 80)

Bards and beer halls

Aug 30 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 4 (from “In Hild’s monastery was a certain brother. . .”) (53-5)
“Cædmon’s Hymn in Old and Modern English” (55)
“The First Satire” (59)
Sept 1 “Ornamental belt buckle” (between 46 and 47)
“The Wanderer” (66-8)
Skallagrímsson, *Höfuðlausn*
Sept 6 *Beowulf*, ll. 1-370 (85-90)
*Discussion post 1 due on Canvas

Monks and scholars

Sept 8 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1 and 2 (42-6)
Sept 11 “CHI-RHO page from the Lindisfarne Gospels” (between 46 and 47)
“Nave, Durham Cathedral” (between 46 and 47)
“[Messe ocus Pangur Bán]” (60)
“[Is acher in gáith innocht]” (62)
Sept 13 “Riddle 26” (78-9; solution 80)
“Riddle 43” (79; solution 80)
“Riddle 44” (79; solutions 80)

“Riddle 45” (79; solutions 80)
*Discussion post 2 due on Canvas

Clerics and kings, history and magic

- Sept 15 “Map of Britain” (between 46 and 47)
Geoffrey of Monmouth, *A History of the Kings of Britain*, books 1, 9, and 12
(134-36; 147-50; 154-55)
- Sept 18 *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, branch 1 (158-69)

Ladies, monsters, and courtly love

- Sept 20 “Sir Geoffrey Luttrell taking leave of his wife and daughter” (between 46 and 47)
Marie de France, *Bisclavret* (180-87)
*Discussion post 3 due on Canvas
- Sept 22 “Betwene Mersh and Averil” (205-206)
“I lovede a child of this cuntree” (207)
Isabel, Countess of Argyll, “There’s a Young Man in Pursuit of Me” (640)
Pronunciation (mediakron.bc.edu/alliterativepoetry/pronunciation)
- Sept 25 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ll. 1-490 (226-39)

Rebels, truthseekers, and the status quo

- Sept 27 Langland, *Piers Plowman*, Prologue
- Sept 29 “Statute of Laborers (1351)” (219-20)
Froissart, *Chronicles* (221)
Ball, “Letter to the Common People of Essex, 1381” (222)
Langland, *Piers Plowman*, passūs 1, 5, and 7 (436-38)

London lawyers and bureaucrats

- Oct 2 Gower, *Cinkante Balades*, 28, 33, and 51
- Oct 4 Chaucer, *The General Prologue*, ll. 1-34 (300)
Chaucer, *The Pardoner’s Prologue*, ll. 41-174 (353-55)
Watch Agbabi perform “Prologue (Grime Mix)” from *Telling Tales*
(youtube.com/watch?v=-U-ozgjZfjQ)
Chaucer’s Life (mediakron.bc.edu/mappingchaucer/chaucers-life)
- Oct 6 “Opening page of the Prologue to *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*” (between 46 and 47)
Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, ll. 1-828 (331-44)
Watch Agbabi perform “What Do Women Like Bes’?” from *Telling Tales*
(youtube.com/watch?v=8LptEFGhR7A)
- Oct 11 Chaucer, *The Prioress’s Prologue and Tale*, ll. 19-256 (366-70)
Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ll. 1-112
(d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/blyth-hoccleve-regiment-of-princes)
Butterfield, “Chaucer’s French Inheritance” (excerpt)

Visionaries and prisoners

- Oct 13 Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (405-21)
“Prophecia Merlini doctoris perfecti”

- Oct 16 “Detail from an illuminated page from a manuscript of the poems of Charles, Duke of Orléans” (between 46 and 47)
 Malory, *Morte Darthur*, book 1 (490-96)
 Cent, “The Illusion of the World” (665-66)
 Charles d’Orléans, “Ballade 8”
- Oct 18 Midterm exam (in class)
- Oct 20 “Artist unknown, *Henry VIII at the Opening of Parliament*” (between 574 and 575)
 Wyatt, “Songs,” 123 (614)
 Surrey, “So Cruel Prison How Could Betide” (621-22)

