Sample Syllabus: Shakespeare Unit in a Survey Course

Logistics and Overview

Objective: This syllabus incorporates portions of the Text module into a course surveying English literature to 1700. As this syllabus demonstrates, elements of “Dividing the Kingdoms” can enrich even courses that are not focused on Lear or Shakespeare. In this case, students work through abbreviated versions of exercises from the Text module in class before completing a mini-edition of selected lines from Act 1, Scene 1. This low-stakes assignment is worth 5% of the total grade, and it offers the class a unique opportunity to understand the process of canon formation from the inside out. For examples of mini-editions produced when this course was taught at Wayne State in Winter 2017, see Student Work.

Creator: Jaime Goodrich

Level: Introductory; mixed audience of English majors, Education majors, and Gen Ed students

Suggested Digital Text: Quarto

English Literature to 1700

Description: This course surveys the development of English literature from its beginnings during the Anglo-Saxon era through 1700. In order to provide students with a comprehensive overview of English literature in this period, we will read traditional mainstays of the canon: Beowulf, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. At the same time, we will examine the formation of this canon by discussing lesser-known texts by female authors, including Margery Kempe and Aemilia Lanyer. Besides observing how the English language changed over the centuries to become modern English, we will also consider the development of English literature in relationship to cultural contexts and historical events such as the feudal system, the Norman Conquest, the English Reformation, and the Civil Wars. Requirements include two short papers, a mini-edition, a midterm, a final exam, quizzes, blog postings, diligent preparation for class, and active participation in our discussions.

Texts: The textbook can be found at the campus bookstore. You may also want to check sites like Amazon.com and Bookfinder.com for bargains on used books.

ISBN: 978-0-393-91300-2 (3-volume split) OR 978-0-393-91247-0 (1-volume)

Grading and Requirements:
First paper (1/27) 10%
Midterm (2/28) 15%
Second paper (3/31) 15%
Mini-edition (4/14) 5%
Final exam (5/2) 20%
Class blog 10%
Quizzes 10%
Engagement 15%

Papers: Students will submit a first paper of no more than 900 words by 11:59 PM on 1/27 via the Assignments page on Blackboard. Students will turn in a second paper of no more than 1200 words by 11:59 PM on 3/31 via the Assignments page on Blackboard. All topics are available on Blackboard’s Assignments page; students may request permission to write on topics of their choice. The best papers will demonstrate a persuasive use of literary analysis to advance a sustained argument based on concrete evidence from the text(s) under consideration, as well as excellence in clarity, organization, thesis, and technical matters such as punctuation and grammar. Students will turn in a mini-edition of *King Lear* by 11:59 PM on 4/14 via the Assignments page on Blackboard.

Schedule

**Old English**

T 1/10: Bede, *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (30-32)

Th 1/12: *Beowulf*, lines 1-1798 (41-80)

T 1/17: *Beowulf*, lines 1799-3182 (80-108)

**Middle English**

Th 1/19: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Parts 1 and 2 (186-209)

T 1/24: *Gawain*, Parts 3 and 4 (209-38)

Th 1/26: Geoffrey Chaucer, “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales* (243-63)
  - *Nota bene:* Give yourself extra time to deal with Chaucer’s Middle English

F 1/27: First paper due by 11:59 via the Assignments page on Blackboard

T 1/31: Chaucer, “Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale” (282-310)


T 2/7: *The York Play of the Crucifixion* (440-47); *Everyman* (508-29)

**The Sixteenth Century**

T 2/14: More, *Utopia*, Book II (597-646)


- *Nota bene:* Make sure to read the Norton’s prose translations of the Italian sources for some of these sonnets: Petrarch, “Rima 140,” “Rima 190,” and “Rima 164” (649-50, 664)


Th 2/23: Sir Philip Sidney, “Definition and Classification of Poetry” from *Defense of Poesy* (1051-52) and *Astrophil and Stella* 1, 9, 15, 108 (1084-87, 1101)

T 2/28: In-class midterm

Th 3/2: Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (1128-63)

T 3/7: William Shakespeare, Sonnets 1, 20, 35, 130, 144 (1171, 1173, 1175, 1184-85)

Th 3/9: Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book I, Cantos 1, 4, and 10 (781-95, 817-30, 893-910)

- *Nota bene:* Make sure to read “Summary of Cantos 2-3, 5-9, and 12 of *The Faerie Queene*” (available on Blackboard, under Readings)

T 3/14 and Th 3/16: Spring Break

T 3/21: Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book I, Canto 11 (910-24); Mary Sidney Herbert, “Psalm 139” (1104-06); Robert Southwell, “The Burning Babe” (699)

*The Seventeenth Century*


- Text Module: Activity 1, Performing the Quarto and Folio; Activity 2, Reading the Quarto (Part 1 only), Activity 3, Choosing a *Lear* (Parts 1 and 2 only)

F 3/31: Second paper due by 11:59 PM via the Assignments page on Blackboard

T 4/4: John Donne, “The Flea,” “Holy Sonnet 14” (1373, 1413-14); George Herbert, “Redemption,” “Easter Wings” (1708-1709); Ben Jonson, “To Penshurst” (1546-48); Aemilia Lanyer, “Eve’s Apology in Defense of Women,” “The Description of Cookham” (1433-40)
Th 4/6: Catherine Magdalen Evelyn, *The Life of Blessed Saint Euphrosina* (online); Katherine Philips, “A Married State,” “Upon the Double Murder of King Charles” (1784-85); Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress,” “An Horatian Ode” (1796-97, 1806-11)

*Restoration*


F 4/14: Mini-edition due by 11:59 PM via the Assignments page on Blackboard

T 4/18: Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko* (2313-58)
  • Optional extra credit due at the beginning of class


T 5/2: Final Exam (8 AM-10 AM)