

English 301: English Literature I – Origins through Early Modern

Instructor: Esther Bernstein

Spring 2017

Office: Carman 393

Section 01W, Code 58054

Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-1:30

T/Th 11-12:15

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Carman 323

Course Description

Catalog: 3 hours, 3 credits. English literature to 1660, emphasizing major writers in poetry, drama, and prose.

English 301 is a survey of English literature from the Anglo-Saxon to the Early Modern period, with the emphasis on the more widely recognized writers and texts. It is therefore a chronological and selective survey of writers and texts from three general periods in English literary history: Old English (c. 800-1100); Middle English (c. 1100-1485); and Early Modern (c. 1500-1660).

Our general goal for the course is to be familiar with the major authors and texts, as well as the cultural and historical contexts, of approximately 1000 years' worth of English literature. We will work toward this goal by reading significant texts from each period, analyzing their content, and discussing their potential meanings, in the context of both their historical culture and our own period.

We will identify and interpret significant thematic emphases of individual works and authors, and we will look for significant continuities and crucial divergences. Some of these themes will be the place and role of women in society; the conventions of love, both spiritual and physical; the nature and exercise of power; and the relationship of the individual to society.

In addition to concerns of a historical context, we will approach the texts with more general questions. Some questions we might consider: Why do we read? What happens when we read? What do we pay attention to or ignore as we read? How and why do our readings change? Why do authors write? What strategies do authors use to position their texts or to engage readers in a particular manner?

Course Objectives

- to read older literature with an eye and ear for its strangeness and view of its importance in shaping the modern literary world
- to develop an awareness of a variety of literary genres, structures, values, and purposes
- to write about literary texts with imagination, precision, and detail
- to place literary texts within their aesthetic, political, religious, and historical contexts

Course Goals

- demonstrate the ability to compose well-constructed and rhetorically effective writing in various modes and media, including formal essays, creative think-pieces, and use of social media
- refine use of critical methods and approaches to literature in written work
- demonstrate effective pre-writing techniques, including active reading, locating and evaluating secondary sources, and using both physical and digital resources
- effectively integrate primary and secondary sources in written work
- demonstrate mastery in use of English language conventions and MLA formatting

Required Text(s)

The *Norton Anthology of English Literature* comes in multiple formats. Volume 1 is 3192 pages and includes The Middle Ages, The Renaissance, and The Restoration and Eighteenth Century. **If you buy this mammoth, do not buy Volumes A&B as well.** Volume A is a slimmer volume containing only The Middle Ages, and Volume B contains The Renaissance. Buy EITHER Volume 1 on its own, OR Volumes A & B. **Make sure to get the correct edition.**

The Norton Anthology of English Literature 9th edition Volume A: The Middle Ages ISBN: 978-0-393-91249-4 (\$52.50)

The Norton Anthology of English Literature 9th edition Volume B: The Renaissance ISBN: 978-0-393-91250-0 (\$52.50)

OR *The Norton Anthology of English Literature 9th edition Volume 1* ISBN: 978-0-393-91247-0 (\$76.25)

Course Requirements

1. **Regular attendance and participation.** Regular attendance is essential. Come to class, bring the scheduled texts with you, and be prepared to share your thoughts about them. Stay on track with the reading schedule, read carefully and attentively, and **take notes as you read.** Be ready to contribute to the class discussion.
2. **Blog posts.** On days indicated in the schedule, you will post assignments to the class blog. Some of these are stand-alone assignments, and some are preparation for writing your essays.
3. **Three formal essays.** Papers are due via Blackboard on the dates indicated in the schedule. Detailed assignment sheets for each essay are provided at the end of this document.

*****In all areas and all requirements: if you see that you will have difficulty completing an assignment as described or by the due date, approach me as soon as you become aware of the problem. It is far easier to work out alternative solutions in advance of the deadline than to try to patch up missed deadlines, etc.*****

If you require accommodation, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please also visit the Office of Disabilities Services in Shuster Hall, Room 238, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Assessment

15%	Essay 1
25%	Essay 2
20%	Essay 3
25%	Blog posts
15%	Participation

RESOURCES:

The Academic Center for Excellence

ACE provides appointment-based and drop-in tutoring in the humanities, social sciences, and writing, as well as general writing skills. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.lehman.edu/issp> or call 718-960-8175. Please make use of this valuable service early and often throughout the semester. Tutoring sessions will supplement and enhance everything you gain from this class.

