Course Description
In this course we will study British Literature from the Medieval period through the eighteenth century. This course covers nearly 1,000 years of literature, so it's an impossible course, really. We can't cover everything in one semester, but what we can do is read the texts deeply and intensely, argue with and about them during class sessions, place them in historical contexts, and think and write essays about their form and significance. We will read of Beowulf’s heroic and bloody battles with the monster Grendel and his protective monster-mother; of Sir Gawain and the indestructible Green Knight; of Doctor Faustus selling his soul to the devil (this is the original tale); of Hamlet's quest to avenge his father’s murder; and much, much more.

Course prerequisites: C or better in English 1010 and English 1020

Course Objectives
After completing this course, students will:

- Acquire broad knowledge of important texts and/or authors
- Understand literary eras and/or movements and their historical and cultural contexts
- Identify and apply basic literary genres, terms, and concepts
- Analyze and discuss thematic concerns in literature
- Develop ability to read literary works closely in order to analyze and interpret them
- Practice analysis of literary texts in well-written assignments

Course Website
https://britlitaum.weebly.com

Academic Support
All students have the opportunity to receive free academic support at AUM. Visit the Learning Center (LC) in the WASC on second floor Library or the Instructional Support Lab (ISL) in 203 Goodwyn Hall. The LC.ISL offers writing consulting as well as tutoring in almost every class through graduate school. The LC may be reached at 334-244-3470 (call or walk-in for a session), and the ISL may be reached at 334-244-3265. ISL tutoring is first-come-first-served. Current operating hours can be found at www.aum.edu/learningcenter.
IT Support
Students may seek technology assistance from the ITS Help Desk located in the computer lab on the first floor of the Taylor Center. You may also call 334-244-3500 or email helpdesk@aum.edu.

Accommodations
Students who need accommodations are asked to contact me by email to discuss your accommodations. If you have not registered for accommodation services through the Center for Disability Services (CDS), but need accommodations, make an appointment with DCS, 147 Taylor Center, or call 334-244-3631 or email CDS at cds@aum.edu.

Expectations
You will do a lot of reading for this class, and I expect you to do a lot of writing as well. I expect you to read the literature each week, and I expect you to participate in the online discussions. If something is not working for you, please let me know—I’m flexible, and I will consider changing my approach if you’re struggling.

The following are my expectations for the work you do in this course. To succeed in this class, you should follow these guidelines. All students in the class are expected to:

- Check your AUM email at least one time each day
- Spend at least one hour each day on course readings and assignments
- Take notes on every lecture
- Read all of your fellow students’ discussion posts before writing your own posts
- Organize your time so that you complete the work throughout the week (rather than on one day)
- Begin working on major assignments at least two weeks in advance of the due date
- Go through multiple rounds of revision on your major assignments
- Ask me questions early and often

Required Texts
PDF Readings (online)
Reliable Internet access
Facebook account

Assignments and Weight Distribution
Homework Assignments (5) 15% @ 3% each
Facebook Discussion Group 15%
Research Summary 15%
Essay Outline 10%
Critical Essay (1000-1500 words) 15%
Essay Exam 15%
Digital Group Project 15%

Requirements

Homework Assignments: There will be five homework assignments throughout the semester, each worth 3% of your grade. Here are the details (see daily schedule for due dates):

Homework #1: Analytical summary of Terry Eagleton’s “What is Literature?” : Write a two-paragraph summary and response to Eagleton’s essay. In the first paragraph, summarize Eagleton’s main argument: How does he answer the question that titles his essay, and why does he think this is important? In the second paragraph,
respond to his argument by explaining how Eagleton’s argument has or has not changed your conception of what “literature” is and what it means.

Homework #2: Response to love poem: Write a two-paragraph analysis and response to one of the love poems assigned during week two. In the first paragraph, explain what the poem is about and how it exemplifies a particular kind of love. In the second paragraph, explain why you chose this poem and how it relates to your own experiences of love.

Homework #3: Create a Canterbury Tales meme: Choose one character from Chaucer and create a meme that reveals something about that character. Post your meme on our Facebook page.

Homework #4: Write a sonnet: Just what it sounds like. Take some time to write an English or Italian sonnet on any topic you’d like. Try to follow the structure as closely as you can. If you’d like to share your sonnet with the class, please post your poem on our Facebook page. Many of my past students have published their sonnets in AUM’s Filibuster magazine.

