

## **ENG 225: Touring British Literature: The Importance of Place**

Spring 2009

Cedar Crest College

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Office hours: T 5:30-6:30, W 11-12, Th 1-2, and by appointment. (I can meet with students directly after our class meeting, if needed.)

### **Class meetings**

This class begins on Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> and continues through Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>. There is a holiday on Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>. The final exam period for this class is most likely to be scheduled for Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>: we will use this time only if one of our classes is cancelled during the semester. Class begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m.; there will be a half hour break for lunch about halfway through the class, and I will give you a “mini-break” during each half of the class meeting.

### **Course Description**

ENG 225 is a 3-credit course, taught in a combination of lecture and discussion formats and via online work. It satisfies the HUM requirement; satisfaction of the WRI1 requirement is not a prerequisite for this class. The topic for ENG 225 varies with each offering. This semester’s topic is described below:

Location, location, location—“place” matters when it comes to literature. What would Emily Brontë’s novel be without windswept moors? How can we think about Charles Dickens without picturing London? For centuries, British writers have employed landscapes—and cityscapes—in their poems, novels, and plays to explore politics, express gender differences, claim a personal identity, or illuminate cultural values. In this course, we’ll look at examples of British literature from the medieval period to contemporary times to learn how writers have included the rural and the urban landscapes in which they lived within their works—and what those places might “mean” to writer and reader.

### **Texts**

I have ordered the following books for this class:

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (Oxford UP, 2008)

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Signet Classic, 2003)

Mary Steward, *The Ivy Tree* (Chicago Review Press, 2007)

Barry Unsworth, *Morality Play* (Penguin, 1996)

Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Penguin, 2003)

Neil Gaiman, *Neverwhere: A Novel* (Harper Perennial, 2003)

I have also ordered Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (Penguin, 2003), which is recommended, but not required. (English majors should read this novel in addition to viewing the film.)

Additionally, you will find a number of readings and other supplemental materials for this class at our eCompanion site for the class. These readings will be indicated on the Course Schedule

## Course Objectives

As with all English courses offered by the department, ENG 225 seeks to help students acquire the ability to read and analyze critically works of literature, to acquire a general knowledge of the history of literature in English, and to expand their knowledge and appreciation of their own and other cultures and historical moments. As with other English courses, ENG 225 also seeks to develop students' oral and written communication skills.

ENG 225: Touring British Literature seeks specifically to achieve these programmatic goals by helping students 1) to use the language of literary critical discourse to explore how writers employ settings metaphorically and thematically to enhance the vision of their works ; 2) to explore how the registering of landscape and surroundings helped British writers and readers to respond to various cultural changes and intellectual and social developments; and 3) to explore the works of literature *as* literature, written for readers' enjoyment and education.

## Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have gained a greater understanding of the contributions of "place" to a writer's interests, technique, and literary vision. As a result of my contributions as instructor and the opportunity for students to practice via class discussions and written assignments, students will be able to go beyond reading works of literature for the plot and increasingly be able to apply the tools of literary analysis to examine how the elements of a work of literature reinforce its thematic content and reveal its cultural context. Finally, students will be better able to articulate to others, both through oral and written discourse, their understanding and appreciation of both classic and popular examples of British literature and the contribution of these works to the creative expression of human experience.

## Assessment of Course Outcomes

The successfulness of ENG 225: Touring British Literature in achieving its outcomes will be assessed, in part, by the ability of students to complete course assignments successfully. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the assigned texts and their competency in applying the tools of literary analysis through their performance in class discussions and on the midterm and final exam. They will demonstrate their ability to explore the possibilities for interpretation of assigned texts and effectively communicate their insights, both orally and in writing, through class discussions and through an analytic paper.

## Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are as follows:

1. Midterm exam, worth 20% of the final grade
2. Take-home final exam, worth 20% of the final grade
3. Paper (4-6 pages), worth 30% of the final grade. You will have your choice of three possible topics/due dates for your paper. A brief description of each paper topic is included in the course schedule below.

More details about exam and paper assignments will be provided during the first class meeting.

