Spring 1-15-1997

ENG 5005-001: Nineteenth-Century Studies

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English 5005: Nineteenth-Century Studies (Thomas Hardy)  
spring 1997

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Course description: The primary task of this course is to read  
and discuss as much of Hardy's work as possible in the time  
allowed. The goal is to develop firsthand an understanding of  
Hardy's art and ideas -- in both fiction and poetry -- as they  
progressed over six decades, from the 1860s through the 1920s.

Course requirements: I have adjusted the typical requirements  
for a graduate level course in order to facilitate our  
obligations to the primary material (i.e., no research paper  
required):

- preparation of the reading (see schedule below)
- regular participation in class discussions
- at least one conference meeting with me
- at least one entry every week on the Hardy listserv (see  
below)
- two class reports as part of a collaborative team (see  
below)
- a written prospectus for a study of Hardy (see below)
- a final exam

Tentative Reading Schedule

Jan. 16: introductions

Jan. 23: "An Indiscretion in the Life of An Heiress" (1878  
[68?]); article on Hardy background from The Thomas  
Hardy Journal (handout)

Jan. 30: Under the Greenwood Tree (1872); oral reports begin  

Feb. 6: A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873)

Feb. 13: Far from the Madding Crowd (1874)

Feb. 20: The Return of the Native (1878)
Feb. 27:  Two on a Tower (1882)
Mar. 6:   The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886)
Mar. 13:  The Woodlanders (1887)
Mar. 20:  spring break

Mar. 27:  Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891)
Apr. 3:   Jude the Obscure (1896)
Apr. 10:  Wessex Poems and Other Verses (1898)

Apr. 17:  selections from Poems of the Past and the Present
          and Time's Laughingstocks (1909)
Apr. 24:  selections from Satires of Circumstance (1914) and
          Moments of Vision (1917)
May. 1:   selections from Human Shows (1925) and Winter Words
          (1928)
Hardy97 Listserv Discussion Group

Everyone must make at least one entry every week on our electronic discussion group called: hardy97. Subscribers are restricted to students registered to this course. This will be an unedited, unmediated discussion driven by your own interests and concerns for the material of the course. Please be courteous, civil, and helpful. Your entries should be informal, but should stay focused on Hardy. Be open and honest; challenge each other; ask questions; take some chances; and have some fun. I will not moderate or mediate or lead this discussion. This discussion belongs to everybody and, therefore, is open to whatever is on anyone's mind concerning the material we are all reading or material that is located in independent research. But remember that at least one entry every week is required, and that I will keep a record of who makes entries and who does not.

What You Need To Do

1. Activate your e-mail account if you have not already done so. You can do this in Student Services Building.

2. Subscribe yourself to the list. Do this by sending an e-mail to "listproc2@ecnet.net". When you do this you need to:
   a. leave the subject line blank
   b. enter the command as the only line in the body of your message
   c. not attach a signature file if you have one
      For example:

      Type "listproc2@ecnet.net when you are prompted who to send the message to.
      Type "subscribe hardy97 [your name] (first last)"

3. You should receive confirmation, within a half hour or so, that you have been added to the list. You will receive two letters (one from the listserv administrator telling you some dos and don'ts and one letter from me -- which is very brief). Keep both, as they have useful information on participating in a discussion group. For more information, go to the ECN home page and browse through their tutorial guides on discussion groups. ECN's address is "http://www.ECNet.Net".

4. If you do not get confirmation within several hours, then try again. If you still get no response, then come and see me and I will help you. (I will have to approve each of your requests for subscription; I will check my e-mail frequently, but if you subscribe at an odd hour, you may have to wait longer for my response.)
Class Reports

Everyone will be part of a three person class report team, and each team will be responsible for "presenting" to the class the novel under discussion for the current week. These reports will begin with Under the Greenwood Tree on Jan. 30. I would like you to work together before class, so that you can make a coherent, well ordered presentation, but since some of you may live out of town and spend limited time on campus, I have devised a three-part structure for the reports that can -- if necessary -- be completed independently. (Remember that we all have e-mail addresses and can work together in cyberspace.)

Class report teams should provide each class member with a bibliography (MLA style) of critical commentary on the work assigned. Include what you consider the best 10 items and provide an oral summation of the one item you find most interesting. (Use bibliographical guides and CD Rom searches to accomplish this work.)

Class report teams should provide an oral presentation of the composition and publication history of the work assigned. Tell the class the story behind the writing of the book and the way it was received by its first readers. Include information on Hardy's thoughts about the book (check prefaces, letters, notebooks, autobiographical sources).

Class report teams should provide an oral presentation of the discussion questions the class must consider in order to understand the point, value, and power of the work assigned. What issues are most important? What issues are new to this book? What issues will lead to the most thought-provoking discussion? (This material will be best generated by discussion of the team as a whole.)

As you can see, the three elements of the class reports are interrelated. Do not limit your preparation to the brief descriptions above: let curiosity and imagination guide you. Try to be entertaining.

Please collaborate with each other if at all possible. Also, remember that the nature of these reports will change as we proceed through the semester and become more familiar with Hardy's books and can begin to compare and contrast one with another. These reports should fill the first hour of each class; but I expect that they will determine our discussions during the second hour as well. I will evaluate the team presentation: all team members will get the same grade.

Please feel free to meet with me as a team before your report. I will be pleased to help. I love to share what Hardy resources I have at hand and to direct you to fruitful ground.
Prospectus

Since we can not read as much Hardy as I would like us to and write a long research paper in the same term, I am requiring that you outline, in a tightly written five page prospectus, a Hardy project that -- given the time -- you would like to complete. The heart of your prospectus should be a synthesis of your own responses to Hardy's work. You will be exposed to plenty of Hardy criticism by way of the class reports you present and listen to, but the approach to a Hardy study you outline in the prospectus should be the results of your own interest in and thinking about Hardy. (You may include another figure, with permission, and outline a comparative study.)

The prospectus should be a project that you write at the end of the term, but that you begin to prepare to write from the very first class, as you begin to develop the language necessary for discussing Hardy and perhaps the special analytical skills necessary for a thorough understanding of Hardy's art. Your prospectus should also clearly present a proposed methodology for completing the project and explain any theoretical approaches you think most appropriate to success.

Please feel free to set up a conference appointment to talk over this project. Though it does not demand the production of many pages, it may take a lot of writing of different sorts and certainly will require a lot of thought to complete successfully. If nothing else, it will be good practice for your Masters paper prospectus, though you should not think that with this assignment I am soliciting Hardy thesis projects to direct. My objective is to force you to shape your thinking about Hardy into a coherent, potentially productive critical idea.