Homework #5: Music-Literature Comparison: Pick a contemporary song (your choice, of course) and analyze the lyrics as a poem. The song could remind you of something we’ve read this semester, or you can consider it a work of literature on its own. Write one detailed paragraph explaining your choice of song and analyzing the lyrics. Post your paragraph and song on Facebook. If you prefer to have a more direct prompt, here is one (this is what I would write about):

In the past three years, three notable musicians have been awarded highly prestigious awards based on the literary merits of their lyrics: Bob Dylan was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2016; Jay Z was inducted to the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2017; and Kendrick Lamar was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 2018 (for his album DAMN). All of these awards were somewhat controversial—a musician had never before won the Nobel Prize in Literature, and a hip-hop artist had never won the Pulitzer (it’s usually given to jazz or classical musicians). These prizes were based on Dylan’s and Jay Z’s and Lamar’s lyrics, and not necessarily the music—their work is being recognized as literature. Select one of these artists and explain how their lyrics work as poetry, using one representative example of a song.

Facebook Discussion Group: This is the discussion/participation portion of the course. I have set up a private Facebook group for our class (https://www.facebook.com/groups/2204178259794133/), and you should write meaningful posts each week. By “meaningful,” I mean a post that is thoughtful, engaged, and shows that you have grappled with the reading for the week. This is a more informal discussion as you make your way through the readings, similar to what would happen in a face-to-face class over the course of the week. I will provide you with a series of discussion questions for the readings each week, and you can respond directly to those questions, but you are free to post anything you’d like about the readings.

I will assess your discussion posts on quality and quantity. A quality post is one that is meaningful, as defined above, and will generally be around 200 words. A series of shorter responses to your fellow students’ posts will also count as meaningful. Those of you who write meaningful posts more often than others will earn a higher grade. Grading for discussion posts will be cumulative and based on a bell curve: the top 10% of students will get an “A”; the next 20% will get a “B”; the next 40% will get a “C”; the next 20% will get a “D”; and the last 10% will get an “F.” So, for example, if there are 30 students in the class, only the top 3 students will get an “A.” After them, there will be 6 “B”s, 12 “C”s, 6 “D”s, and 3 “F”s.

Research Summary: As emerging scholars and future professionals in your respective fields, you should become familiar with research methods and communication skills. To that end, you will find and summarize a scholarly source related to one of the assigned readings for this course. You should use the library databases and/or Internet to find an appropriate journal article or book chapter related to the reading. The source should be peer-reviewed—that means it has been vetted by experts in the field and published by a reputable
journal or press. Any source in an academic journal or in a book published by a university press will be peer-reviewed. I can help you search for sources, as can AUM’s librarians. You will sign up for a particular reading the first week of the semester, and you will have two options for the summary:

Option #1: Write a professional 500-word summary of the source in a Word document.

Option #2: Create a five-minute online/digital presentation (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, YouTube video) in which you summarize the source.

Whichever option you choose, you will post your summary to our discussion board for your fellow students to read/view.

**Essay Outline:** You will create a detailed outline of your essay in advance, using a form provided by me. The outline will require an initial position/main point/working thesis; a series of topic sentences; and quotations from the reading about which you are writing. The outline will require a good deal of planning and organization—the idea is to have a working outline of your paper before you write the first draft.

**Critical Essay:** You will write one essay for this class, which should focus on one assigned reading. In this paper, you will articulate a position/thesis about the reading: what the reading means, what is important, how it works, and what its ultimate point seems to be. You should show me you can do a close reading. See the prompt at the back of the syllabus for more details.

**Essay Exam:** There will be one exam for this course. The exam will consist of three short essay questions. I will email you the exam before finals week, and you will have one week to complete it.

**Digital Group Project:** This will be a collaborative project you create with your group, which we'll form during the first week of class. You will work on this project throughout the semester. This project can take on any form you want—be creative! What I’d like you to do is to create something that reflects on, engages with, extends, develops, remakes, riffs on, etc., a literary text or author we study this semester. Connect the literature we study to our contemporary world. The project should be substantial—that is, it should reflect a semester’s worth of work, and not something you throw together in a few days.

A few examples that students have done in the past:

* Turn an assigned reading into a song/music video that you perform
* Film a short documentary on a particular reading or author
* Create a short film based on a particular reading or author
* Create a podcast on a particular reading or author
* Create a website devoted to a particular reading or author
* Rewrite an assigned text (think *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*)

Here are links to some projects from past students:

Modern-day Wife of Bath, Sir Gawain, Shakespeare’s sonnet 130, and Faustus: [https://youtu.be/KU1x_TfRJs](https://youtu.be/KU1x_TfRJs)
Website on William Blake: [http://lbrblake.weebly.com](http://lbrblake.weebly.com)
Website on John Milton: [http://johnmiltonworks.weebly.com](http://johnmiltonworks.weebly.com)

In addition to the project itself, you will also write a 500-word overview of the project. This overview should contain a summary/explanation of the project; a rationale for your choices; a summary of the research you performed; and a description of the work each group member performed. Each group member should sign at
the bottom to confirm that they agree with the description (you can sign electronically). **You will all receive one grade for the project.** However, if there is a reason you believe individuals should be graded separately—for example, one group member went MIA and didn’t do anything—you should state this in the description.

