

ENG 321: English Novel (Defoe to Austen)

Winter 2014

MWF 9:00-9:50 a.m.

CRN 38828

221 McKenzie

Hall

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen O'Fallon

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Hours: MWF 2:00-3:00 p.m.

and by appointment

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Course Description

The 18th century ushered in a new form of literature in England: the novel. Novels took various forms, including the epistolary novel, the picaresque novel, the gothic novel, and the novel of manners. As we study examples of these novels by some of the most influential authors of the day, we will discuss how the culture of the time shaped the literature, and we will tackle the problem of creating a working definition for a genre that—from its very beginnings—was anti-conventional and diverse.

Required Texts

Defoe, Daniel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) Broadview
Ed.*

Sterne, Laurence *The Life and Opinions of Tristram
Shandy* (1759-67)

Burney, Fanny *Evelina* (1778)

Lewis, Matthew *The Monk* (1796) Broadview Ed.*

Austen, Jane *Persuasion* (1818)

*Please be sure to purchase these critical editions because we will be using the supplemental materials.

Written Assignments

No exams are required in this class. Instead, you will be writing a series of one-page letters on **all** novels and short (3-4 pages MAX!) essays on **three** of the five required novels, and they will be due as indicated on the schedule. Because letters will form the basis of group discussion on the days they are due, and you will be expected to come prepared to read them aloud, you should write to provoke discussion. Every student will read aloud at each group meeting.

All essays must be narrowly focused, and ample direct textual evidence must be offered in support of all assertions. [Translation: You must quote directly from the novel!] Topics should grow out of letters and subsequent discussion of those letters.

Epistle [Letter] Writing Assignment

Purposes of the assignment:

1. To begin the process of articulating your thoughts about each reading.
2. To provoke class discussion.
3. To enhance understanding of the epistolary novel.
4. To practice the process of taking an argumentative stance and supporting it.
5. To provide the basis for 3-4 page essays on three of the assigned novels.

Requirements:

On the days indicated on the course schedule, bring a one-page (may be single-spaced) letter addressed to a

character in the assigned novel, to the author of the novel or to your classmates.

Each letter should address a single issue from the reading that you find provocative and want to pursue in class discussion. DO NOT just summarize what the author says—express your response to what you've read. Be specific about why you react the way you do. The letter must show that you have read the assignment carefully and should express a clear position in relation to a character's actions or to the author's ideas and/or methods. Letters that do not demonstrate that you have completed the assigned reading AND that you have made a serious attempt to engage with the text will not receive full credit.

One copy of these letters must be provided for the instructor. Students will keep a second copy to read aloud in class in designated groups. LETTERS WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTED DURING CLASS ON THE DAY THEY ARE DUE. THEY CANNOT BE TURNED IN LATE. If you know you will be absent on the day a letter is due, you must see that one copy gets to the instructor and copies get to each member of your discussion group.

These letters become part of an ongoing conversation among the authors of the works we examine, you, your classmates, and the instructor. On the day letters are due, you will meet with an assigned discussion group. All members of the group will read letters aloud, and then the group will discuss them. At the end of the class, groups will choose one letter to represent its ideas. At the beginning of the next class session, someone will read that letter aloud to the whole class and summarize the response it provoked. If it sparked disagreement, discuss the different positions group members held. It is important that you

have better reasons for choosing a letter than just "liking" it or thinking it is "good."

Letters are not graded for content or skillful execution (but don't forget that your work is going to be read by all your classmates). You will be given a summary grade based solely on how many letters you turn in, provided that each clearly demonstrates that you completed the reading assignment. I reserve the right to withhold credit from letters that say nothing or that waste space whining about the assignment itself, but if you turn in every letter and **take the project seriously**, you will receive an "A" which will be equivalent to the grade on one formal essay.

Three of these letters will form the basis for 3-4 page essays on the assigned novels. You may choose to write on any three of the five novels, but essays are due as indicated on the course schedule. Once a due date for a particular novel has passed, you cannot turn in an essay on that novel, so carefully plan which ones you will write about and give yourself sufficient time to compose a draft and revise it. I encourage you to bring drafts to my office hours so we can work on them together, but please do not email drafts and expect me to edit them for you.

Schedule of Assignments:

Week One: March 31-April 4

M Introductions
W Lecture: The origins of the novel in England
F Robinson Crusoe Introduction and pp. 47-134

Week Two: April 7-11

- M Robinson Crusoe pp. 135-222 and Appendix H
- W Robinson Crusoe pp. 223-304; Letters due; Small group discussion
- F Group reports on letter discussion

Week Three: April 14-18

- M Appendix D
- W Essay on Robinson Crusoe DUE
Background on the epistolary novel
- F Evelina Letters 1-21

Week Four: April 21-25

- M Evelina Letters 22-43
- W Evelina Letters 44-65
- F Evelina Letters 66-84; Letters due; Small group discussion

Week Five: April 28-May 2

- M Group reports on letter discussion
- W Essay on Evelina DUE
Background on the picaresque novel and metafiction
- F Tristram Shandy Vol. I

