

University of Utah  
ENGL 2701-001  
TuTh 2.00pm – 3.20pm, [HPR N 242](#)  
Spring 2023

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## Introduction to British Literary History I: Medieval to 18<sup>th</sup> Century (via the Renaissance)



[Access Course Syllabus Here](#)

### Course Description

Blossoming much earlier than neighbouring vernacular (non-Latin) literatures, English developed from its provincial beginnings on a small island at the edge of Europe, to its current position as a global language spoken and written on every continent on our planet in little over a thousand years. On this course we will follow English literature for most of that millennium-long journey, as far as the beginnings of its global pre-eminence (in the eighteenth century). Along the way we will sample different genres of literature popular in their historical periods, including epic, romance, lyric, the sonnet, tragedy, comedy and prose fiction (or the beginnings of the novel). Our journey starts in the early Middle Ages (the ‘Dark Ages’), in the late tenth century (although with a poem that is already looking back to the fifth century) and ends almost eight hundred years later. We will survey some of the ‘greatest hits’ of early British literature, and among the names you may have heard of are included *Beowulf*, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. We’ll also be reading work by some of the groundbreaking women authors of early British literature, and addressing issues such as identity and race, where they arise.

Until we get to Chaucer, all the texts you will read are in Modern English translations (earlier medieval English is hard to read without explicit language study), and from Chaucer onwards you will be reading later medieval and early modern texts in the original language (albeit with helpful glosses). In this way you will acquire a sense of the historical development of the English language, as well as its literature. Although there is a reasonably large amount of compulsory primary reading set on this course (you should think of it as a reading course), you will not be required to read any secondary literature (scholarship and criticism written about these works), although I can recommend such reading if you request. Expect to encounter dragons, elves, green giants, swooning lovers, adulterers, thieves, angels and seafarers. Inevitably any selection on a survey such as this is partial and incomplete, and I confess that I have chosen some texts because I love reading them. I hope you will too.

### **Set Text**

– *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, Volumes A, B and C ('Package 1').  
Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2018.  
ISBN-13: 978-0-393-60312-5

Please note: you must make sure you obtain the 10<sup>th</sup> edition. Earlier editions do not have all the texts we require for our course. The Campus bookstore should stock copies of this package. Norton are selling it currently for c. \$90 <https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393603125>. You may be able to find it cheaper from other online retailers. (If you do, check before you purchase that you have the 10<sup>th</sup> edition, not the 9<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>, which are still widely available, and that you have all three required volumes of 'Package 1': A = The Middle Ages; B = The Sixteenth Century and the Early Seventeenth Century; C = The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century. We need all three.) There are no other books necessary for purchase for this course.