4. Discussion board contributions at eCollege website, worth 15% of the final grade. Each week after our first class meeting, you will find a discussion prompt posted to the ECompanion web site for our course. You will be asked to contribute two responses to the discussion: one which directly responds to the prompt question and another in which you respond to one of your classmate's contributions. Your weekly responses will be graded with a  $\surd$ ,  $\surd+$ , or  $\surd-$  on the basis of how well they achieve the following: 1) timeliness (all discussion board contributions are due by 9:00 a.m. on the day of our class meeting); 2) appropriate length for the assignment (each response should be a generous paragraph in length, not just a single sentence or phrase); and 3) quality of response—writing should demonstrate thoughtfulness, rather than superficiality or “just going through the motions.” I will not expect a polished response—indeed, the purpose of all informal writing assignments is to encourage you to explore ideas and concepts, and such explorations are often tentative and messy—but I will expect that you have given each discussion question reasonable attention.

If you are unable to access or have any difficulty using the eCollege site features at any time, please let me know this at once. I will help to resolve any access issue you might have, but, in the absence of your effort to work with me to resolve problems as they occur, I will not excuse your non-completion of online assignments on the basis of a claim that you have not been able to access or use the eCollege site and/or features.

5. Class participation, including oral contributions and in-class writing responses, worth 10% of the final grade. You are expected to come to class fully prepared to engage in lively discussion of our course materials. Active and consistent participation, not just bodily presence, is required for full credit. (For example, if you attend every class but remain silent, you will have earned a “B-” for this component of the participation grade.) I will also, on occasion, ask us to take a break from discussion and to reflect on our work via an informal written response. These responses will be collected and will be graded with a  $\surd+$ ,  $\surd$ , or  $\surd-$ . Together, your oral contributions and your informal written responses will constitute your participation grade.

3. Attendance, worth 5% of your final grade. Because this class is an accelerated class, missing a class is equivalent to missing two weeks of a regular semester offering. As the educational experience of this class involves discussion and reflection, as well as the encounters with the literature itself, you must attend all classes for the full time in order to receive the educational benefits of the class. Absences will be penalized as follows: 1) missing one half of one class will be overlooked, if that is the only absence; 2) missing one entire class will result in an attendance grade of C; 3) missing two or more classes will result in an attendance grade of F.

You may not make up missed in-class work unless I have received notification of your absence from the Dean of Students. If I have received such notification of an absence from the Dean of Students, I will penalize that absence with an attendance grade of B and work with you to make up in-class work. If, however, you will be absent for more than one class, even if that absence is registered as legitimate by the Dean of Students, I cannot accommodate the additional absences without the penalties described above. See my Course Policies handout.

## **Course Policies**

Please see attached document for specific information regarding attendance and my policies regarding absences, classroom protocol and the Cedar Crest Honor Code, late work, make-up work, plagiarism, disability accommodations, and class cancellations.

## Use of Study Aids

I am aware that many students turn to various study aids (e.g., *Cliffs Notes*, *SparkNotes*, Wikipedia) for help when they take literature courses. I do not recommend the use of these guides/websites, because they tend to provide overly simplistic—and occasionally inaccurate—summaries of plots and themes. Furthermore, they prevent students from engaging with a literary work on its own terms, noting interesting details, making connections to other works on the syllabus, placing a work in its historical or cultural context. I acknowledge, however, that my warning will not prevent students from utilizing these resources. Therefore, I urge the following: DO NOT use these aids in lieu of reading a literary work. If you refer to these aids at all, refer to them ONLY after having read the assigned text and consider them to provide supplemental information to the results of your own reading of the text and our class discussion of it. In no circumstances should you incorporate information from a study aid or Wikipedia into a paper or exam, as these resources do not meet the definition of an academic source.

## Course Schedule

This course is accompanied by an optional 10-day study-abroad experience to Scotland and England (you must have already registered for and paid for the tour in order to participate in this experience). I have ordered our discussions each week, in part, to follow the journey through Scotland and England that some of us will be taking and, in part, to allow us to trace the development of a consciousness of landscape among British writers.

\*\*Please note that you have a reading assignment due by our first class meeting. This is the only way in which we can complete our class assignments within this accelerated format.

