

British Literature I

Dr. Jenny C. Bledsoe

This survey course is designed to give students a basic understanding of early British literary history, from Old English literature through the eighteenth century. Along with reading a wide variety of literary works, we will also consider the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts for medieval and early modern literature. For our discussion of medieval literature (500–1500), we read texts (in translation) which were originally composed in a variety of languages, including Old Irish, Old English, Latin, Middle Welsh, Middle Irish, Anglo-French, Anglo-Hebrew, and Middle English. The multilingual nature of our readings reflects the multicultural society of medieval Britain and demonstrates that literature in other languages influenced the development of English works. Instead of moving through the readings chronologically, each week we will discuss a few texts which fit into a genre or theme common in medieval and early modern literature. Through these groupings, we will learn about how a theme or genre developed over time, and we will compare texts written centuries apart for their treatment of similar topics. We will read literature in a variety of genres, including epic, chronicle, *lais*, lyric, sonnet, saint's life, dream vision, romance, and drama.



Matthew Paris's thirteenth-century map of Great Britain in London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius D. vi, fol. 12v.

BOOKS

- *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: Concise Volume A*, ed. Joseph Black et al., 3rd ed. (Broadview, December 2016). ISBN: 978-1554813124.
- William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, Folger Shakespeare Library edition (Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004). ISBN: 978-0743482769.
- All other readings will be available via a link or PDF on the course website.

ASSIGNMENTS

Requirement	Deadline	Percentage of final grade
Attendance	ongoing	10%
Participation including contributions during class (4%) and in online discussions (8x, 1% each)	ongoing, posts due on Fridays by 11:59pm most weeks	12%

Quizzes Reading comprehension quizzes. Most quizzes have two multiple choice and three fill-in-the-blank reading comprehension questions (each question is worth 10 points). The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.	Weeks 2–15	28% (2% each)
Manuscript illumination and short paper (3–4 pages) focusing a primary source See assignment sheet for details.	Sunday of Week 7, 11:59pm <i>Peer workshop in class during Week 6</i>	7%
Final essay A literary analysis paper focusing on at least 4 primary sources from the course readings; the paper will use 3 scholarly sources to support the writer’s interpretations of the primary sources.		
• Rough draft of proposal 1 paragraph, including at least 2 primary sources	Due in class for peer review during Week 11 (submit on BB for participation grade)	part of participation
• Proposal (1 page) plus annotated bibliography of 3 primary sources and 1 scholarly source	Sunday of Week 12, 11:59pm	3%
• Progress report, including an outline for the paper and comments about progress on scholarly research	Sunday of Week 14, 11:59pm	1%
• Lightning presentation (c. 2 min)	In class during Week 16	1%
• Final paper (7–8 pages), which incorporates and analyzes 4 primary sources from the class and 3 secondary sources independently researched.	By beginning of class during Week 16 <i>Peer workshop with drafts in class during Week 15.</i>	18%
Final exam Multiple choice questions on author, century, genre, language, and religious tradition (46 pts); passage identification (24 pts); historical event paragraph (6 pts); two mini-essays of two paragraphs each (24 pts)	Week 17	20%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Old English Poetry

Historical background, pp. 1–5 (“Introduction” thru “History, Narrative, Culture”)

In BEDE [c. 673–735], Caedmon’s “Hymn” [c. 731] (pp. 53–55, beginning “In Hild’s monastery” at bottom of p. 53) [LAT./OE]

Exeter Book [ANON. 10TH C. MANUSCRIPT]:

Elegies: intro (pp. 65–66), “The Wanderer” (pp. 66–68), “The Wife’s Lament” (pp. 70–71) [OE]

Riddles: intro (p. 76), riddles 26, 44, 45, 47, 95 (pp. 78–80) [OE]

Week 2: Invasions and History Writing

Quiz 1

Historical background, pp. 5–23 (“Before the Norman Conquest” thru “Wales, Scotland, Ireland: Norman Invasions and Their Aftermath”)

The Celts (which includes Irish, Welsh, Cornish, Manx, and Breton langs.): ANON., “The wind is wild tonight” (p. 62) [OI]; MUIRCHÚ MOCCU MACHTHENI [b. 7TH C.], early Irish life of *St. Patrick* (PDF: 18 pgs) [OI]

The English: BEDE [c. 673–735], intro (pp. 41–42), *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* [c. 731] (pp. 42–46: thru “The Coming of the English to Britain”) [LAT.]

