

**Carleton University  
Fall-Winter 2013-2014  
Department of English**

**ENGL 2300D  
Major Authors from Chaucer to Milton  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:30**

**Instructor: D.A. Beecher**  
**E-mail: [donald\\_beecher@carleton.ca](mailto:donald_beecher@carleton.ca) (emergencies only)**  
**Office: 1908 Dunton Tower**  
**Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30**

**Course Requirements:** The orientation of this course is not only historical and thematic but critical. It is intended to serve as a thorough introduction to the chosen authors and their texts, and as an introduction to basic methodologies of textual criticism and critical terminology. The lectures will thus contain factual and theoretical information, thereby providing a variety of paradigms for the study of literature (not to mention numerous excursions important to me and to most students into matters cultural, contextual, and evaluative). Success in the course will ultimately depend upon the student's ability to work with critical ideas in the short papers and exam questions. Historically, the readings cover a period from 1385 to 1673, hence from the late medieval to the end of the Renaissance. This was a dynamic period socially and politically that witnessed the reformation of the church, the discovery of the new world, major scientific revolutions, and the formation of the modern nation states constituting western Europe, with an emerging sense of national identities and concerns. It was also the period of the new learning and its effects upon pedagogy, mores and ethics, and social life, the family, expressions of love, marriage, and divorce. The literature of these periods reflects many of these issues and anxieties. At the same time, the course should extend the critical acumen of students, adding new terms and concepts to their critical vocabularies, and provide opportunities for honing and perfecting their critical writing. All of these matters are related to **objectives** of the course which may be summarized as follows:

- To acquaint the student with representative works from the best writers of the period.
- To gain a sense of the chronological unfolding of early English literary styles.
- To achieve some insight into the historical and cultural developments of early modern England.
- To develop a sense of the themes and universal ideas of literature and to compare early themes with issues of our own day.
- To look at specific issues concerning protagonists, heroism, narrative and story telling, epic, comic and tragic forms, modes of allegory, symbolism, lyric styles, matters of love and friendship, satire, the destiny of the soul, questing and return, and many more related issues.
- To extend the vocabulary of literary terms and critical concepts, and especially those

which will be named and discussed in class.

To acquire and improve writing skills relating to literature, argumentation, research techniques, and the conventions relating to the presentation of scholarly writing in general.

**The texts are:** Shakespeare's *Sonnets*; Spenser's *Fairie Queene*; Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*; Jonson's *The Alchemist*; Milton's *Paradise Lost*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, North's *The Moral Philosophy of Doni*, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. These have been ordered through the University Bookstore in the Student Union.

**Course work:** A 10-page (maximum) term paper will be required for each term; the first term paper is due on the last day of class in the fall, the second is due on the last day of class in the spring. Each will count for 25% of the final grade. At the end of the year there will be a scheduled 3 hour exam covering all nine authors. The exam will consist of nine short essay questions, suggesting that you devote approximately 20 minutes of exam time to each. The exam counts for 40% of the final grade. That leaves 10% for attendance and participation, and for being mentally as well as physically present during the lectures and discussions. I am appalled to find myself bowing to this now widely adopted instrument (taking attendance and computing contributions) as a means to encouraging students to function well in these courses and to clarify class expectations. What is happening to the university, its culture, and community of mature enquiry? And have our communications tools become so obsessively obstructive as to merit naming and being disallowed? It seems, too, that my pedagogical responsibility includes punitive measures for late-submitted essays, at the rate of a 3% deduction per diem from the final grade. I am dismayed to be caving to such pre-adult measures, but now it is said. It is fair to remind students, however, that all term work must be submitted before a final grade can be assigned as per the university regulations.

**Early Feedback:** An optional 2-3 page essay on one of the first two authors studied in the course is due on Oct. 14, and will be returned with a graded evaluation, which, nevertheless, will not be recorded. Therefore, this paper is not obligatory. The paper should propose a specific point that is debated in the usual manner of literary-critical discourse. It is an opportunity to explore a methodical approach to a literary problem in miniature, in a format short enough to allow you to reconsider your design and argument, and to polish your critical prose. This will give me an idea of your critical skills, and give you an idea of my expectations in a core course at the second-year university level. The thesis is open—I cannot tell you how to think on your own about literature—but there are many critical themes and approaches upon which it may be based from allegory to narrative, including approaches to character, symbolism, myth, medieval or Renaissance social issues, literary genres, and much more.