### Week One, March 21<sup>st</sup>

#### *Reading assignments:*

- Excerpts from Dorothy Wordsworth's journals, available at the eCollege course site
- Selected poems by William Wordsworth, available at the eCollege course site: "Lines Written in Early Spring," "I wandered lonely as a cloud," "The world is too much with us"
- Selected poems from Kim Taplin's collection, *By the Harbour Wall*, available at the eCollege course site: "Walking in North Devon," the cycle "This Year, Next Year," and, from the cycle *Muniments*, "Greenham Common, Berkshire," "Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire," "High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire," and "Ruislip, in the London Borough of Hillingdon"
- Selected poems by Robert Burns, available at the eCollege course site: "Winter—A Dirge," "Verses Written with a Pencil," "The Winter It Is Past," "The Chevalier's Lament," "My Heart's In The Highlands," "Address to Edinburgh"
- Excerpt from Sir Walter Scott's poetry and prose, accessible via the eCollege course site: Cantos 1 and 2 from *The Lady of the Lake* and Chapter 4 of *Rob Roy*

#### *Brief class outline:*

- Introduction to the course
- Romanticism and the Picturesque: 19<sup>th</sup> century tourism, nature poetry, and the ethics of seeing landscapes
- Discussion of Dorothy and William Wordsworth's work
- Discussion of Kim Taplin's contemporary eco-poetry

- Discussion of Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott and the creation of Scotland and its landscape as a tourist destination. Discussion of Scottish history and the creation of Scotland itself as “myth” in literature and film.
- Screening and discussion of *Rob Roy*
- **Writing option 1 assigned:** comparing film versions/visions of Scottish identity, past and present, rural and urban (*Braveheart* versus *Trainspotting*). Due Week Three

### Week Two, March 28<sup>th</sup>

#### *Assignments:*

- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
- Contribute your discussion board responses by class time

#### *Brief class outline:*

- Discussion of *Wuthering Heights* and the transfer of Romantic treatments of landscape to the realist novel tradition
- Discussion of cultural shifts in appreciation for “rural” landscapes in the face of urban and technological developments
- Screening and discussion of *Miss Potter*: exploration of women’s writing and the land

### Week Three, April 4<sup>th</sup>

#### *Assignments:*

- Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
- Mary Stewart, *The Ivy Tree*
- Contribute your discussion board responses by class time
- If you are submitting a paper for Writing Option 1, it is due by class time

#### *Brief class outline:*

- History and culture of England: some additional background
- Discussion of *The Ivy Tree* and contemporary treatments of romance, psychology, and landscape
- Discussion of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: consideration of the internal, the aberrant, and the urban: relationships between setting and characterization
- **Writing option 2 assigned:** comparing relationship between psychology and landscape in two of the following: Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal entries, Kim Taplin’s poetry, *Wuthering Heights*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Ivy Tree*. Due Week Five

### **Break**

### Week Four, April 18<sup>th</sup>

#### *Assignments:*

- York cycle mystery plays, available at the eCollege site: “The Flood,” “Joseph’s Trouble about Mary,” “The Nativity”
- Barry Unsworth, *Morality Play*

- Contribute your discussion board responses by class time
- Review for your midterm exam

*Brief class outline:*

- **Midterm exam**
- Discussion of medieval cycle plays and their performance implications (these plays were originally performed in the streets of York on a single festival day); discussion of the York cycle itself
- Discussion of *Morality Play*, a contemporary novel inspired by the cycle plays

Week Five, April 25<sup>th</sup>

*Assignments:*

- Jane Austen, *Persuasion*
- Contribute your discussion board responses by class time
- If you are submitting a paper for Writing Option 2, it is due by class time

*Brief class outline:*

- Discussion of Austen's *Persuasion*, bringing together our thematic conversations from earlier classes
- Screening and discussion of *Persuasion*: the heritage film tradition; considerations of *mis en scene*
- **Writing option 3 assigned:** comparing the way in which "place" reinforces social values in *Morality Play* and *Persuasion*. Due by Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Week Six, May 2<sup>nd</sup>

*Assignments:*

- Neil Gaiman, *Neverwhere*
- Contribute your final discussion board responses by class time

*Brief class outline:*

- History, culture, and places of London, for discussion; exploration of the significance of the city, this city
- Discussion of Gaiman's *Neverwhere*; consideration of how writers use London thematically.
- Screening of film version of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (English majors should read the novel, though I will not test you on the novel itself.). Discussion of rural versus urban imagery and visuals in films and novels.
- Wrap-up to the course; course evaluations
- **Take-home final exam distributed**

**Take-home final exam is due by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>. If you are submitting a paper for Writing Option 3, that paper is also due by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>.**