Office of Disabilities Services

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula for all students. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of

Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at Shuster Hall, Room 238, email disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu, or call 718-960-8441.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism (intellectual theft) has serious academic consequences, including potential failure of the course, suspension, or expulsion. Remember to cite or acknowledge the help you received in formulating your ideas. This help includes but is not limited to magazine or journal articles, other textbooks, reference books, introductions to texts, web pages, friends, and classmates. Remember to cite quoted material as well. If you have any questions about plagiarism, CUNY's policy on academic integrity is clear and available for you to read: <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>. The statement in the Lehman College student handbook is available at <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/student-affairs/documents/student-handbook-02.pdf>.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS: (Please note that this schedule is subject to change.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading Due</u>	<u>Writing Due</u>
Tues, Jan 31	Introduction; set up blog + email	
<u>UNIT 1</u>	<u>Anglo-Saxon Literature</u>	
Thur, Feb 2	***No class meeting. Be sure to complete the assignment*** Lewis, "The Medieval Situation," <i>The Discarded Image</i>	Lewis (B)
Tues, Feb 7	<i>The Wanderer</i> (c. 10 th cent)	Primary text (B)
Thur, Feb 9	<i>The Dream of the Rood</i> (c. 10 th cent) "Caedmon's Hymn" (c. 7 th /8 th cent)	
Tues, Feb 14	<i>Beowulf</i> (c. 8 th -11 th cent) (ll. 1-1250)	Sec source (B)
Thur, Feb 16	<i>Beowulf</i> (complete)	
<u>UNIT 2</u>	<u>Middle English Literature</u>	
Tues, Feb 21	Marie de France, <i>Lanval</i> (late 12 th cent)	Sec source (B)
Thur, Feb 23	Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> "General Prologue" (late 14 th cent)	Hindsight (B)
Tues, Feb 28	Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> "General Prologue"	Essay 1
Thur, Mar 2	Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> "The Wife of Bath's Tale"	
Tues, Mar 7	Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> "The Wife of Bath's Tale"	WoB sequel (B)
Thur, Mar 9	<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i> (late 14 th cent)	Texts / topic
Tues, Mar 14	<i>Gawain and the Green Knight</i>	
Thur, Mar 16	<i>The Second Shepherd's Play</i> (mid-15 th cent)	Bibliography (B)
Tues, Mar 21	<i>The Second Shepherd's Play</i>	
Thur, Mar 23	Performances and Presentations	Draft 1
<u>UNIT 3</u>	<u>Early Modern Literature</u>	

Tues, Mar 28	Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i> , Booke 1, Cantos 1-2	Midterm reflection (B)
Thur, Mar 30	Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i> , Booke 1, Cantos 3-4	
Tues, Apr 4	Peer review	Reverse Outline
Thur, Apr 6	Lanyer, "Eve's Apology in Defense of Women" Isabella Whitney, "Will and Testament"	
Sat, Apr 8	-----	Essay 2
Tues, Apr 11	SPRING RECESS	
Thur, Apr 13	SPRING RECESS	
Tues, Apr 18	SPRING RECESS	
Thur, Apr 20	MONDAY SCHEDULE	
Tues, Apr 25	Sonnets of Shakespeare (18, 20, 130)	
Thur, Apr 27	Donne, "The Flea," "Death, be not proud," "Batter my heart"	Sonnet (B)
Tues, May 2	<i>Twelfth Night</i> Acts 1-3	
Thur, May 4	<i>Twelfth Night</i> Acts 4-5	
Tues, May 9	Early Modern witchcraft (TBA)	Draft 1
Thur, May 11	***No class.***	
Tues, May 16	More, <i>Utopia</i> Book II (pages TBA)	
Thur, May 18	More, <i>Utopia</i> Book II (pages TBA)	Utopia (B)