Class time will be divided among several approaches: historical background, literary contexts, contemporary authors, themes, genres, textual analysis, and the many ways in which such works can be read according to modes of critical thinking. These theoretical discussions may be wide ranging, speculative, and philosophical. The goal of the course involves both literary history and critical approaches, with an emphasis on literary ideas.

Ideally, the lectures will provide paradigms of criticism that you can adapt to your own writing about literature. In particular, I will be concentrating on select critical terms germane to the study of literature, and for that reason would encourage you to include a good glossary of literary terms in your personal library.

The schedule of readings is as follows:

Sept.	5	Introductory lecture
Sept	10	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Sept.	12	Sir Gawain
Sept.	17	Sir Gawain
Sept.	19	Sir Gawain
Sept.	24	Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, General Prologue
Sept.	26	Chaucer, The Miller's Tale
Oct.	1	The Reeve's Tale
Oct.	3	Wife of Bath's Prologue
Oct.	8	Wife of Bath's Tale
Oct.	10	The Franklin's Tale
Oct.	15	The Nun's Priest's Tale
Oct.	17	The Pardoner's Tale
Oct.	22	A Maguerite of America
Oct.	24	A Marguerite of America
Oct.	29	No class
Oct.	31	No class
Nov.	5	The Faerie Queene, An Introduction
Nov.	7	F.Q. Bk. III, 1-2
Nov.	12	F.Q. Bk. III, 3-5
Nov.	14	F.Q. Bk. III, 6-8
Nov.	19	F.Q. Bk. III, 9-10
Nov.	26	F.Q. Bk. III, 11-12
Nov.	28	Epithalamion
Dec.	3	Sonnets (Selected)
Dec.	5	Review

Jan.	7	Marlowe, Dr. Faustus
Jan.	9	Marlowe, Dr. Faustus
Jan.	14	Marlowe, Dr. Faustus
Jan.	16	Marlowe, Dr. Faustus
Jan.	21	Shakespeare, Sonnets
Jan.	23	Shakespeare, Sonnets
Jan.	28	Shakespeare, Sonnets
Jan.	30	Shakespeare, Sonnets
Feb.	4	Jonson, Alchemist
Feb.	6	Jonson, Alchemist
Feb.	11	Jonson, Alchemist
Feb.	13	Jonson, Alchemist

Feb.	18-22	No classes
Feb.	25	Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Bk. I
Feb.	27	P. L. Bk. II
Mar.	4	P. L. Bk. III
Mar.	6	P. L. Bk. IV
Mar.	11	P. L. Bk. V-VI
Mar.	13	P. L. Bk. VII-VIII
Mar.	18	P. L. Bk. IX
Mar.	20	P. L. Bk. X
Mar.	25	P. L. Bk. XI-XII
Mar.	27	John Donne, Poems, The Bait, A Valediction Forbidding Mourning, The Good Morrow, Song, The Sun Rising, The Canonization
April	1	John Donne, Poems, Air and Angels, The Anniversary, A Valediction of My Name, Twickenham Garden, Love's Alchemy, the Flea, The Curse, The Ecstasy, The Relic
April	3	John Donne, Poems, Holy Sonnet 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 18. Good Friday Riding Westward
April	8	Donne, Satire 3, Elegy 6, Elegy 8, "To his Mistress Going to Bed."

**Regulations:** For all the official university regulations, deadlines, and statements on plagiarism, see the University Calendar.

**Writing-Attentive Course:** English 2300 has been designated "writing-attentive," which means that writing skills are part of the course's goals and part of its pedagogical design, including the writing on final exams—which is arguably a form of writing all its own. The two term papers are the heart of the course and represent a precious opportunity for students to gain real writing experience. To miss this learning opportunity by borrowing from the writing of others is pure folly. Skilled writing is a part of a successful career for most. Ideally, these creations should be under consideration well before the end of term, and they should be vehicles for all the critical and analytic insight you can bring to bear on a literary problem. They should be written in a considered, clear, logically coherent and idiomatic style, and should seek to avoid the many pitfalls associated with effective communication in English. Typically, such papers will have clear thematic direction, a well-marked unfolding of an argument, and they will employ a critical vocabulary requisite to the forceful presentation of ideas. They should be instruments in literary problem solving, make use of secondary sources in an integrated way, and employ standard practices in documentation. Most if not all of these skills should now be in place for students of literature at the university level, but some generic and strategic matters may come up for reconsideration. Nevertheless, this cannot be a remedial course in writing and still move through the literature; hence students will be responsible, largely, for responding to the critiques pertaining to their own work and for addressing the shortcomings of their own styles. There are many guides and manuals to scholarly writing and documentation, including the famous MLA style guide, and there is help for those in real trouble through the Writing Tutorial Services.

**Plagiarism:** I am obliged to remind you that all written work for this course must be your own, and that where you borrow or adapt the ideas of others, you must cite them and their sources responsibly and reliably. Academic integrity and intellectual property are among the most important mentalities and concepts to be taken away from the university experience, simply as a part of your professional training. In a more legalistic sense, the university takes unqualified plagiarism quite seriously and imposes punitive measures. Similar principles apply to cheating during exams in all the ways known to and discussed among students. All these matters are regulated by Carleton's new student academic conduct policy. If you are in doubt about what constitutes the work of others and what constitutes your own work, you may consult, but the distinction seems rather patent in most cases. It does, in academic practice, include papers written for you by others, even if they are original to the "guest" author, and papers written by yourself, but already submitted to other courses.

**Deadlines:** I've given up negotiating deadlines in order to be fair to all. Bona fide documentation, of course, is something else and will win for you all the accommodations and elasticities proffered by the official system. See the Academic Calendar, Regulation 2.6. Term Papers are due on the last day of class of each term.

**Exams:** If you miss the final exam, that too falls outside my jurisdiction; for that you have to make the appropriate arrangements with the Registrar—again check the Calendar. You must be in good standing in the course in order to apply.

**Research:** About Web and Net research essays: articles posted there are extremely uneven and very often lack the authority or the vetting of published material. I prefer you avoid them altogether unless you are really confident about separating the useful from the vacuous. In any case, surfers beware of third-rate materials! I can't use this material in my own writing—it is often derivative without acknowledgment—and hence I can hardly recommend its use. Vetted scholarly journals on line are, of course, quite another thing and may be cited in the normal way.

**Term papers:** I prefer well-researched term papers, those that have been built in dialogue with other scholarly voices. This is not to say that the paper should be a work-a-day gathering of opinions neatly linked; that formula, though much taught, is deadly. The topic and the direction should be your own, debating your own informed views in dialogic fashion with others; that is something else altogether. Above all, for a paper to succeed, it needs a clear statement of purpose, a sense of methodology, and a well-posted progression toward a cogently argued conclusion. This is predicated on the notion that literature makes complex demands upon its readers, raising problems that invite scrutiny, and that such scrutiny will lead to primary questions about the nature of literature, itself, and the multitudinous ways in which it generates experience from moral instruction to sheer aesthetic delight. It is useful to remember, too, that things that might be taken for granted, such as what a "character" is, rarely should be. Characters are literary constructs composed of tendentious choices consolidated in words—as most features of literature by definition must be. In a larger sense, writing about literature is about reading accurately, reflecting critically, and writing cogently—operations not unlike those called for by all

enquiries into the nature of things social or creative across the gamut of university disciplines. Keep back-up copies of your work in the event a paper gets lost, and always hand in paper copies; never submit them to me as an e-mail attachment.

**Paul Menton Centre** is available to students with learning disabilities or for those requiring accommodation for exams, Rm. 500 Unicentre.

**The Writing tutorial Service** provides coaching in the writing of essays and term papers on a one-to-one basis, 229 Paterson Hall.

**The Student Life Services** is located in 501 Unicentre.

**The Student Academic Success Centre** is located in 302 Tory.

**Accommodation is also available for religious holidays and for pregnancy.**