The Scandinavians: King Cnut [r. 1016–35] and the *Encomium* (ANON.) written for Queen Emma [c. 984–1052] (PDF: 7 pgs) [LAT.]

The Norman Conquest [1066]: scenes from the Bayeux “Tapestry,” an embroidery created soon after the Conquest (PDF: 17 pgs) [VIS. ART]

Online discussion #1 due by 11:59pm on Friday

Week 3: Myth and Heroism

Quiz 2

Historical background, pp. 33–39 (“Language and Prosody”)

ANON., *Beowulf* [DATE DISPUTED, c. 700–1000]: intro (pp. 81–84), text (pp. 85–127) [OE]

ANON., *Mabinogion* [12TH–13TH C.]: intro (pp. 156–57), “Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed” (pp. 158–70) [MW]

Online discussion #2 due by 11:59pm on Friday

Week 4: Dreams and Visions

Quiz 3

ANON., “The Dream of the Rood” [10TH C. MS BUT SEEMS TO PRE-DATE RUTHWELL CROSS]: intro (p. 72), text (pp. 72–75) [OE]

The Ruthwell Cross [PROBABLY 9TH C.]: short article, images [linked on Bb](#) [VIS. ART]

GEOFFREY CHAUCER [c. 1340s–1400]: intro (pp. 293–96), *Parliament of Fowls* [1381–1382] (PDF: 8 pgs) [ME]

Online discussion #3 due by 11:59pm on Friday

Week 5: Romance, Magic, and Religion

Quiz 4

Historical background, pp. 26–31 (“The English Monarchy,” “Cultural Expression in the 14th c.”)

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight [14TH C.]: intro (pp. 225–26), text (pp. 226–90) [ME]

Online discussion #4 due by 11:59pm on Friday

Week 6: Gender, Writing, and Authority

Quiz 5

Historical background, pp. 31–33 (“Fifteenth Century Transitions”)
MARGERY KEMPE [c. 1373–AFTER 1438], *The Book of Margery Kempe*: intro (p. 404), text (pp. 405–21) [ME]
DAFYDD AP GWILYM [c. 1315/20– c. 1350/70]: intro (p. 655), “Ode to the Penis” (PDF: 4 pgs) [MW]
GWERFUL MECHAIN [fl. 1460–1502]: intro (p. 662), “Ode to the Vagina,” “To Her Husband, for Beating Her” (pp. 662– 63) [MW]
MARGARET CAVENDISH [1623–1673], “A World in an Earring” (pp. 1150–51),
“To All Noble and Worthy Ladies” (PDF: 3 pgs, preface to *Poems and Fancies*)
Bring to class: ideas for manuscript illumination and short paper for peer workshop

Manuscript illumination and short paper due by 11:59pm on Sunday

Week 7: Animal Fables

Quiz 6

MARIE DE FRANCE [fl. 1160–1215]: intro (pp. 179–80), “The Cock and the Fox,” “The Rooster and the Gem,” from *Ysopet*, a fable collection (PDF: 2 pgs) [AF]
BERECHIAH HA-NAKDAN [fl. 12TH–13TH C.]: background on persecution of Jews in England (pp. 440–43), “Cock and Gem,” “Crow and Fox,” and “Fox and Cat,” three fables from *Mishlei Shu’alim* (PDF: 7 pgs) [AH]
CHAUCER [c. 1340s–1400]: *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* (pp. 371–83) [ME]
Online discussion #5 due by 11:59pm on Friday

Weeks 8-9: History, Fiction, and Royalty

Quiz 7

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH [c. 1095– c. 1155]: intro (pp. 133–34), *History of the Kings of Britain* (pp. 134–39, from Bk I & II) [LAT.]
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE [bapt. 1564–1616]: intro (pp. 880–84), *King Lear*, Acts I–II (Folger: pp. 1–119)
Online discussion #6 due by 11:59pm on Friday

(Week 9)

Quiz 8

King Lear, Acts III–V (Folger: pp. 123–261)

Week 10: Drama and Performance

Quiz 9

Historical background, pp. 587–90 (early modern drama)
ANON., *Everyman* [c. 1500]: intro (p. 473), text (pp. 474–85) [ME]
CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE [bapt. 1564–1593]: intro (pp. 846–47), *Doctor Faustus* (pp. 847–75)
Online discussion #7 due by 11:59pm on Friday

Week 11: Christianity, the Bible, and the Protestant Reformation

Quiz 10

Historical background, pp. 547–52 (“The Reformation in England”)
CHAUCER [c. 1340s–1400]: *Pardoner’s Prologue & Tale* (pp. 351–63) [ME]

Late medieval and early modern religious writers: WILLIAM TYNDALE [c. 1494–1536] (pp. 596–97); AEMILIA LANYER [1569–1645] (pp. 804–7); ANNE ASKEW [1521–1546], JOHN FOXE [1516/17–1587], and LADY JANE GREY [c. 1537–1554] (PDF: 15 pgs with Askew, Foxe, and Grey)

Selections from English Bible translations (pp. 599–609)

Bring to class: rough draft of proposal for peer workshop

Proposal for final essay due by 11:59pm on Sunday

Week 12: The Devil and Evil

Quiz 11

ANON., *Saint Juliana* [c. 1190–1220] (PDF: 39 pgs, transl. on bottom of pages) [ME]

JOHN MILTON [1608–1674]: intro (pp. 993–95, 1015–16), *Paradise Lost*. Book I, lines 1–380 (pp. 1017–23); Book II, lines 629–1055 (pp. 1039–44); Book III, lines 1–372 (pp. 1045–50); Book IV, lines 288–538 (pp. 1054–58); Book IX (pp. 1071–86)

SAMUEL JOHNSON [1709–1784]: intro (pp. 1629–31), on Milton's *Paradise Lost* from *Lives of the Poets* (pp. 1658–62)

Online discussion #8 due by 11:59pm on Friday

Week 13: Poetry and Love I: Lyrics and Religious Verse

Quiz 12

Historical background, pp. 584–87 (early modern poetry)

ANON. Middle English lyrics: intro (pp. 203–4), “Betwene Mersh and Averil” (pp. 205–6), “My lefe is faren in a lond” (p. 210) [ME]

ISABEL, COUNTESS OF ARGYLL [1437–1510]: intro (p. 639), “There’s a Young Man in Pursuit of Me,” “Woe to the One Whose Sickness Is Love” (p. 640) [MI]

GEORGE HERBERT [1593–1633]: intro (pp. 961–62), “The Altar” [1633] (p. 962), “Easter Wings” [1633] (p. 963), “Love (3)” [1633] (p. 973)

JOHN DONNE [1572–1631]: intro (pp. 913–14), “The Flea” [1633] (p. 920), *Holy Sonnet* 14 [1633] (p. 938)

Progress report for final paper due by 11:59pm on Sunday

Week 14: Poetry and Love II: Sonnets

Quiz 13

Historical background, pp. 624–25 (“The Elizabethan Sonnet”)

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY [1554–1586]: intro (pp. 729–30), *Astrophil and Stella* [1591], 1, 2, 34 (pp. 731, 733)

EDMUND SPENSER [1552?–1599]: intro (p. 667), *Amoretti* [1594], 1, 34, 75 (pp. 725–26, 728)

SHAKESPEARE [bapt. 1564–1616]: intro to sonnets (pp. 884–85), *Sonnets* [1609], 18, 73, 116, 130 (pp. 887, 890, 893–95)

LADY MARY WROTH [1587–1651]: *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* [1621], 1, 6 (p. 943)

Week 15: Travel and Empire

Quiz 14

SIR WALTER RALEGH [1554–1618]: intro (p. 811), *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* [1596] (pp. 815–20)

DANIEL DEFOE [1660–1731]: intro (pp. 1335–36), *Robinson Crusoe* [1719] (PDF: 7 pgs)

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU [1689–1762]: intro and two *Turkish Embassy Letters* [1717] (PDF: 6 pgs)

Bring to class: draft of final paper for peer workshop

Week 16

Final paper due on Blackboard by beginning of class

In class: Mini-presentations on final papers and review for final exam

Week 17

Final exam