THURSDAY, May 25: Essay 3 due

SCHEDULE OF BLOG POST ASSIGNMENTS:

<u>Due by:</u>	<u>Text:</u>	<u>Prompt:</u>
Thur, Feb 2	Lewis, "The Medieval Situation"	summary + response
Tues, Feb 7	none	primary text
Tues, Feb 14	none	secondary source
Tues, Feb 21	none	secondary source
Thur, Feb 23	Marie de France, <i>Lanval</i>	"hindsight" on modern romance
Tues, Mar 7	The Wife of Bath's Tale	sequel – the first year of marriage
Thur, Mar 16	none	bibliography
Tues, Mar 28	none	midterm reflection
Thur, Apr 27	Shakespeare's sonnets	sonnet
Thur, May 18	More's <i>Utopia</i>	modern utopian vision

HOW TO PROPERLY POST TO THE BLOG:

1. Log in to WordPress. If you have a personal WordPress blog, make sure you're posting to the **class blog** and not your personal blog.
2. Title: Your **title** should always be formatted as "Name, Date, Unique Title." For example: "Esther Bernstein, 1/31/2017, The Wife of Bath's Silent Moments." Your unique title can be as creative or plain as you'd like.
3. Photo: In order to make it easier for us all to identify who posted what, include your chosen **Featured Image** with each post. Choose one image that will be yours throughout the semester. It can be a photo of you, or of anything else.
4. Proofread: Blogging is less formal than writing an essay, but it still requires **standard language and punctuation**. You're not writing a text message or posting to Twitter. Spell out all words fully, use spellcheck, pay attention to grammar and punctuation. You will not be graded on your spelling and grammar, but if your post looks like a last-minute dashed-off text message, you will not receive credit for that post.

DETAILS ON EACH BLOG POST ASSIGNMENT:

Lewis: Read the chapter on "The Medieval Situation" (PDF on the class blog). Use the reading guide posted to the class blog to help you take notes as you read, and to gather your thoughts once you're done reading. Write in your notebook, or in a Word document, as informally as necessary in order to get your ideas together. Then write a polished blog post **summarizing** Lewis's main points and **responding** to the chapter with your own thoughts and analysis. Your **summary** should be no longer than **500 words**. You will need to really focus and zero in on what you think the main points are in order to stay under that word count. Your **response** may be as long as you want, with a minimum of **250 words**. Post to the blog

Primary text: Our class will create a collection of primary medieval and Early Modern texts which are not on the syllabus. Each student is responsible for finding and reporting on one text, and this collection will then be available for everyone to use. **For this assignment, you need to post in two places:** on the blog, as usual, and in the timeline document. You will get a link for the timeline document via your email. **What you need to do:** 1. Search for a medieval or Early Modern primary text (a poem, play, story, etc). Make sure the one you choose is not already on our syllabus. You can do a Google search or you can use the databases we looked at in class. 2. Write down all the information you can find about it. What year was it written? (Exact or

approximate date.) Who wrote it (if that information is available)? What genre is it (poetry, drama, prose, etc)? How long is it (pages or lines)? What is it about? 3. Enter the information into the timeline via the link provided, and then write a short (**250-word**) post for the blog summarizing this information.

Secondary Source (x2): For each of these assignments, you will find a different secondary source. This is in preparation for your first paper. **What to do:** 1. Choose a primary text that interests you (from our syllabus or from the collection generated by students). 2. Using the databases available through the Lehman library, find an article or chapter that discusses your chosen primary text. 3. Using the reading guidelines posted to the class blog, read and annotate your secondary source. 3. Write a **summary** of the secondary source in no more than **300 words**. (Be as concise as possible, and cut out any details not essential to the main argument.) 4. Do this again for the second assignment, using the **same** primary text but a **different** secondary source. Your first paper will compare these two secondary sources.

