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ENG 3604-001: Before Texting: Letter-Writing and the Origins of the Novel

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Before texting, even before email, people wrote letters. And just as with email, sometimes those letters ended up being read by someone other than the person to whom they were written. In fact, before the craze for the long works of fiction we today call novels, people often found entertainment in reading collections of letters written by people they didn't know, often famous people. (Not so different from reality TV.) This course will examine letter-writing and its relationship to the development of the novel in the eighteenth century. We will read some of the most famous epistolary novels from England, America, France, and Germany, as well as some other texts that include letters.

**Learning Objectives**

Like all literature courses, this one is designed to improve your skills as a critical reader and critical writer and to enhance your ability to examine literature in historical and cultural context. In addition, we have some objectives specific to the “pre-1800” requirement of the English major and specific to this course: to familiarize you with the early history of the novel, as context for your later reading of contemporary novels (or as context for your own writing); to improve your ability to work with texts that are historically distant; and to examine the multiple functions of the letter as a literary device.

**Texts from TRS**

Brown (Charles Brockden), *Wieland*
Fielding, *Shamela*
Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*
Laclos, *Dangerous Liaisons*
Mulford, ed., *The Power of Sympathy & The Coquette*
Richardson, *Pamela*
Richardson, *Clarissa*

**WebCT**

Course handouts will be archived in our WebCT space, along with materials like quiz replacement assignments. I will also make your grades available in WebCT, and some short writing assignments may be made in the form of postings in a WebCT discussion board.

**Information for Students with Disabilities**

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

**The Electronic Writing Portfolio**

If you wish, you may use the Formal Essay from this class to submit to the Electronic Writing Portfolio. Submissions must be made no later than the end of finals week.
Grade Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th>Final Grade Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>93-100 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>85-92 B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Writing Assignments</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>77-84 C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>69-76 D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative Learning Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>68 and below F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of Formal Essay</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of Integrative Learning Proj.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading:** This course is reading intensive. Expect roughly 80 pages of reading for a Wednesday class and about twice that much for a Monday class. *These are the most important assignments in the course.* Without carefully preparing the reading before coming to class, you can not possibly learn what the course is designed to teach you. Thus, if you wish to get the value of your money and time out of this class (or any literature class), you need to commit to a time management strategy that allows you to give your reading sufficient time and attention.

**Reading Comprehension Quizzes:** Expect reading quizzes whenever reading has been assigned. Reading quizzes are designed to give you feedback on how well your reading process is working and to give appropriate weight to this most essential course requirement. Reading quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and will normally take only 5-10 minutes, so you should arrive on time if you want to take the quiz.

*Grading:* Each quiz is worth 10 points. I will drop your lowest quiz score (including 0s for missed quizzes that are not made up). The remaining quiz scores will be averaged.

*Missed quizzes:* Since I will drop your lowest quiz score, if you miss only one quiz, you might choose to take the 0, knowing that that score will be dropped. However, if you miss more than one quiz, due to lateness or absence, you will likely want to make up one or more quizzes with the alternate assignment. Quiz replacement assignments, listed by date of the quiz they replace, are available on WebCT. These assignments are due at the class session after the one at which you missed the quiz. These will be significantly different from the quizzes, but they will require you to demonstrate your reading comprehension for the relevant section of reading and will also require some research and approximately 3 pages of writing.

**Short Writing Assignments:** Short writing assignments will be made throughout the semester. Some will focus on developing particular skills, like active reading; some will be reflective; some will require a small amount of research; some will help you get started with or make progress on the two final projects of the course. Some will be submitted as hard copy (printed) in class; others will be submitted via WebCT. Be sure to check the assignment for details. Grading standards will vary according to the nature of the assignment, but all will be worth 10 points and the scores will be averaged.
**Formal Essay:** The formal essay will require you to present your own argument about one or more of the texts we read in this course; it will also require that you conduct research in order to both acquire appropriate background information to support your argument and to position your argument in relationship to what literary scholars have said about the text(s) you are writing about. 8-10 pages.

**Integrative Learning Project:** The integrative learning project will allow you to explore the connections between our course content and your career interests (or, if you prefer, an area in which you are particularly knowledgeable even if that is not your planned career interest). You will design your own project, within certain parameters that we will discuss, and subject to my approval. You may choose to work collaboratively or individually. Projects may be primarily written or may include a mix of media.

**Revisions of Research Essay and Integrative Learning Project:** Revisions of both the research essay and the written portions of the integrative learning project are required; each of the two revisions is a separate assignment. The grades on the revisions will not replace the grades on the original projects.

**Mid-Term and Final Exams:** Both the mid-term and the final exams will test your recall of the texts we have read and your ability to apply concepts we have studied to new material.

**Late Work:** The ability to meet deadlines is an important skill to learn. I am willing to grant extensions, but you must follow this procedure: You must contact me, either in person or by phone, no later than the calendar day before an assignment is due, to request an extension. I will not grant extensions the day the assignment is due, and I will not grant extensions in response to emails or text messages.

