Fall 8-15-2010

ENG 3601-001: Studies in Major Writers (Thomas Hardy)

Richard Sylvia
Eastern Illinois University

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Course Description and Objectives: Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) wrote poetry, novels and short stories during a career that spanned the Victorian and Modern periods of English literature. At the time of its publication, many readers found his work controversial, even offensive. (His last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, was dubbed “Jude the Obscene” by one critic, and it was burned by the Bishop of Wakefield.) Though we may no longer be scandalized by Hardy’s stories and poems, they still challenge us to think through important social and philosophical issues. And while Hardy paints a world in which big questions matter, he documents in fine detail the rural Wessex landscape, which in his day was still a fairly remote, unknown section of southwest England. So we have the luxury in reading Hardy of being absorbed into a strange, local — and most painfully tragic — landscape.

To get an imaginative grasp of Hardy’s Wessex, we will read and discuss a generous sample of his work: three novels, one collection of short stories, and selections from several volumes of his poetry. Our goal is, first, to enjoy the work of one of the great writers in English; second, to sharpen our reading and writing skills; and, third, to deepen our appreciation for Hardy’s skills and accomplishments.

Books:  
*Two on a Tower*  
*The Woodlanders*  
*Jude the Obscure*  
*Wessex Tales*  
*The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy*

Requirements and Grading: careful preparation of reading assignments  
participation in class discussions (10%)  
two exams (40%)  
one brief paper (20%)  
one documented research project (30%)

Tentative Schedule:

Aug. 24: course introduction; Hardy and Wessex

Aug. 26: *Wessex Poems and Other Verses*, numbers 2-26

Aug. 31: *Wessex Poems*, numbers 27-52

Sept. 2: *Wessex Poems*

Sept. 7: *Two on a Tower*, chapters 1-11

Sept. 9: *Two*, 12-20

Sept. 14: *Two*, 21-31; short paper due
Sept. 16: Two, 32-41
Sept. 21: The Woodlanders, chapters 1-12
Sept. 23: The Woodlanders, 13-24
Sept. 28: The Woodlanders, 25-36
Sept. 30: The Woodlanders, 37-48

Oct. 5: Poems of the Past and Present ("Miscellaneous Poems")
Oct. 7: Poems of the Past and Present ("Miscellaneous Poems")
Oct. 12: mid-term exam

Oct. 14: Wessex Tales ("The Three Strangers")
Oct. 19: WT ("The Withered Arm")
Oct. 21: WT ("Interlopers at the Knap")
Oct. 26: WT ("The Distracted Preacher")
Oct. 28: Jude the Obscure, Part First

Nov. 2: Jude, Parts Second and Third; research paper topic due
Nov. 4: Jude, Parts Fourth and Fifth
Nov. 9: Jude, Part Sixth; research bibliography due
Nov. 11: Satires of Circumstance ("Lyrics and Reveries")
Nov. 16: Satires ("Poems of 1912-13"); research paper draft due
Nov. 18: Satires ("Poems of 1912-13")
Nov. 22 - 26: Thanksgiving Break
Nov. 30: Moments of Vision (selections to be announced)

Dec. 2: Late Lyrics and Earlier (selections to be announced)
Dec. 7: Human Shows (selections to be announced)
Dec. 9: course evaluations; research paper due

Final Exam: Dec. 13; 12:30 - 2:30 pm