

Literary History

English 206-02

Fall 2014
Pardee 320A
MWF 10-10:50am
1 Unit

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& by appt.

At its most basic, literary history is literature understood within time. What that means in practice, as we'll see, gets messy. How do you define a literary period? An author's career? A canon? A set of reading practices? This course will take you through several case studies built around these questions. We'll read primary texts, we'll consider how to work with literary criticism on those texts, we'll spend time with a wide range of library resources to help us explore this field, and we'll develop researchable questions that can help us place literary texts in context for ourselves and others. Sound good? Then read on, dear readers!

REQUIRED TEXTS

Beowulf, trans. Seamus Heaney (Norton)
Washington Irving, *The Sketch-Book* (Oxford)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poems and Other Writings* (Library of America)
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, trans. Simon Armitage (Norton)
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King* (Penguin)
Walt Whitman, *Poetry and Prose* (Library of America – College Ed.)
Jonathan and Jessica Wordsworth, eds., *Penguin Book of Romantic Poetry* (Penguin)
Other readings available on Moodle

COURSE GOALS

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Analyze a text by contextualizing it within a historical framework;
2. Select and use effectively a range of library-based research tools;
3. Develop a viable, meaningful research question on literary history;
4. Process and present critical work in literary history in written and oral forms.

SCHEDULE

UNIT I: THE MEDIEVAL 19TH CENTURY

Week 1: British & American Timelines

Week 2: Romantic poetry

Week 3: *Beowulf* & *Sir Gawain*

Week 4: Tennyson

UNIT II: AMERICAN CAREERS ACROSS THE CIVIL WAR

Week 5: How to study a career?

Week 6: Whitman

Week 7: Longfellow

UNIT III: MINI-RESEARCH SEMINAR IN READER-BASED LITERARY HISTORY

Week 8: What counts as a *literary* history?

Week 9: Irving & the ELC

Weeks 10-14: projects

Week 15: Making literary history – Native American literature

NB: Day-to-day reading assignments are listed on the course's Moodle site

ASSIGNMENTS

QUESTIONS (15% of total grade)

On days for which we have readings or are planning discussions that would benefit from a range of questions, you are to post a question to the day's link on Moodle by 10pm the night before. I will choose two or three questions each day to highlight our discussion. Questions are anonymous, so only you'll know when your question is chosen; this will make it easier to talk about how to identify the strengths of a question and how to make them even stronger.

EXERCISES (20% of total grade)

In this course, you will be asked to use a range of databases, print sources, and reference materials (you'll even have to go to an off-campus library!). A series of exercises throughout the semester, usually with direct connections to Project Essays (see below), will lead you through these resources and how you might apply them to research in literary history.

PROJECT ESSAYS (10 + 10 + 25% = 45% of total grade)

We will develop step-by-step individual projects across each of the three units of the course. These projects will result in essays (or something like essays) that we will share and discuss together before you receive grades on them. Essays will be due by 5pm on **Friday, September 19; Wednesday, October 15; and Monday, November 24.** Instructions will be given for each essay at the start of a new unit.

MAKING LITERARY HISTORY (20% of total grade)

For the final project of the course, I ask for your help. I want to design a unit for this course on Native American literature – but how do I do it? What questions and problems do I need to address? What is doable and worth pursuing, what might be too much or too out there? Is there even such a thing as Native American literature? We will explore this new way to create literary history at Lafayette together during the last week of class, and you will submit a proposal for your idea of the most teachable, exciting unit to me for your final.

A few words about grading policy:

- Late work will be penalized one letter grade for every day beyond the due date. The first day past the due date starts one hour after assignments are due. Late forum postings will count as one-half credit.
- I calculate grades based on the point system used for GPA on your Lafayette transcript. Thus, an A=4, an A-=3.7, B+=3.3, and so on. F counts as a 0.

- If you wish to contest a grade, you must do the following: 1.) wait 24 hours after you have received the graded assignment, 2.) write and send me a brief argument as to why I should reconsider your grade, and 3.) come see me in person to discuss what you wrote. Keep in mind that if I decide to reconsider the grade, you may wind up with a lower grade than you had before.

A word about **Academic Honesty**: All students must read and follow the guidelines of academic honesty as outlined in the section entitled “Principles of Intellectual Honesty” in the Student Handbook of Lafayette College. Any infraction of these principles will be referred immediately to the Office of the Dean of Studies for adjudication.

A word about technology in the classroom: I invite you to use tablets, laptops, smartphones, etc. in class on one condition. By using these devices, you agree to live-tweet our class sessions, thereby taking notes that all of us can use now and later. Just to warn you, sustained live-tweeting is hard mental (and manual) work! It can be a great service to the class, though, as well as yourself – as long as it doesn’t keep you from joining the discussion.

In compliance with Lafayette College policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Requests for academic accommodations need to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students must register with the Office of the Dean of the College for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations.

The student work in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four credit hour course. Please see the Lafayette College Compliance webpage on the Registrar’s site for the full policy and practice statement.

Moodle contains student information that is protected by the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA). Disclosure to unauthorized parties violates federal privacy laws. Courses using Moodle will make student information visible to other students in this class. Please remember that this information is protected by these federal privacy laws and must not be shared with anyone outside the class. Questions can be referred to the Registrar's Office.