

Introduction to British Culture I

Required BA Course (2019–2020) / Dr. Jonathan Stavsky

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 the assigned introductions to each period and work covered by the course. All texts will be made available on the course website. To ensure your success on the exams, you must work exclusively with the prescribed editions or translations.

Evaluation

- Regular attendance during the entire course, including make-up classes (10%);
- A midterm exam (30%), where you will be asked to identify and explicate passages from texts studied in the first part of the course;
- A longer final exam (60%) that includes (a) identification and explication of passages from texts studied in the second part of the course and (b) an essay on two works, one from each part.

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

Basic Course Rules

Full attendance in all classes for the entire duration of the lesson is necessary in order for you to achieve the goals of this course. No less important is your commitment to preparing the required texts before they are taught and following the lectures and discussion attentively.

Should you fall behind on your studies even for a week or two, you will find it very difficult to catch up later. Since this is a reading-intensive course, plan to spend around three hours studying for each lesson. If you have any time left, start getting ready for the next one.

Please show consideration to other students as well as the lecturer by refraining from side conversations, using electronic devices for non-course-related purposes, wandering in and out of the classroom, bringing in visitors, consuming strong-smelling, crispy, or crunchy food or carbonated drinks, and other distractions. Disrespectful or confrontational behavior will not be tolerated.

Attendance Policy

- Attendance in all classes from the first day of the semester is obligatory. There will be a penalty of two points for every unexcused absence. Students who accrue six or more absences in total for whatever reason will not be allowed to pass the course.
- All absences must be coordinated with the lecturer in advance of the affected class or, in case of an emergency, as soon as possible thereafter. Those due to late registration, documented illness, childbirth, veteran service, and certain religious holidays (listed at www.tau.ac.il/calendar) will not incur a two-point penalty but will still be counted.
- An official doctor's note is needed to justify absences on account of ill health. Such notes must be issued no later than 72 hours following the first day of your absence.
- If you encounter another problem that you believe may call for special consideration, contact the lecturer the moment it arises and be prepared to follow his instructions. Such cases will not be negotiated at a later date.
- Students who repeatedly come in late or leave early will be marked as absent when such behavior occurs. If you have a particular reason for doing so on a one-time basis, please notify the teaching assistant before the beginning of class.
- Students who for any reason have failed to sign the attendance sheet will also be counted as absent. Please wait patiently until it reaches you or add your name at the end of the lesson.

Policy on Exams

- You are entitled to two regular dates (*moadim*) for each exam in 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 may be scheduled to coincide with the first regular date of the following academic year. Remember: a passing grade in this course is a prerequisite for taking second and third-year courses in the same field.