**Make-up Policy:** I allow make-ups for excused absences. In those cases, we will meet to schedule alternate dates/times to submit missed work. I will schedule make-ups on a case-by-case basis. The details of AUM’s attendance policy are [here](#).

**Plagiarism** is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. All writing submitted for this class must be your own writing and must be written exclusively for this class. Any use of quotations, paraphrases, or ideas from outside sources, including Internet sources, must be properly documented (in this case an “outside source” means anything other than your own unique creation). You may not recycle or reuse writing that you wrote for another class, including any other English course at AUM or another university—you also may not use any work from a class previously taken but not passed. While re-using your own text is not improperly using outside sources, it is academic dishonesty because it does not require new work specifically for this class, and it is subject to the penalties described below. In cases where plagiarism or other academic dishonesty is clearly established, you will automatically fail the course, regardless of the value of the assignment. You will also be reported to the Office of the Provost, which may choose to impose additional sanctions. An “F” for plagiarism in a course will be clearly noted on your transcripts. Should students ever need to share their transcripts, to be eligible for employment or for an application to graduate school, there will be no question that they failed because they cheated. If you are confused or uncertain in any way as to whether your paper constitutes plagiarism, come talk to me before submitting your writing. Once you have submitted an assignment, there’s nothing I can do. The full policy on academic misconduct can be found in the Student Handbook.

A note here: I have at least one student fail a class each year due to plagiarism. Please don’t be this student. If you are struggling to complete an assignment, come talk to me. If you are using outside sources and you’re not sure if you’re citing correctly, come talk to me. If there’s any doubt in your mind at all regarding using outside sources, come talk to me.

**Evaluations:** You will be allowed to evaluate the course in the last few weeks of the semester. A link will be provided to you via Blackboard and AUM email to complete these voluntary, anonymous course evaluations.

**Grading**

For any assignment, and for the course overall, I do want to stress that I consider **A-work** as exceptional. Such work goes above and beyond the requirements; it shows not only an effort to wrestle with ideas, readings, and writing, but also a successful outcome. **B-work** is good, quality work. Such work pushes beyond the general requirements and shows thoughtfulness and time spent on the ideas, readings, and writing. **C-work** satisfies the requirements of an assignment. It is work that meets all the criteria, yet it does not step beyond those original goals. **C** is an average grade; most work generally falls near this category. **D** and **F** work is work not completed or work that fails to achieve the goals of the assignment. You may talk with me at any point in the semester about your standing in class.
Daily Schedule

As this is an online course, we don’t have a specific meeting day, but you should plan to spread out the readings and assignments throughout the week, just like in a traditional face-to-face class. I have structured the course so that you can complete the work on your own schedule, but each week’s assignments are due by Thursday. All readings and assignments are due by 11:59pm each Thursday. The lectures, PowerPoints, and weekly assignments will only be available until Thursday. On Friday mornings, I will upload the new materials for the following week. So, you will need to take notes, keep up on the readings, and submit all assignments on time, just like a face-to-face class. I have highlighted major assignment due dates.

**Week One: January 10: Introduction to the Course**
**DUE: HOMEWORK #1**
Introduction to the course, texts, and syllabus (watch the intro video first)
Read: Terry Eagleton’s “What is Literature?”; and first-week poems (online PDFs)

**Week Two: January 17: Introduction to Poetry**
**DUE: HOMEWORK #2**
Read: selection of poems and introduction to poetry analysis (online PDFs)

**Unit One: The Medieval Period**

**Week Three: January 24: Beowulf**
Read: first half of Beowulf – through fight with Grendel’s mother (online PDF)

**Week Four: January 31: Beowulf**
Finish Beowulf

**Week Five: February 7: Sir Gawain**
Read: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (online PDF)

**Week Six: February 14: Geoffrey Chaucer**
Read: Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales: The General Prologue and The Miller’s Prologue and Tale* (http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/tr-index.htm)

**Week Seven: February 21: Geoffrey Chaucer**
**DUE: HOMEWORK #3**
Read: Chaucer’s *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale* (http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/tr-index.htm)

