

**Introduction to British Culture I  
Required BA Introductory Course (2018–2019)**

**Dr. Jonathan Stavsky**

**Course Description**

What did the English language sound like over a thousand years ago? Why is it so different today? Has British culture always enjoyed the same global prestige? What are its sources? How did it come to assert itself? What was it like to be a woman in the fourteenth century? Is Shakespeare really the greatest love poet? Can texts written in the remote past speak to present readers? These are some of the questions asked, and partly answered, by this survey of English literature from its earliest medieval records to the Renaissance and beyond. It aims to familiarize you with some of the best poetry and drama ever produced in England and to give you the tools to understand, enjoy, and take further courses on the works you will study. By the end of the semester, you should be able to identify, analyze, contextualize, and trace the development of their forms, themes, and ideologies.

**Reading Material**

The following works will be taught: *Beowulf*\*; Marie de France's *Lais*\*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*\*; *Everyman*; Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*\*; Renaissance love sonnets\*; Shakespeare's *Sonnets*\*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet*; and Milton's *Paradise Lost*\* (texts marked with an asterisk will be read in selections). In addition, you must read introductions to each period and work covered by the course. All texts will be made available on Moodle. To ensure your success on the exams, you must work exclusively with the assigned editions or translations.

**Evaluation**

1. Full attendance (10%);
2. A midterm exam (30%), where you will be asked to identify and explicate passages from texts studied in the first part of the course according to a fixed set of criteria;
3. A longer final exam (60%) that includes (a) identification and explication of passages taken from works studied in the second part of the course and (b) an essay that spans works from both parts.

To pass this course, you must attend the required number of classes and get a passing grade on both the midterm and the final exam.

**Course Rules**

1. Carefully prepare the assigned texts and introductory material in advance of the class on which they will be taught and reread them at least once before you are tested on them. Most are difficult to decipher even on the

literal level. Hence, you should plan to spend about three hours or more studying for each lesson. If you have time left, start getting ready for the next one.

2. Full attendance is mandatory. All absences must be coordinated with the teaching assistant in advance of the affected class or, in case of an unforeseen emergency, as soon as possible thereafter. A doctor's note is needed to justify health-related absences. Such notes must be issued no later than 72 hours following the first day of your absence. Students who miss six or more classes without valid justification will not be allowed to pass the course. Only illness, childbirth, veteran service, and certain religious holidays (listed at [www.tau.ac.il/calendar](http://www.tau.ac.il/calendar)) count as permissible grounds for absence. If you encounter another problem that you believe might call for special consideration, notify the teaching assistant the moment it arises and be prepared to follow his instructions. Such cases will not be negotiated at a later date.
3. Please maintain a productive learning atmosphere: come and leave on time; do not wander in and out of the classroom; use electronic devices for class purposes only; avoid side conversations; do not consume strong-smelling, crispy, or crunchy food or carbonated drinks; show respect to other students.
4. You are entitled to two regular dates ("moadim") for each exam on this course. Requests for a special exam date ("moed meyukhad") will be processed by the Departmental and Faculty Teaching Committees in accordance with university policy. In some cases, the special date will be scheduled to coincide with the first regular date of the following academic year. Remember: a passing grade on this course is a prerequisite for enrolling in second and third-year courses in the same field.