If you request an extension as described above, there will be no penalty to your grade. If you do not request an extension as described above but your work is late, it will lose 10% of its value for each calendar day it is late.

**The English Department's Statement on Plagiarism:** “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—’The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

**My Statement on Plagiarism:** When I discover an act of intentional plagiarism, I fail the responsible student for the entire course and report the offense to the Office of Student Standards. Alas, this has happened at least once every year I have been at Eastern, and it has happened even in classes for English majors.
Attendance: Unless you are seriously ill, you should come to class every day. However, I am neither your parent nor your employer, so, with one exception, I do not feel it is my business to decide whether or not your reasons for missing class are good ones. That is to say, with one important exception, you don’t need to tell me why you miss class or give me doctor’s notes, etc., for your absences.*

Here’s what happens when you miss class:

• It is your responsibility to learn what you need to make up. You can get most of that information on WebCT, but you will probably also want to check with a classmate about notes from our discussion.
• If you miss a reading quiz, you will find a quiz replacement assignment on WebCT; it is due at the next class session (but remember that your lowest quiz score will be dropped).
• If you miss class on the day when a major essay is due, you should submit that essay via email to arvietto@eiu.edu on the same day the essay is due. (Not possible? See the policy on late work.)
• There is no way to “make up” participation points for days you miss class.

Don’t be deceived: excessive absences will hurt your grade in this class (both because you will not learn as much, which will show in your essays and exams, and because of the participation grade).

Participation: Participation means being focused and forthcoming during class. When you sit silently, even if you are listening, you do not learn as much as you do when you participate in conversation. That’s not just something old folk like me believe on faith; it is established fact, supported by extensive research by psychologists who study learning.

Each day you attend class, I assign between 1 and 10 points for participation. I average your participation grades over the course of the semester to obtain the final grade. Here’s how I assign points:

• Students who make a good faith effort to do everything I ask during a class session and remain alert and engaged throughout the session, engaging actively in (on-task) small group discussion and making at least one or two high-quality contributions to large group discussions, earn 10 points for the day.
• Students who come close to the standard above but fall a little short (for example, participating well in small groups but not speaking in the larger group) will earn 8-9 points.
• Students who are attentive and contribute at least once but whose contributions are sometimes off topic or lower in quality will earn between 5 and 8 points.
• Participation points will be deducted, at my discretion, when students arrive late, leave early, demonstrate that they have not been paying attention, do work for other classes, use ear buds, sleep, or otherwise behave rudely.
• When I see a student text messaging, that student’s daily participation score will be 1.
• Extra credit participation points can be earned by planning and conducting an activity for class, such as a student-led discussion. Arrangements must be made in advance, and you must meet with me to discuss your planned activity before the day on which you wish to conduct it.

* The only exception is missing an exam, either the mid-term or the final; in fairness to other students, should that occur, I will require documentation that a legitimate, serious, unavoidable illness or genuine emergency prevented the student from being present for the exam before allowing the student to take an altered version of the exam.
Schedule

M Jan 10   Intro
W Jan 12  Early epistolary materials (handouts)
M Jan 17  Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday celebrated—No Class
W Jan 19  More early epistolary materials (handouts)
M Jan 24  *Pamela*, pp. 1-161
W Jan 26  *Pamela*, pp. 161-238
M Jan 31  *Pamela*, pp. 238-378
W Feb 2   *Pamela*, pp. 378-499
M Feb 7   *Shamela*, pp. 305-345
W Feb 9   Selections from *Clarissa*, TBA
M Feb 14  *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, pp. 1-41
W Feb 16  *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, pp. 42-87 and selected letters by Chesterfield (handouts)
M Feb 21  *Les Liaisons Dangereuses (Dangerous Liaisons)*, 1-131
W Feb 23  *Les Liaisons Dangereuses (Dangerous Liaisons)*, 131-291
M Feb 28  *Les Liaisons Dangereuses (Dangerous Liaisons)*, 291-372
W Mar 2   Midterm Exam
M Mar 7   *The Power of Sympathy*, pp. 1-62
W Mar 9   *The Power of Sympathy*, pp. 63-103
Mar 14-16 Spring Break
M Mar 21  *The Coquette*, pp. 104-185; Proposal for formal essay due
W Mar 23  *The Coquette*, pp. 186-242; Proposal for integrative learning project due
M Mar 28  *Wieland*, pp. 1-88; Formal essay preliminary bibliography due
W Mar 30  *Wieland*, pp. 89-185
M Apr 4   *Wieland*, pp. 186-278
W Apr 6   Formal essay annotated bibliography due; in-class writing workshop
M Apr 11  Conferences on formal essays
W Apr 13  Formal essays due; panel presentations
M Apr 18  Integrative learning projects due; begin ILP presentations; formal essays returned
W Apr 20  Integrative learning projects returned; ILP presentations continued
M Apr 25  Revisions due; ILP presentations continued
W Apr 27  Course conclusion & review for final exam
R May 5   Final Exam—12:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.