Hindsight on modern romance: After we've read and discussed Marie de France's *Lanval* in the context of courtly love and chivalry, you know now that love as portrayed in medieval literature often does not resemble the realities of medieval love. Choose a contemporary genre of literature or film (romance, Young Adult, erotica, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, thriller), and think about how love and romance are portrayed in that genre. Imagine you're a student of literature or film in the year 2500, studying the literature of the 21st century. What conclusions would you draw about love and romance based on the genre you've chosen to analyze? How does this match up with what you (the real you) know about love and romance in contemporary real life? (There's no need to be personal, but you may use personal details.) **250-500 words.**

Wife of Bath's Tale sequel: the first year of marriage: Drawing on our class discussions about the knight, the woman, and their relationship, write a **500-word** story about their first year of marriage. [We'll discuss more details in class after we've talked about the tale itself.]

Midterm reflection: Look back at your post from the first day of class, in which you free-wrote about your perceptions of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Also look at your classmates' posts. Mark any statements that have been confirmed by our study of medieval and Early Modern literature. Mark any that have been disproven. Mark any whose truth you're unsure of. **What to post:** Three lists of five – 1) five statements about the medieval or Early Modern periods that you now know are true, along with the texts we studied or topics we discussed that prove them to be true; 2) five statements about the medieval or Early Modern periods that you now know are untrue, along with the texts we studied or topics we discussed that prove them to be false; 3) five statements about the medieval or Early Modern periods that you're still unsure about. **Optional:** Additional reflection on the statements you now know are either true or false. From which contemporary books, movies, or TV shows did you get the wrong impression? Which were accurate?

Bibliography: You're working on your second essay at this point. You should have identified a primary text (or texts) that you are writing about, and you should have found at least two possible secondary sources you might want to use in your essay. Create a "works cited" page, formatting each entry according to the MLA guidelines, and post your bibliography to the blog.

Sonnet: While we discuss Shakespeare's and Donne's sonnets, you will write one of your own. The only requirement for this creative assignment is that it follow the **proper format** of a sonnet (the meter, rhyme scheme, etc). The choice of topic is up to you.

Modern utopian vision: More's *Utopia* responds to specific problems he identified in society in his historical moment. It envisions a more perfect society and goes into great detail about what that perfect society (utopia) would look like. Use those same principles to write a **500-word** mini-utopian vision of your own. **Steps:** Identify a problem in society. Think about its causes and effects, and any issues or concerns that might be related to it. Then imagine an ideal world where this problem doesn't exist. What does this world look like? What are the people in this world like? What kinds of jobs do they have, what kinds of hobbies do they have? What do their social gatherings look like? What kind of economy does this world run on? What kind of government does this world have? What does the environment look like? Be as wildly idealistic and unrealistic as you want – that's the point of a utopian vision.

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Paper I Assignment

DUE: Tuesday, February 28, as a .doc or .docx via BlackBoard

Requirements:

- 2 full pages
- Double-spaced
- MLA format
- Title
- One primary source
- Two secondary sources

The purpose of this assignment is to get started on thinking about using secondary sources in your own argument about a literary text. The bulk of your analysis in this paper will be about the secondary sources, not the primary text of medieval or Early Modern literature.

You'll start by reading, summarizing, and analyzing one secondary source. You'll post your summary and analysis to the blog on Tuesday, February 14. Then you'll read, summarize, and analyze another secondary source for Tuesday, February 21. The final step will be a comparison of the two secondary sources.

How to compare the secondary sources:

Start by noticing the similarities and differences between the two articles. Do they reach the same conclusion but use different ways to get there? Do they reach different conclusions even though they used the same methods of analysis? Are they just completely different in their analysis and conclusions?

Your two sources may use the same theoretical approach. (If you don't know which theoretical lens your text uses, that's okay. Just summarize the arguments without using theoretical terminology.) Maybe you chose two feminist readings of your primary text, or two postcolonial readings, two queer readings, two Marxist readings, etc. If that's the case, you need to ask yourself: what does each one do differently within this theoretical lens? Two articles about *Harry Potter* may be making feminist arguments, but if one uses Hermione Granger as the main focus and one uses Cho Chang as the main focus – note that. Then think about why that difference matters. (Does the one that uses Cho Chang also consider factors of race and ethnicity? Is it more intersectional in its feminism? How does that affect the different conclusions of each source?)

If your two sources use different approaches (a feminist reading of *Harry Potter* and an exploration of historical witchcraft in *Harry Potter*), think about how those different approaches affect the conclusions each scholar comes to. (Does the one discussing witchcraft stress the historical effect on women? Or does it not touch gender at all? What difference does that make to the argument?)

The work you're being asked to do is an intense reading and analysis, and it may seem daunting at first. But your preliminary work of summarizing each source on the class blog will help you work through these ideas. You'll also gain from reading other students' blog post summaries, so you can see a wide range of critical approaches. We will discuss this in more detail as we work through the assignments.

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Paper II Assignment

DUE: Saturday, April 8, as a .doc or .docx via BlackBoard

Requirements:

- 5 full pages
- Double-spaced
- MLA format
- Title
- One or two primary sources
- One secondary source

In your first paper, you analyzed other scholars' arguments. Now, you'll make your own argument about the text.

Think about the topics we've discussed in class (place and role of women in society; the conventions of love, spiritual or physical; the nature and exercise of power; the relationship of the individual to society, etc).

Choose one that you want to explore further.

Next, choose one or two texts from our syllabus (or from the student-generated collection) that touch on this topic. Using the reading guide on the class blog, re-read the texts and take notes about your topic. Make sure to do the final step of asking yourself what it all adds up to. **Come to your own tentative conclusion before beginning research.**

Then find a secondary source. Your secondary source can discuss your primary text, or it can discuss your topic more generally. For example, if you're writing about the exercise of power in *Beowulf*, you might find an article discussing Beowulf's leadership strategy, or you might find an article discussing Anglo-Saxon power more generally.

Critically read your secondary source, using the reading guide. Does the source confirm your conclusion? Does it add nuance to it? Does it provide an alternative view?

Using your notes from both the primary text and the secondary source, write a thesis: an argument about your primary text. We will workshop your theses in class before you begin to write your drafts.

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Paper III Assignment

DUE: Thursday, May 25, as a .doc or .docx via BlackBoard

Requirements:

- 3 full pages
- Double-spaced
- MLA format
- Title
- One or two primary contemporary sources
- One primary medieval / Early Modern source

For this paper, you will reflect on what you've learned about medieval and Early Modern culture and literature by examining their representation in contemporary culture.

There are many contemporary books, movies, TV shows, songs, plays, etc, that use medieval or Early Modern themes or that evoke medieval or Early Modern settings. Some are more faithful to the medieval or Early Modern, and some are not.

Step 1: Free-write about your perception of medieval and Early Modern culture and literature at the end of the semester. Look back at your blog post from day 1 of this semester, as well as your midterm reflection. How has your perception of the medieval and Early Modern changed? If you had to describe medieval and Early Modern culture and literature to someone now, how would you do that? What are the important features of medieval and Early Modern culture and literature?

Step 2: Choose a contemporary text, movie, or TV show that uses or evokes the medieval. We will generate a list of these in class. You should choose a text that you are familiar with, so that you can quickly get to the analysis stage and not have to read or watch it for the first time just for this paper.

Step 3: Choose a medieval or Early Modern text that you can compare your contemporary text to. Make sure there are enough similarities for comparison. For example, don't use *Beowulf* for comparison to the TV show *The Tudors*. They're from different periods entirely, and therefore not a good comparison.

Step 4: Write an analysis of the contemporary text's portrayal of medieval or Early Modern culture. Use your medieval or Early Modern text to support your claims about the contemporary text's accuracy. We will discuss this technique further in class before you begin to write.

Bonus: This step is not necessary, but if you'd like to try for it, you can. Think about why your contemporary text may diverge from historical accuracy at times. Is it deliberate? Does it affect the plot in any significant ways? Does the text ignore some less desirable aspects of medieval or Early Modern culture in order to paint a better picture? Does it play up those less desirable aspects in order to create more despair or terror? Does it subvert some aspects in order to offer a critique of contemporary society?