**Unit Two: The Renaissance**

**Week Eight: February 28: Christopher Marlowe**
Read: Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (online PDF)

**Week Nine: March 7: William Shakespeare**

MARCH 11-15, SPRING BREAK
Week Ten: March 21: William Shakespeare
Finish Hamlet

Week Eleven: March 28: Renaissance Lyric Poetry
Read: Sir Thomas Wyatt’s sonnet 10 and ballad 80; Sir Philip Sidney’s sonnets 1, 2, and 7; and William Shakespeare’s sonnets 1, 2, 18, and 55 (find online)*

Week Twelve: April 4: Metaphysical Poets
DUE: HOMEWORK #4
Read: John Donne’s “To His Mistress Going to Bed,” “The Flea,” and Sonnet 14; and George Herbert’s “The Altar,” “Redemption,” and “Easter Wings” (find online)*

Unit Three: The Eighteenth Century

Week Thirteen: April 11: Eighteenth-Century Satire
Read: Alexander Pope’s The Rape of the Lock; Jonathan Swift’s A Modest Proposal and “The Lady’s Dressing Room”; and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s “The Reasons that Induced Dr. S. to Write a Poem call’d the Lady’s Dressing Room” (find online)*

* You can find most of these poems on this excellent site: http://www.luminarium.org

Week Fourteen: April 18: The Eighteenth-Century Sexual Imagination
DUE: ESSAY OUTLINE
Read: Eliza Haywood’s Fantomina; or, Love in a Maze (http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/haywood/fantomina/fantomina.html)

Week Fifteen: April 25: Poetry and Music
DUE: HOMEWORK #5
DUE: ESSAY EXAM

Finals Week: May 2: Final Projects Due
DUE: DIGITAL GROUP PROJECT
DUE: CRITICAL ESSAY
Assignment Prompt for Critical Essay

Write an essay of 1000-1500 words in which you develop a position/thesis on an assigned reading supported by a close reading of assigned reading. You should make a clear overall point/thesis in the introduction—this is your main idea. What single main point do you want to communicate about the literary text? Your close reading will then support and illustrate that main point. You should demonstrate the writing skills you learned in English 1020, but you should also move beyond first-year writing. No five-paragraph-form essays!

Your paper must follow MLA style and formatting; it must be double-spaced; and it must meet the minimum word requirement. I will not accept papers that do not meet these requirements.

Your paper should include an introductory paragraph that establishes the text about which you are writing, its background and context, and a clear statement of your position/thesis.

Your paper should then develop as a series of body paragraphs, each of which begins with a clear topic sentence and includes evidence quoted directly from the literary text. You should analyze and interpret the evidence in each paragraph (this is the close reading): so, you should quote, paraphrase, discuss, and analyze specific passages from the literary text in each paragraph. Your ability to perform a close reading is essential for this paper.

The paper should end with a concluding paragraph that returns to your main idea without restating it; makes a point that ties everything together; and provides readers with a takeaway point.

At the sentence level, you should demonstrate a command of standard grammatical and mechanical conventions. Spend time proofreading to minimize grammatical and mechanical errors.

Ultimately, I want to see you perform a close reading in this paper. Show me that you’ve done careful reading (and re-reading) and thinking, and that you’ve spent time crafting the paper.

* * * * *

A strong critical essay should contain the following:

A crafted introduction and conclusion

* A strong introduction identifies the text(s) you will analyze; defines the topic of your essay; states why your position matters; provides appropriate background/context; and contains a statement of your main point/idea/thesis. The introduction sets the tone for the rest of the essay, so it’s essential to the paper as a whole.

* A strong conclusion makes a judgment about your original position (but does not restate anything); makes a point that ties everything together; and gives the reader a takeaway point. The conclusion works with the introduction to frame your paper: this is the last thing readers read, so make sure to end your paper on a solid note.

Close reading and analytical claims

* Analytical claims are interpretations or ideas regarding texts (as opposed to opinions, which offer no evidence); textual evidence is the documentation, paraphrase, or analysis of the text(s) linked to specific claims. This is close reading: you should link your ideas and statements about the text/s to specific words, phrases, lines, images, paragraphs in the text/s. The body paragraphs should all have some kind of close reading of the text.
Logical structure and organization

* Coherent paragraphs have strong topic sentences that develop systematically throughout the paper. After the topic sentence, you should provide evidence to illustrate and support that topic sentence. This evidence will usually take the form of a quotation or reference to the literary text or an outside text. After stating the evidence, you should analyze, interpret, and explain that evidence for readers (this is the close reading). The final sentence of the paragraph should conclude the main point of that paragraph.

* A logically structured and organized paper contains clear transitions between paragraphs. In most cases, a transition word or phrase should appear in the topic sentences of body paragraphs that “reaches back” to the previous paragraph, creating the transition/link.

* At the sentence level, you should demonstrate clear phrasing; apt word choice; and a command of standard grammatical and mechanical rules.