The English royal court

- Oct 23 “Artist unknown, *Queen Elizabeth I*” (between 574 and 575)
 Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ll. 1-495 (670-78)
 Spenser, “Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh on *The Faerie Queene*” (718-21)
- Oct 25 CLASS CANCELED
- Oct 27 Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, sonnets 18 and 41 (731; 734)
 Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy* (to “. . .the speaking picture of poesy.”) (740-43)
- Oct 30 “?Robert Peake, *Elizabeth I in Procession*” (between 574 and 575)
 Elizabeth I, “On Monsieur’s Departure” (761)
 Elizabeth I, “Speech to the House of Commons, 28 January 1563” (764-66)
- Nov 1 Lanyer, “Eve’s Apology in Defense of Women” (806-807)
 Raleigh, *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana*, part 5 (816-21)
 *Social mapping paper due (1-3 pp.)
- Nov 3 Bacon, “Of Truth” (825-26)
 Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” (845)
 Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, 20 (887-88)
- Nov 6 Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 1
- Nov 8 *Tempest*, acts 2-3
- Nov 10 *Tempest*, acts 4-5
- Nov 13 Jonson, “On Something that Walks Somewhere” (902)
 Mary Sidney Herbert, “O”
 (poetryfoundation.org/poems/55249/o-56d2369e67a1d)

Lovers and believers

- Nov 15 “Anonymous, John Donne” (between 574 and 575)
 Donne, “The Relic” (923-24)
 Donne, *Elegies*, 19 (925-26)
 Keating, “Bear with Thee, O Letter, My Blessing” (649)
 *Agbabi, Lowell lecture, 7:00pm, Gasson 100
 *Discussion post 4: brief reaction to Agbabi lecture
- Nov 17 “Marcus Gheerarts the Younger, portrait of Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester, and her children” (between 574 and 575)
 Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, sonnet 77 (945-46)

- Herrick, "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" (959)
George Herbert, "The Collar" (971)
Nov 20 Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" (979-80)
Philips, "A Married State" (988-89)

Dissenters, Puritans, and a rake

- Nov 27 Milton, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" (995-1000)
*Final paper skeleton due (1 p.)
Nov 29 Milton, *Areopagitica* (1006-14)
O'Donoghue, "This caps all their tricks, this statute from overseas" (652)
Dec 1 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 1 (1017-30)
Dec 4 Cavendish, "Of Many Worlds in this World" (1150)
Dryden, "Mac Flecknoe" (1183-86)
Behn, *Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave* (to ". . .all imaginable respect and obedience.") (1235-53)
Dec 6 Pepys, *The Diary*, May 1660 21-3 (1201-1204)
Oroonoko (1254-69)
Dec 8 Wilmot, "A Satire on Charles II" (1324-25)
Wilmot, "Impromptu on Charles II" (1333)
Review session
*Final paper due (5-7 pp.)
Dec 15 Final exam (12:30pm)

GRADING

- Discussion posts 15%
Midterm and final exams 20% each (40% total)
Paper, 5-7 pp. 20%
Participation (including attending the Lowell lecture) 10%
Social mapping paper, 1-3 pp. 15%

OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the semester, you will encounter early literature from the British Isles in its linguistic, social, and cultural diversity. You will learn to recognize the conventions of the major genres of British writing before 1700. Special emphasis will be given to the relationship between writing and social institutions such as families, professions, and royal courts. This course will help you develop skills of literary criticism and written exposition.

ASSIGNMENTS

The Discussion posts should reflect your initial reactions to the course material. They can, but need not, articulate an argument about the material. Discussion post 4 is a brief reaction to the designated Lowell lecture (Agbabi). For the social mapping paper, you will use the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (oxforddnb.com) to conduct research on one author from our syllabus, or another relevant historical figure, and then compose a short essay connecting the person's life and social context to one of our course readings up to that point, or to another text by an author included in the course. The final paper stages an extended argument about one or more course texts and makes reference to prior scholarship.

EXAMS

The midterm exam will consist of forty multiple-choice questions about our course readings and key critical concepts from our discussions up to that point. The final exam will consist of sixty multiple-choice questions about our course readings and critical concepts from our discussions since the midterm, followed by four short-answer passage identifications drawn from course readings.

PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend each class having completed the assigned reading. Students should come to class prepared to actively discuss the language and rhetoric of the assigned texts. This is a discussion-based class, and you typically will not need laptops or smart phones.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Boston College places great value on academic integrity (bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html). I have a zero tolerance policy for intentional plagiarism. All quotations or paraphrases of sources must be cited parenthetically or in a footnote (examples: libguides.bc.edu/c.php?g=44446&p=281300).

ACCESSIBILITY

If you are a student with a disability seeking accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities.