

USER'S MANUAL

English 3701-090, Spring 2018

INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY HISTORY, I (ONLINE)



This document is a course description, an overview of requirements and policies and what to expect. Usually such a document fits on a page or two, and we go over it together in the classroom. Now I'm trying to spell everything out (literally), so the document has grown to the length of one of those User's Manuals that come with new gadgets.

Please read this carefully, all the way through, as soon as you can. The writers of User's Manuals *always* say this, and nobody ever does it, but this time you really should. And come back to it during the semester, when you want to be reminded of something you couldn't quite memorize the first time around.

Before we start, I ask that you pause and consider some special features of this online course. It's not the right course for all students! Almost everything will happen online. So you will certainly need basic computer and internet skills, and a reliable, reasonably fast internet connection.

Besides this, you'll need a kind of personal motivation and commitment not required in my regular, classroom 3701. There are obvious advantages to "online." You never have to be any particular place at any particular time; you never have to appear on campus. But there *will* be discussions on Canvas, and you'll be asked to contribute at least once a week. Class participation will be just as important as it is in my classroom class, but silent attendance (which usually earns points) drops out of the equation: the only way to participate is to type words and send them to the discussion. The reading for this course is substantial and sometimes difficult, and it will be up to you to ask for the kind of help you need with it; you can't just show up in the classroom and hope that others will ask the questions you haven't quite formulated.

To emphasize this point, I want to quote my colleague Alf Seegert, describing his own online English 3600. (That course has been a crucial model for me; I gratefully acknowledge Professor Seegert's help.) He says, and I say too: "**Because this course is taught entirely online, responsibility falls entirely to YOU to make sure you keep caught up. This is a course for people with strong self-direction and serious self-motivation. I will definitely be 'present' to provide lessons and feedback on your work, but ultimately YOU will be the one who needs to make sure you stay caught up with the reading and writing assignments, as well as engaged with the online discussions. If any of this is a problem for you, save yourself some hassle and drop the course right now—I don't want any of you to be miserable.**"

If, after all that, you're still in the class, read on.



Instructor: Tom Stillinger tomstillinger@gmail.com

You can contact me by email or through the Canvas message system. *If you email me, always include “English 3701” in the subject header.* I try to respond to individual communications within a day or two; if you don’t hear from me within 48 hours, feel free to resend the message.

You can also meet with me in the three-dimensional world. My office is 3421 LNCO. I’ll announce regular office hours, and I can make appointments for many other times in the week. Indeed, I would like to meet as many of you as possible during the semester. The picture at left shows me in my office, scrolling through a text and wishing students would come visit.

Description: This course will introduce you to some of the most important English literary texts produced over a thousand years, from the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* to Alexander Pope’s mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock*. Our first responsibility will be to understand these works on their own terms—bearing in mind that there may be many sorts of “terms” appropriate to these widely varied texts. Much of our time in class will be spent on close reading. At the same time, we will try to see what patterns these texts fall into. What’s the logic of parceling centuries into capitalized periods (the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Eighteenth Century)? How do literary genres inflect the meaning of individual texts? How do genres, which are supposed to be timeless, change? We will try to arrive at a larger sense of the cultural forces, from social structures to literary conventions, that shaped these texts. We will get at these contexts both inductively, through our close readings, and also by means of the introductions to historical periods and individual authors in the *Norton Anthology*: it is important that you always read these, in addition to the assignments in your reading schedule. Finally, we will be thinking about the issues raised by the very idea of a survey course: what is literary history? How do texts speak to each other across centuries? How do anthologies get written, and how should we read them?

Text: Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, The Major Authors*, 9th ed., vol. 1

The Campus Store has copies, and you can find it elsewhere. If you already have the Ninth Edition of the *NAEL*, the regular edition (not “Major Authors”), you have everything in the assigned text except *Othello*, and much, much more. (And you can read *Othello* in any good annotated edition.) If you have something else and want to make it work, discuss it with me.

Requirements:

—*Reading.* A mountain of reading. Or a mountain-bike-ride of reading. I hope it will be fun for you, but in any case there’s a lot of it. The most important reading is the primary texts in the *NAEL*, but you will also be reading a great deal of secondary material in the *NAEL*, and many pages of lectures composed by ahem yours truly.

There are (I am told) some online classes somewhere where you can do a semester’s worth of work entirely on your own schedule—all of it in the last week, if you like. This isn’t one of those. You will need to keep up with the class reading schedule. Of course you can get *ahead* in the reading, but if you fall *behind* in the reading you’ll have a hard time finishing the course.

—*Discussion*. Frequent, industrious, engaged participation in online discussions. Twice a week you'll be expected to pipe up, online, with questions or suggestions or responses. I'll set particular topics, and also encourage free-ranging conversation. I will be as clear about my expectations as I possibly can be.

—*Quizzes*. About once a week, you'll take a quiz on Canvas. These are timed multiple-choice questions: typically you'll have eight minutes to answer six questions. The questions are designed to be hilariously easy if you've done the reading with any kind of attention—but difficult enough that if you *haven't* done the reading you won't have an easy guess and you won't be able to google the answer in time. The goal is to reward students for doing this substantial reading week by week. Typically, I'll post a quiz and give you five days or a week to choose your eight minutes of testing.

—*Four short formal papers*. They will start at one page and eventually reach two or even three pages. These will be regular college English papers, with capital letters and punctuation and everything. But they'll be short. For many students, especially advanced English majors, a short paper is harder to write than a long paper; I understand. That's part of my reason for assigning them. *If you miss a deadline for a paper, hand it in late. I do accept late papers; I do not give passing grades to students who have failed to write one or more assigned papers.*

—*Big final quiz*. At the end of the semester there will be one more Canvas quiz—a long one, with questions ranging over the entire course. There will be a multi-day window for taking this exam, and we will discuss it as much as you like before it happens. There will be no final exam scheduled during finals week.

Time and space:

We don't have a physical classroom or a fixed time for meeting—but, in effect, we'll have two sessions a week. The sessions begin at 1 pm **Monday** and 1 pm **Thursday**. That's when I'll post a lecture, a discussion prompt, a set of questions, and/or a paper assignment. The window for discussion opens then, and I'll ask that you contribute by 10 am of the next session day (that is, by ten on Thursday, for a discussion that opened on Monday, or by ten on Monday for a discussion that opened Thursday). Important note! We'll have two sessions even when there's a Monday holiday. I'll still post on Monday, and encourage you to take Monday off and get back to 3701 on Tuesday.

Paper deadlines will vary, and I will always give you a week's lead time with a paper assignment.

In general, I'd like you to do the primary-text reading before you start in on lectures and discussions. In a classroom class, this wouldn't need saying: you're expected to read on your own and come to class prepared to hear and talk about what you've read. Same thing here, virtually. It's up to you, obviously, how you manage your time, but it's important that you keep up with the reading assignments and devote some very serious time to the discussion and lectures. A helpful guide (perhaps): in a regular class, you'd be spending 160 minutes per week in the classroom, plus the time you spend reading and writing on your own. Expect to spend that much time on this course.

As for our *space*: that's Canvas. Almost everything will happen there: lectures, discussions, communications about papers and exams and everything. Like many teachers, I have some reservations about Canvas, but we couldn't do this course without it. The course site will launch by 1 pm on the first day of the semester. You can access Canvas at <http://go.utah.edu>. You should check in frequently for updates—at the minimum, on Monday and Thursday afternoons to pick up new material from me.

Grading:

Roughly speaking, your course grade will be based on this plan:

formal papers: 33%
reading checks, midterm, and final exam: 33%
participation in online discussion: 33%
clever Canvas avatar: 1%

Some course policies:

Mutual respect. Spirited discussion is encouraged, and outright disagreements can be illuminating. But disruption and disrespect are a different story. Please keep discussions on-topic and be courteous to me and to your classmates. Other online discussions you have seen may not be good models for what we're doing here. (No trolling!)

Accommodations and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact the instructor of this course at the beginning of the semester to discuss any such accommodations for this course.

Plagiarism. The University's plagiarism policy will be strictly enforced. According to the Student Code, plagiarism is defined as "the unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit..." Disciplinary action for plagiarizing papers or exams ranges from a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, to suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any doubt about whether or not you need to acknowledge a secondary source, *do so*. (If you're not sure about the proper form, attach a note.) Note: The internet has made plagiarism more tempting for students, but also much easier for professors to detect.

Reading schedule:

This is a rough schedule; I will give you specific reading assignments as we go, and I may tinker with some of the dates. But we will stick to this list of works, in this order.

Week 1 (1/8): Introductions; "Caedmon's Hymn"; begin *Beowulf*

Week 2 (1/15): *Beowulf*

Week 3 (1/22): *Beowulf*; start *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Week 4 (1/29): *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, start Chaucer

Week 5 (2/5): Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue; Miller's Tale

Week 6 (2/12): Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

Week 7 (2/19): Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*

Week 8 (2/26): lyric poems, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance

Week 9 (3/5): Shakespeare, *Othello*

Week 10 (3/12): Milton, *Paradise Lost* (abridged)

SPRING BREAK!

Week 11 (3/26): *Paradise Lost* continued

Week 12 (4/2): ditto

Week 13 (4/9): Pepys and Swift (excerpts); Behn, *Oroonoko*

Week 14 (4/16): *Oroonoko*; Pope, *Rape of the Lock*

Week 15 (4/23, only one session as classes end 4/24): Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" and "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat"; Smart, "My Cat Geoffrey"

