ENG 3806-001: British Romantic Literature

Randy Beebe
Eastern Illinois University

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Goals. This course has three primary goals. The first goal is to read critically and widely from representative figures of the British Romantic period (ca. 1780-1830). Proceeding from this first goal, the second aim is to work toward some definition of the term “romanticism” (how is the term useful? how is it misleading? what are its central tenets or competing ideas? how has the term influenced our own time?). By realizing the difficulty of this second goal (as well as the need to attempt it), you should leave the class better prepared—to read those many writers not on our list but still important for the time.

The third aim of the course is the broadest, most practical, and probably the most difficult goal: to become more sophisticated and critical readers of poetry and its various modes. We will be reading other genres, of course; however, some of the most challenging and captivating reading in this course lies in the poetry.

Requirements.

- 2 Papers (5-8 pages) 35%
- Midterm 10%
- Final exam (comprehensive) 15%
- Response Papers 20%
- Participation 20%

Course Participation. This is not a lecture course. The format of the course and its overall success depend upon your active and informed contributions. Note that 40% of your final grade comes from participation and response papers.

Papers. I will hand out a list of possible topics to help you brainstorm for your papers, although I’m quite flexible about the topics you decide upon or the methodologies you employ. Generally, I expect your papers to advocate and to develop some kind of reading of a text or group of texts. You may have a reading of a text that goes against how the rest of the class reads that text. In this scenario, your paper is your chance to outline and make your case for this contrary reading. You might want to read some additional works by a writer on the reading list and write a paper that investigates how these other texts help us understand—or further complicate—this writer. Of course, there are other possibilities, too. For instance, if you are an education major, you might want to prepare some kind of lesson plan based on a poem or group of poems. Or if you are interested in politics or history or art, you could easily direct your paper more toward those contexts.

Feel free to do outside research for your papers, though it is not a requirement that you review other
interpretations. In fact, in most cases you will probably want to rely mostly on your own responses, your own questions or dilemmas. If you do utilize secondary sources, you will be expected to document your research appropriately according to MLA guidelines.

If you want to try something really ambitious or beyond the boundaries of the syllabus, you should talk to me first. In fact, about a week or so before the paper, you will submit a proposal, outlining your idea (or ideas) for your paper. That's also a good time to consult with me individually about any concerns you have about the topic or writing in general. I will not grade these proposals; they're simply a way to force you to commit your ideas to paper and to allow me to help you at that early stage of writing. The proposals will count toward your participation grade.

**Late Papers.** Papers are due on the dates indicated. Papers turned in after the due date will be penalized one-third of a grade for each calendar day they are late—unless you have already made arrangements with me prior to the due date. Although I encourage you to turn in your paper in class, you have until 4:00 p.m. on the due date to hand in your paper (either to me in my office or in my mailbox). In other words, I want you to be in class that day whether or not you have your paper fully completed.

**Response Papers.** To help focus class discussion, I will frequently give a study question or two for an upcoming reading assignment or for that day's assignment, and I will ask the class to prepare written responses that will be read in class and also turned in. These responses should be 1-2 typed pages in length and should take only a few minutes to read. The questions will usually be specific, so the responses need to be equally specific and detailed. In other words, get to the point quickly and argue vigorously.

I will not evaluate these short papers in the same way I will your longer papers. I'm more concerned that you are honestly trying to answer the question, at least struggle with it, than in your overall organization, sentence structure, and other stylistic issues that you will need to worry about in the longer, more polished papers. I will, however, mark your response with a check, plus, or minus—a plus equals full credit, a check equals approximately 80%, and a minus equals 0%.

Response papers cannot be made up or turned in after class. Papers turned in late or not at all are automatically receive a minus score. If you know you will not be in class to turn yours in, make arrangements to have someone else turn it in for you.

**Attendance Policy.** You need to be in class all the time. I generally allow up to three absences (personal days). Each absence after that will lower your final grade by one letter grade (for example, if your final grade is a B and you have four absences, you will receive a C for the course). Seven or more absences will automatically result in a failing grade.

**Students with Disabilities.** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**Reading Schedule.** I will soon handout a reading schedule as a rough guide for our discussion this semester. You are expected to read the assigned texts carefully and thoroughly and be prepared to discuss them on the date indicated. We may not be able to discuss in class each assigned text; however, you will be expected to have read and be familiar with all the assigned selections unless I indicate otherwise. Although we will try to keep to schedule, modifications are bound to occur, which I will always announce in class. It is your responsibility, however, to keep aware of any changes—especially if you are absent from class.
An Overview of Literary History

Literary Periods of British Literature

- Medieval Literature (Old English/Middle English ca. 428 - 1500)
- Renaissance (ca. 1500-1660)
- Restoration & 18th Century (ca. 1660-1800)
- Romantic (ca. 1790/98-1832)
- Victorian (ca. 1832-1900)
- 20th Century (Modern & Contemporary ca 1900 - )

Literary Periods of American Literature

- Colonial Period (ca. 1607-1765)
- Revolutionary/Early National Period (1765-1830)
- Romantic Period (1830-65)
- Realistic Period (1865-1900)
- Naturalistic & Symbolistic (1900-30)
- Conformity & Criticism (Modern) (1930-60)
- Contemporary (1960- )