Week Six: May 5-9

- M Tristram Shandy Vols. II, III
- W Tristram Shandy Vols. IV, V
- F Tristram Shandy Vols. VI, VII

Week Seven: May 12-16

M Tristram Shandy Vols. VIII, IX; Letters due; Small group discussion

W Group reports on letter discussion

F The Monk Introduction and Vol. I

Week Eight: May 19-23

M The Monk Vol. II

Essay on Tristram Shandy DUE;

W The Monk Vol. III; Letters due; Small group discussion

F Group reports on letter discussion
Appendices A and B

Week Nine: May 26-30

M MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVED—NO CLASS

W Persuasion Chapters 1-8

Background on the novel of manners

F Essay on The Monk DUE

Jane Austen on film

Week Ten: June 2-6

M Persuasion Chapters 9-17

W Persuasion Chapters 18-24; Letters due; Small group discussion

F Group reports on letter discussion

Final Exam Period: Thursday, June 12 10:15-12:15

PAPERS on Persuasion DUE

Desired Learning Outcomes

All assignments in this class give students opportunities to practice skills that the English Department has designated as “desired learning outcomes” for the undergraduate major. These outcomes are:

1. to read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. to draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. to perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
4. to write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatically correct prose;
5. to employ logic, creativity and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
6. to employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay’s thesis.

Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, and paraphrases) must be properly documented. Refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct in the *Schedule of Classes*. In cases where plagiarism has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is my standard practice. It is simple to discover if a paper has been “borrowed” from the internet, so don’t underestimate my ability to spot plagiarism. Please talk to me if you have any questions about your use of sources *before* you turn in something that might be questionable.

Policy on Late Assignments and “Incompletes”

If exigent circumstances cause problems with the due date for the essays, students must discuss this with the instructor **BEFORE** the deadline so that arrangements can be made. **Late work which is not cleared with the instructor prior to the due date will not be accepted. Exceptions will not be made for assignments which specify that they must be submitted in class on the due date.**

A final grade of “incomplete” can only be granted if a student has turned in at least 50% of the required work when he/she requests this option. Students requesting an “incomplete” must come to the instructor with a written proposal detailing when and how they intend to complete all

required work for the course—including a plan for fulfilling the class participation component of the course.

Policy on Disabilities:

Students with physical or learning disabilities should consult the instructor as soon as possible so accommodations can be made.

Grades

Each of the following requirements has weight in determining your grade:

- ✓ Essays (60%)
- ✓ Letters (20%)
- ✓ Attendance and Participation (20%)

Note: This grade includes reading letters aloud and working with groups

*Questions regarding grades should be addressed during office hours, NOT through email. Expressing concerns as a desire to learn rather than to obtain what you “deserved” or “expected” will set a productive tone for such discussions. Please understand that an instructor cannot assign grades based on how hard a student thinks he/she has worked on an assignment—only on the written results of that effort. However, writing multiple drafts of essays and **careful** revising of those drafts should lead to more polished work that makes a positive impression on the reader.*

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to be in class, on time, having read the materials assigned for that day and having done any required writing. Assignments are due when class begins.

Attendance will be taken every day. It is your responsibility to sign in on the attendance sheet *for yourself only*. More than three absences will result in a one-half grade penalty in the final course grade. Attending class is a choice you have to make on your own, and that means you have to accept the consequences of that choice.

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, except in two cases:

1. Illness so severe and prolonged that a doctor officially excuses you.
2. You are involved in a university-sanctioned activity.

Written proof of these excuses is required, but there is no need to explain your reasons for other absences. Emailing me that you are going to miss does not excuse you from class.

If you know you are going to miss a class, make advance arrangements with me to turn in any work that is due and/or to pick up handouts. Ask a classmate to catch you up on discussion that you will miss.

If you have an unplanned absence, see me *as soon as you return* to pick up missed handouts, and ask a classmate for any missed notes. If you have questions about material discussed while you were gone, come to my office hours. We will have carried on in your absence, so please don't be arrogant enough to ask *if* you missed anything. Of course, you did.

STUDENTS MUST ALWAYS BRING TEXTS TO CLASS WHEN THEY ARE BEING DISCUSSED. WHEN ESSAYS ARE ASSIGNED TO BE READ ALOUD, STUDENTS MUST BRING THEM TO CLASS. IT SHOULD GO WITHOUT SAYING THAT WRITING IMPLEMENTS ARE ALSO REQUIRED.

Students are expected to contribute significantly to discussion, and to do so in a way that shows respect for classmates. Listening carefully is as important as speaking thoughtfully, so please do not interrupt or wave your hand insistently while someone else is speaking. All ideas are welcome in this class, but they should be backed up by evidence from the texts.

To be fully present in the class, you must be focused on the reading and the discussion at hand. **THEREFORE, please turn off and put away all electronic devices before class begins. PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE THE ROOM DURING CLASS UNLESS YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY.**